

Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A Case Study of Merseyside

Grace Robinson BSc (Hons), MA

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of Edge Hill University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Law and Criminology, Edge Hill University.
September 2019

Abstract

This research focuses on the involvement of gangs in County Lines drug dealing and processes of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). Data were collected by way of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and informal discussions with two samples of participants: gang-involved or gang-associated young people, and practitioners working with gang-involved or gang-associated young people. Practitioners were from criminal justice agencies (Youth Offending Teams (YOTs), Police, Young Offender Institutes (YOIs)), third-sector organisations and Alternative Education Providers (AEPs). Research was conducted with participants from four of the five boroughs that make up Merseyside, and as such the project took on the form of a case study of one part of England. Thematic analysis was utilised to identify various themes in the samples. Practitioners provided their understandings of CCE and highlighted factors impacting their ability to help gang-involved young people in an age of austerity, and gang-involved young people discussed processes of County Lines drug dealing and provided examples of CCE.

The thesis provides numerous contributions to knowledge including: providing a thorough understanding of a complex problem; hearing the voices of often difficult to access groups of young people, and; capturing the realities of gangs, Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines from Merseyside - a place which has largely been left out of academic debate surrounding gangs. Other findings examined how exploited young people adopted and internalised the role of exploiter and used moral neutralisation techniques to justify their criminal and exploitative behaviour.

In its entirety, the thesis offers humorous, heart-breaking and shocking accounts. It argues for the need to re-examine popular discourses of CCE and County Lines and understand the complexities in the everyday lives of those involved. The research project was the first of its kind to criminologically investigate the newly termed Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines from a professional perspective and also from the lived experiences of children and young people growing up in Merseyside, during the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Contents

Abstract	i
Contents	ii
Declaration.....	iv
Author’s Acknowledgements.....	v
Acronyms and Abbreviations.....	vi
Glossary of Terms and ‘Scouse’ Idioms.....	viii
Chapter One: Introduction	1
Research questions.....	2
Structure of Thesis and Chapter Summary.....	3
Chapter Two: Literature Review	7
Introduction.....	7
Context: Gang Evolution and Gang Processes.....	8
Defining a Gang.....	11
Quantifying Gang Membership in the UK.....	14
Media Representations and Application of the Gang Label.....	25
Government Policy: Dealing with Gangs.....	27
Society, Economy and Deprivation.....	29
Risk Factors of, and Motivations for, Gang Membership.....	30
Trauma and Mental Health.....	41
Girls and Gangs.....	44
Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines.....	48
Conclusion.....	58
Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods	59
Introduction.....	59
Methodological Rationale.....	60
Sampling and Access.....	63
Methods of Data Collection.....	68
Analytical Strategy.....	79
Ethical and Political Considerations.....	81
Limitations and Reflection.....	89
Chapter Four: Findings: Young people	94
Introduction.....	94
Norms and Beliefs.....	95
Marginalisation.....	105
Child Criminal Exploitation.....	110
Deviant Entrepreneurism and the Participants’ Exploitation of Drug Use.....	129
Conclusion.....	137
Chapter Five: Findings: Practitioners	139
Introduction.....	139
Child Criminal Exploitation.....	140
The Business of Drug Dealing.....	169

Culture of Austerity.....	175
Conclusion.....	185
Chapter Six: Discussion and Conclusion.....	187
Introduction.....	187
Understandings of Child Criminal Exploitation.....	188
Victim-Perpetrator Relationship.....	192
Victims Becoming Perpetrators.....	194
School Exclusion and Child Criminal Exploitation.....	196
The Role of Cannabis.....	198
Recommendations.....	200
Reference List.....	205
Appendices.....	239
Appendix 1. Practitioner Participant Information Sheet.....	239
Appendix 2. Young Person Information Sheet.....	241
Appendix 3. Practitioner Consent Form.....	243
Appendix 4. Young Person Consent Form.....	244
Appendix 5. Young Person Demographics Questionnaire.....	245
Appendix 6. Practitioner Interview Schedule.....	247
Appendix 7. Young Person Interview Schedule.....	250
Appendix 8. Demographics of Young People Sample.....	253
Appendix 9. Demographics of Practitioner Sample.....	254
Appendix 10. Recruitment Sources / Institutions Accessed.....	255
Appendix 11. Thematic Map.....	256
List of Tables	
Table 1. Demographics of the Young People Sample Including Method of Data Collection Implemented.....	67

Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and has not been submitted in any other form of award of a higher degree at any other educational institution.

Some data collected from this research has been published in the *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*.

Robinson, G, McLean, R., & Densley, J. (2019) Working County Lines: Child Criminal Exploitation and Illicit Drug Dealing in Glasgow and Merseyside. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63(5), pp. 694-711.

Acknowledgements

I would firstly like to say a huge thank you to the organisations across Merseyside involved in making this research possible. Not only did they provide me with access to professionals, but also to the young people who they worked with on a daily basis. Thus, I would like to say thank you to the many incredible young people who took a chance and gave up their time to discuss, often difficult, experiences with me. I learned so much from these young people and will never forget their level of openness and sense of humour whilst sharing heartbreaking elements of their lives.

I will always be grateful to Professor Andrew Millie and Dr. Eleanor Peters for their supervision over the past three years. They provided me with advice, direction and encouragement on both an academic and personal level, and for that I owe a debt of gratitude.

I would also like to thank my parents and brother for their unstinting moral support without which would have made completing the PhD a much more difficult process, and my grandparents whom both sadly passed away during this journey, however would have read every word of the thesis ten times over given the opportunity. I am also very grateful to Dr. Robert Hesketh and Paul Walmsley for their support. On numerous occasions they have gone above and beyond to help with various stages of the PhD.

Finally I would like to say thankyou to Luke Fox for his motivation, encouragement and humour, and dealing with my fluctuating moods during difficult stages of the course. Here's to the next chapter.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACE – Adverse Childhood Experience
ADHD – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AEP – Alternative Education Provider
ASBO – Anti-Social Behaviour Order
CARMAC – Child at Risk Multi-Agency Conference
CBD - Cannabidiol
CBO – Criminal Behaviour Order
CCE – Child Criminal Exploitation
CPS – Crown Prosecution Service
CSEW – Crime Survey for England and Wales
DSG – Deviant Street Group
EGYV – Ending Gang and Youth Violence
HMP – Her Majesty Prison
ILM – Intermediate Labour Market
ISSP – Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme
KMBC – Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
LAC – Looked After Child
LDF – Lewis Dunne Foundation
MARSOC – Multi-Agency Response to Serious and Organised Crime
MSA – Modern Slavery Act
NEET – Not in Education, Employment or Training
NHS – National Health Service
NIM – National Intelligence Model
OCG – Organised Crime Gang/Group
ONS – Office for National Statistics
OG – Original Gangster
OT – Out There
PRU – Pupil Referral Unit
PWITS – Possession with Intent to Supply
SALT - Sport Art Learning and Training
SEN – Special Educational Needs
SMBC – Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council

THC - Tetrahydrocannabinol
TYP – Targeted Youth Prevention
UK – United Kingdom
YOI – Young Offender Institute
YOS – Youth Offending Service
YOT – Youth Offending Team
YRO – Youth Rehabilitation Order

Glossary of Terms and ‘Scouse’ Idioms

B’s – brown / heroin

Bally – balaclava

Banking – internally hiding drugs

Bando – house to sell drugs from

Bizzies – police

Cunch – going country / going out the way to sell drugs

Feds – police

Ken – house

Gaff - house

George - heroin

Graft / grafting – drug dealing

Legged – beaten up or chased

Mandem – groups of friends

OT – out there / going out the way to sell drugs

Poly – short for pollen, a popular strain of cannabis

Plod - police

Plugged – internally hiding drugs

Plugging – internally hiding drugs

Punter – customer

Shotting – dealing drugs

Strapping – drugs on loan / buy now, pay later scheme

Tic – drugs on loan / buy now, pay later scheme

Wool (short for woolly back) - derogatory term for those close to, but not from, Liverpool i.e. St. Helens, Runcorn, Wirral etc.

Chapter One

Introduction

Over the past three years the criminal exploitation of children across the United Kingdom (UK) has become a deeply problematic social and criminological issue. Yet, understandings of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) amongst practitioners, government officials and policy makers are scarce. Similarly, there is a distinct lack of academic literature pertaining to the phenomenon. Accounts of CCE have been restricted to local and national news reports which seldom contain accurate information. Child Criminal Exploitation is yet to have an agreed definition and is restricted to local definitions usually by law enforcement agencies and, or local safeguarding boards. As such, Merseyside Police define the criminal exploitation of children as:

The use of a child in any way for economic gain. Children are often used to help sell and distribute illegal drugs and firearms. They can also become involved in violence through gang associations (2017).

According to the Children's Society (2019), cases of CCE have been rising across the UK, so too has the prevalence of County Lines drug supply (National Crime Agency, 2017). County Lines - identified by the Police as the migration across borders to sell illicit drugs (National Crime Agency, 2017; 2019) - has seen increases in the use of children in drug supply and the exploitation of a number of vulnerable groups in society (Robinson et al., 2018). Like CCE, understandings of County Lines are varied and nebulous, comprising mainly of presumptions and conjectures and only amplified and distorted by the mainstream media. What is certain, is that the success of County Lines networks is heavily dependent upon exploitative techniques of manipulation, coercion, force and violence, where the victims are disproportionately children and young people. There is a common thread in the CCE and County Lines nexus; and that is the involvement of organised individuals and, or criminal gangs. Indeed, advances in transportation and technology; improved police practices; and loopholes in the law have encouraged criminal gangs into exploring other drug territories and using children and young people to carry out criminal activity mainly in the form of drug supply, transportation of drugs and money, and hiding and using weapons such as knives and

firearms. According to the National Crime Agency (2016; 2017), London-based criminal gangs are the leaders in County Lines drug supply, involved in exploiting and trafficking children and young people from the capital to areas including Essex, Devon and Cornwall. Yet children and young people from Merseyside have been identified as involved in County Lines drug supply in each of the 43 police force areas around England and Wales (2017).

It is the purpose of this thesis to provide understandings of CCE and County Lines from those who have experience of being involved and those who are tasked with helping such individuals. Further, the research aims to provide narratives from young people which are all too often dismissed in academic inquiry and policy discourse (Yates, 2006a). It is the lived experiences of these young people that are paramount to the credibility of the research project, in ensuring that their voices are heard and used to help other young people in similar situations. Through primary research with gang-involved and gang-associated young people, victims of CCE and County Lines, and practitioners from Merseyside, the thesis stands as the first of its kind and the only in-depth study to date into Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines. Throughout the study, the following four research questions were addressed:

1. What are gang-involved young people's understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation?
2. What are practitioners' understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation?
3. To what extent does Child Criminal Exploitation occur within street gangs?
4. Do gang-involved young people identify when they are being criminally exploited?

Structure of Thesis and Chapter Summary

The thesis consists of six chapters. A brief introduction to each subsequent chapter is outlined below.

Chapter Two - Literature Review

In setting the scene for the thesis, this chapter provides readers with a critical analysis of the academic literature on gangs both in the UK and internationally. The chapter opens by providing an understanding of British gangs by analysing traditional and contemporary definitions and how gangs have evolved and developed over time. In highlighting the current context of British gangs and providing the rationale for the case study location, gangs on Merseyside are explored in detail and compared with gangs from other major cities across the UK. The review continues by exploring responses to gangs in the UK such as current media discourse, government policy and law enforcement strategies to deal with gangs. Risk factors and the motivations for gang membership are explored by demonstrating how individual and structural conditions in society can create the environment for criminality and gangs to thrive. Indeed, strict austerity measures implemented by the 2010 coalition government - that have exacerbated conditions of poverty, inequality and social exclusion for a generation of young people growing up in deprived communities - are discussed and brought under the spotlight for their role in the growing issue of youth violence. In addition, factors such as: a desire for belonging; safety and protection; financial reward; and status and respect are explored as well as the growing body of literature that highlights a link between trauma, mental health and gang membership. Through the lens of predominantly American literature, it is argued here that early childhood trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and illicit drug use are key indicators of gang membership. Further, the reciprocal relationship between PTSD and gang membership is explored, where experience of trauma increases the risk of involvement in gangs, and gang membership increases the risk of experiencing traumatic events and developing PTSD (Kerig et al., 2016). The literature on girls and gangs is reviewed, ultimately highlighting the need for further academic inquiry in order to understand the role of girls in gangs. Finally, the review narrows in focus and explores the scarce research on Child Criminal Exploitation, in addition to County Lines and the link

between the two. This section identifies gaps in the knowledge around CCE and highlights the need for the current research project.

Chapter Three - Methods and Methodology

This chapter consists of the steps that were taken in order to complete the research and details from start to finish the methods of data collection, the participants and the method of data analysis adopted. First, readers are provided with the methodological rationale. This explores the researcher's epistemological and ontological beliefs and how such beliefs affect the design of the study, the methods adopted and the research strategy. The researcher's personal views and beliefs about how the world works and how knowledge is produced become apparent, in addition to how she views her research topic and participants. Indeed, it is argued here that as a social researcher is it impossible to separate the researcher from the researched (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). As such, readers will be informed of the rationale behind the methodology and methods of data collection selected. The chapter then outlines the methods of data collection adopted including the use of ethnographic techniques, the participants, the institutions involved and how they were accessed. The strategy adopted in order to analyse the data is provided to ensure that readers have an understanding of how themes were identified and conclusions made. The many ethical and political considerations of the research project are discussed at length, stating how obstacles were overcome and how potential risk to the researcher and participants was mitigated. The chapter closes with the limitations of the research including issues with the methods of data collection and analytical strategy; and personal reflections from the researcher including issues in accessing institutions and participants.

Chapter Four - Findings: Young People Sample

This chapter provides the findings from a sample of seventeen gang-involved and gang-associated young people that participated in the research. The chapter explores in detail four themes that were identified through thematic analysis. These consist of: *norms and beliefs; marginalisation; Child Criminal Exploitation; and 'deviant entrepreneurship'*. The chapter outlines, from a lived perspective, the realities of Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines, describing how young people usually become involved in cannabis consumption, criminality, drug supply and the subsequent criminal exploitation that emanates from these activities. An understanding into how

County Lines drug supply works in practice is provided, in addition to the working conditions, physical and emotional harms that young people face and a cycle of exploitation that sees victims become perpetrators. The chapter concludes with an examination of ‘deviant entrepreneurship’ (Hesketh, 2018) - that is, how young people have developed deviant entrepreneurial traits in order to overcome marginalisation and exclusion.

Chapter Five - Findings: Practitioner Sample

This chapter examines the findings from twenty-eight practitioners accessed from various criminal justice agencies, educational settings and third-sector organisations who participated in the research. The chapter provides three themes identified through thematic analysis, these are: *Child Criminal Exploitation; the business of drug dealing;* and *culture of austerity*. The chapter provides perspectives from those working on the front line to address gang-involvement, CCE and County Lines. The chapter concludes with practitioners sharing their concerns and difficulties in trying to help young people desist from gangs in an age of extreme austerity and budget cuts. Indeed, practitioners highlight their difficulties in trying to address rises in youth violence and gangs whilst also experiencing reduced numbers of staff and increased workloads. They further claim that these issues are compounded by deprivation and poverty experienced by their clients.

Chapter Six – Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis and draws together the most significant findings from data obtained from the two samples. The chapter draws attention to some of the key issues surrounding Child Criminal Exploitation including gang-involved young people’s understandings of it and whether they identify with being victims of criminal exploitation. The varied and nebulous relationships between exploiter and victim are critically discussed with some relationships identified as overtly forceful and volatile, and others more reciprocal in terms of respect - yet harbouring subtle undertones of coercion. Emphasis is given to the disproportionate number of young people in the research who had been excluded from mainstream school and the impact this had on their transition into late adolescence and legitimate employment. Indeed, all young people in the research perceived drug dealing and gang involvement as a viable alternative to academic success and legal work and relied upon involvement in drug

supply as a way of forming an identity and securing money. The chapter discusses the role that cannabis plays in drawing young people into becoming gang-involved, in addition to the risk of criminal exploitation because of increasing drug debts. The chapter concludes with a number of recommendations for obtaining a more holistic understanding of CCE in terms of how young women are criminally exploited and the experiences of vulnerable drug users affected by County Lines drug supply.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

It is claimed that there is a gang problem throughout the UK. Literature suggests that gangs have grown more violent, chaotic and visible with an increased accessibility to weapons such as knives and firearms (Decker and Van Winkle, 1996; Hallsworth, 2013; Harding and Palasinski, 2016). Gangs are thought to be highly territorial groups (Deuchar, 2009; Fraser, 2010; Densley, 2012) and have received significant attention from media outlets, politicians and academics alike. This is especially over the last 15 years, predominantly due to an increase in gang-related deaths of young people, mainly killed by other young people (Hesketh, 2017). Academic research on the UK gang phenomenon has also appeared in abundance (e.g. Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Pitts, 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Densley, 2013; Hallsworth, 2013; Harding, 2014; Fraser, 2015; 2017, etc.). Adding to the myriad of problems that gangs bestow upon their communities, such as turf wars, violent disputes and drug supply, the past few years have seen the development of a deeply problematic criminal and social justice issue, the criminal exploitation of young people by gangs (Windle and Briggs, 2015b; Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Robinson et al., 2018). There is a current lack of academic literature written about gang-related Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). As such, in this chapter, learning is drawn from recent government documentation (Home Office, 2017; National Crime Agency, 2017; 2019) and literature on Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) where similar patterns and cycles of abuse can be observed.

This literature review provides an understanding of British gangs and how they have evolved over time and space, whilst highlighting the nuanced and under-researched social issue of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) – a process whereby gangs criminally exploit other (usually gang-involved or gang-associated) young people into moving and distributing drugs and other illicit goods. The review begins by highlighting the literature on gang evolution and gang processes, giving rise to how they have developed through history. Comparison is made with research on gangs in the United States (US) where there is a longer history of academic interest. As with most academic commentary on gangs, definitional sensitivity is explored and analysed,

with suggestion of the most appropriate definition for gangs in this study. The following section of the review emphasises the estimated scale of gang membership in the UK and their composition, focusing primarily on four major cities: London, Manchester, Glasgow and Liverpool (the latter being a main focus of this study). Media reporting on gangs and the application of the gang label from such outlets, practitioners and law enforcement agencies is explored, showing how the gang label can, at times, prove unhelpful for many young people. The main risk factors and motivations for gang membership are considered in detail including: poverty and deprivation; family and background; and protection and victimisation. The review draws upon masculinity theories in an attempt to explain why many young males seek gang membership. Similarly, the literature on female involvement in gangs is addressed to also understand their motivations for becoming gang-involved and the roles that they usually adopt. Literature on early childhood trauma and mental health is considered, highlighting the risk of gang-involved young people developing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental health issues. Where research has largely focused on the development of PTSD through victimisation, using evidence from the US it will be suggested that perpetrating violence could be a significant indicator of mental health problems for gang members. Lastly and most importantly, CCE is explored in depth, drawing from government reports and research surrounding CSE. The ‘County Lines’ phenomenon is explored - where gang members send young people to other (often rural) towns to distribute drugs to new customers - demonstrating what role Child Criminal Exploitation takes in this process and what needs to be explored in order to further develop understanding of this issue, and how best it can be addressed. The review also demonstrates how this study provides an original contribution to knowledge throughout.

Context: Gang Evolution and Gang Processes

Up until the 1980s, gangs were seen by many as solely an ‘American anomaly’ (Medina et al., 2016: 1). Indeed, gangs were considered a predominant cause of crime in inner city America, the term describing organised and ethnically-based groups such as the Crips and Bloods in Los Angeles and Latin Kings in Chicago (Hallsworth and Young, 2004). In his book ‘*The Delinquent Solution*’, David Downes (1966) argued that gangs did not exist in Britain, but instead delinquent groups and criminal networks

were common. This is contested by historical accounts of UK gangs dating back to the nineteenth century which include discussion on gangs such as the ‘Peaky Blinders’ in Birmingham, ‘Scuttlers’ in Manchester (Pearson, 1983) and the ‘High Rip gang’ in Liverpool (Macilwee, 2006). Despite this, it was only during the late 1980s and early ’90s that the use of the term gang in the UK began to be used in common parlance (Densley, 2013). Since then, there has been a significant debate in the UK around whether there are commonalities between British and American gang experiences. There is some research to support the claim (Klein et al., 2006; Windle and Briggs, 2015a) when examining gang organisation and structures.

When examining gangs, it is important to gain an understanding of how firstly they develop, and secondly how they are organised and structured. Many academics (such as, Pitts, 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Smithson et al., 2012; Densley, 2013) have debated whether British gangs, unlike American gangs, are organised - particularly whether they are hierarchical with clear leaders and followers. In British gang research there is a divide between academic inquiry in the North of England (Aldridge and Medina, 2007) who argue that gangs lack structure, and academics in the South of England (Pitts, 2008; Hales and Hobbs, 2010; Densley, 2013; Harding, 2014) who argue that gangs are hierarchically structured groups (Windle and Briggs, 2015). In Scotland, delinquent youth groups are imbedded into its history (Patrick, 1973; Davies, 1998; Bannister and Fraser, 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Deuchar and Holligan, 2010; Fraser, 2015), with Glasgow – ‘the country’s largest city’ (McLean et al., 2018: 151) having a reputation as a ‘hotbed of gang violence’ (Davies, 1998: 251) during the early-twentieth Century. Despite this, Scottish academics also face issues in terms of an agreed notion of what and how gangs are structured. Indeed, McLean states that ‘much, if not all, contemporary [Scottish] gang research ... [ha]s focused upon ... recreational groupings’ (2017: 310), which further muddies the water in terms of defining gang typologies and levels of criminality. McLean continues that such a focus on these groups has meant that Scottish gang literature has failed to move ‘away from the recreational and toward the criminal’ (ibid). The Scottish context will be explored in more detail below.

Smithson et al. (2012: 63) argued that gangs - particularly in Liverpool - ‘had no structure and w[ere] simply a group of friends doing what they choose to do’. This

supports Densley's (2013: 43) assertion that gangs (particularly those in the south of England) 'start life as purely recreational groups' which develop over time, expanding upon the 'goods and services they can offer'. It comes as no surprise that most gangs develop out of familial relationships and friendships that have formed in schools and communities. In this context, both Densley (2014) and Pitts (2008) describe 'elders', 'youngers' and 'wannabes'. For them, 'elders' were usually in their late twenties to early thirties and controlled a number of 'youngers' between the ages of 14 and 17 - although government reports now estimate it to be even younger (National Crime Agency, 2017) - encouraging them to participate in running drugs. 'Wannabes' 'were then exploited to engage in even higher risk, lower valued work' (Windle and Briggs, 2015a: 1172). Densley (2014) suggests that gang structures and hierarchies are usually found in more organised groups; however much of the literature opposes this by claiming that organised crime groups lack any formal hierarchy (Hobbs, 2013; Windle, 2013). It can be surmised that gang structures and hierarchies change dependent on the environment, the members and their acquired skills in those gangs.

Where gangs have evolved over time, certain aspects of their culture remain the same: they are territorial, and they possess a willingness and capacity for violence. According to classic US work on gangs by Thrasher (1927)¹ gangs were highly territorial - in keeping with findings from most of the academic literature that has succeeded his research. When young men - as they are usually young men - become territorial, taking ownership over a certain area, they must be willing to do anything to defend their 'turf'. Petty territorial disputes have been at the root of a number of gang-related shootings in the UK by provoking spur of the moment reactions and creating cycles of retaliation (Firmin et al., 2007). To not retaliate in the same way as a rival gang, would be to lose face, suggesting that a gang - or member - lacked the courage to protect their territory.

Other gang consistencies over time include: a willingness and capacity for violence. According to Squires et al. (2008: 25), 'not being violent would only invite further violence'. Having said that, in his London ethnography of youth violence, Densley

¹ Frederick Milton Thrasher was one of the first academics to conduct research on the gang phenomenon in North America. His book, *The Gang: A study of 1313 gangs in Chicago* originally published in 1927, offers a detailed analysis of the way in which urban geography influences the formation and development of youth gangs.

(2013) highlights how gangs have become even more violent and ruthless than before, with less respect for anybody that crosses their path:

The game has changed. Gangs will now kill you in public with your family and friends watching. They will run up in a man's house and assassinate him while he's asleep. The home used to be a sanctuary but now nothing is off limits. Kids are sleeping in body armour for fear of being shot in their beds (Densley, 2013: 20).

Whilst some would argue that gang-associated violence comes as a result of illegal drug markets, others argue that it is the turf wars relating to these that have been responsible for a cluster of shootings that have taken place in Manchester (Keeling, 2015), Birmingham (McCarthy, 2015), Liverpool (Thomas, 2016) and London (Simpson, 2017). A spike in gang-related shootings in Manchester in the early 1990s infamously gave Manchester the title 'Gangchester' or 'Gunchester' (Medina et al., 2016). Nottingham was similarly given the derogatory title 'Shottingham', reinforced by local media to denote an increase in shootings in 2003 (O'Connor, 2006), and Liverpool was nicknamed 'Triggerpool' following a number of fatal shootings in 2015 and 2016 (Williams, 2016).

Academic research on gangs in the UK has grown in abundance (e.g. Mares, 2001; Bullock and Tilley, 2002; Bennett and Holloway, 2004; Hallsworth and Young, 2004; Pitts, 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Densley, 2013; Fraser, 2015), all providing evidence for the existence of gangs, yet consistently lacking a common definition of a 'gang' and knowledge about the extent and nature of the problem. It is left to be explored whether gang-related violence can be attributed to illegal drug markets, or due to defending territory; and whether gang-involved young people truly know what they are fighting over.

Defining a Gang

One of the most contested debates surrounding the gang discourse is what constitutes a gang (McLean et al., 2018). In fact, Gunter (2017) asserts that there is only one - rather pessimistic - point that is consistently agreed upon in relation to gang definitions and that is 'that there is no agreement' (Greene and Pranis, 2007: 9). Further connotations about street gangs indicate that they are dynamic (Pitts, 2008), chaotic

(Golding and McClory, 2008) and more than willing to carry and use weapons such as knives and firearms (Harding and Palasinski, 2016). Unlike the UK, North American academic research on gangs is well developed, dating back to the 1920s. Indeed, academic literature on gangs that does not refer to the instrumental research of Thrasher (1927) at some stage is few and far between. It has been used as a springboard for understanding gangs and a template for conducting further inquiry where, for many (e.g. Pitts, 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Densley 2013), his definition of a gang still holds some resemblance to those argued to exist in contemporary Britain. He defined a gang as:

An interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behaviour: meeting face to face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this collective behaviour is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure, esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory (Thrasher, 1927: 46).

Perhaps of most relevance to gangs today is the meeting face-to-face and attachment to local territory, which will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Following in the footsteps of Thrasher (1927) scholars such as Whyte (1943), Cohen (1955), Klein (1971), Miller (1977), Campbell (1984), and Decker and Van Winkle (1996) have sought to explore American gangs and provide adaptations to the gang definition. Interestingly, Thrasher's definition failed to make associations between gangs, delinquency and criminality, a key component in the eyes of most scholars. Klein (1971: 13) later identified the need for this association and added that a gang should 'have been involved in a sufficient number of delinquent incidents to call forth a consistent negative response from neighbourhood residents and/or law enforcement agencies'. Law enforcement agencies have shown a similar lack of clarity which has resulted in inconsistencies from one location to another. For example, in their research investigating the extent and nature of gang culture in London, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) adopted Hallsworth and Young's (2004) definition of a gang² whereas Strathclyde Police's Violence Reduction Unit opted for the Home Office's (2004)

² Hallsworth and Young (2004: 12) define a gang as 'a relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity'

broader definition of a gang³ for the analysis of their 2004 Glasgow Gang Assessment. The Home Office then changed their original definition in 2004, emphasizing the use of guns in 2008⁴, an evidently more specific definition which aimed to encapsulate organised criminals who engage in the use of firearms to commit criminal acts.

The definitional sensitivity has meant that academics, politicians and practitioners have failed to agree upon a universal definition of a gang, resulting in widespread and, at times, negative effects for many young people who have been labelled as such. Indeed, ever-changing and broad definitions that consist of elements that define many normal youth friendship groups only serve to widen the net of criminalization through peer-group associations. In addition, it raises the question of how reliable data are on gangs in the UK when a different definition is adopted in almost all research studies. This not only makes quantifying gang membership difficult, but also puts barriers in place in working to reduce the problem.

It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate which gang definition is the most accurate across the UK, nor is it the purpose to create a new definition. Rather, it is to acknowledge which definition appears to be the most appropriate for the gang situation across Merseyside and that which seems to be evident in cases of Child Criminal Exploitation. That being said, a working group of the Conservative think tank ‘the Centre for Social Justice’ created a definition that appears to fit this criterion. They claim that a gang is:

A relatively durable, predominantly street based group of young people who (1) see themselves and are seen by others as a discernible group, (2) engage in a range of criminal activity and violence, (3) identify with or lay claim over territory, (4) have some form of identifying structural feature and (5) are in conflict with other, similar gangs (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 21).

³ The Home Office’s (2004: 1) original definition of a gang included ‘youthful groups which have durability and structure and whose members spend time in public places and engage in delinquent activities together’

⁴ Following a number of gun related incidents, the Home Office (2008: 23) changed their original definition to ‘a group of three or more people who have a distinct identity (e.g. a name or badge/emblem) and commit general criminal or anti-social behaviour (ASB) as part of that identity. This group uses (or is reasonably suspected of using) firearms, or the threat of firearms, when carrying out these offences’

This definition has had some success in recent years. Whilst it builds upon Hallsworth and Young's (2004) widely adopted definition among practitioners - of gangs being street-based, identifiable and participating in crime and violence – the Centre for Social Justice (2009) incorporates a further three characteristics to their definition, stating that gangs are territorial, have some form of structural feature and are in conflict with other similar groups. Indeed, many Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (for instance Greater Manchester (2017), Northumberland (2018), Knowsley (2017), Dorset (2018) and Kirklees (2018)) have adopted this definition and it could be suggested that they have begun to identify these particular groups of young people as highly territorial and chaotic when faced with rival gangs. With a host of academics (for instance Batchelor, 2009; Deuchar, 2009; Goldson, 2011; Fraser, 2015) claiming that territoriality is now a significant feature of gang life, it seems that the Centre for Social Justice definition is an appropriate definition to implement moving forwards.

Quantifying Gang Membership in the UK

What little knowledge there is of gangs in the UK comes largely from research that is concentrated in and around London (Pitts, 2008; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Densley, 2013). This is largely due to the fact that the majority of groups that could be identified as gangs in the UK are located in this city. Outside London research has focussed on bigger cities such as Manchester (Mares, 2001; Aldridge and Medina, 2007, Aldridge et al., 2008) and Glasgow (Patrick 1973; Kintrea et al., 2008; Deuchar, 2009; Fraser and Atkinson, 2014; Fraser, 2015). What little research there is of gangs in Merseyside is limited (Smithson et al., 2009); however Heale (2012: 186) noted that outside London, Liverpool was seen as Britain's centre for organised crime. Interestingly, Pearson (2006) discusses gang-like groups in Manchester, London and Liverpool during the nineteenth century. Adding Birmingham to this list, the four cities were at the forefront of concerns about youth violence during the Victorian period, and more than one hundred years later, the very same cities are at the centre of modern anxieties in England related to gangs and youth violence (Goldson, 2011). It is these cities that remain as England's most heavily affected urban areas for gang crime and high-profile shootings.

Between March 2016 and March 2017 there was a rise in the recorded police figures for violent crime in the UK with a 26 per cent increase in knife crime and a 27 per cent increase in firearms offences (Office for National Statistics, 2017). There are a number of factors which could be responsible for such a rise: an increased willingness by the general public to report crime (therefore signalling that this crime may have actually decreased, yet reporting of it has increased), increased recording tools by the police, a willingness by police to classify crimes as violent, or a true increase in crime. With an estimated 75 per cent of young people found in possession of knives having no connection to gangs (BBC, 2016), and the Guardian newspaper quoting the Metropolitan Police as stating that most of London knife crime is no longer gang-related (Khomami, 2016), it is evident that gangs cannot solely be blamed for this rise. Whilst the academic literature on youth gangs does suggest that gang-involvement encourages the use of knives and firearms (e.g. Young, 2009; Marshall et al., 2005; Bennett and Holloway, 2004), gangs are certainly not the cause of all violent crime.

London

Between January and May 2007, London saw the murder of 26 teenagers (BBC, 2007), seven of which were attributed by the police, to 'growing gun, gang and weapon culture'. During the same year, the Metropolitan Police identified 171 gangs in their Pan-London Gang Profile (Metropolitan Police Authority, 2007: 1). Disputing this, the Home Office estimated that there were 356 gangs (The Centre for Social Justice, 2009) in the capital. Such major differences can be attributed to varying definitions, leaving the true scale of gang culture unknown and estimates largely unreliable. In 2007 London saw an increase of 70 per cent in the homicide rate, which had increased from an average of 17 murders (since 2000) per year to 26. In the February of that year Billy Cox, 15, became the third teenager in 11 days to be shot and killed (in his bedroom) in South London. His death came after James Smartt-Ford, 16, was killed as he attended a disco, and Michael Dosunmu, 15, killed as he lay in his bed at home (Densley, 2013).

Ten years later, London's homicide rate has risen to 80 in 2017, including the highest number of teenagers murdered since 2008 (Dearden, 2018). Accompanying these deaths were growing concerns around knife crime with many of these attributed to knife attacks (Grierson, 2018).

According to the Home Office (2017) knife crime nationally had risen by 26 per cent from June 2016 to June 2017. Over the same period, the Metropolitan Police recorded the highest volume increase in knife crime, accounting for 47 per cent of the overall rise in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2017). Similar figures are evidenced when examining firearms offences from June 2016 to June 2017, where a 27 per cent increase has been reported, again with the highest volume increase (50 per cent) being recorded by the Metropolitan Police. Of course, gangs are not to blame for the whole of this, and police recorded figures need to be interpreted with care. These statistics, as Jenkins (2017: 1) writes, ‘reflect reporting activity in police stations’. When compared to the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)⁵, violence has been steadily decreasing since 1995 (Office for National Statistics, 2018a).

Densley (2012) conducted research into London’s street gangs to examine the nature and extent of gang organisation. He interviewed gang members and gang associates⁶ from ‘twelve different gangs across six of London’s most gang-affected boroughs (Croydon, Hackney, Haringey, Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark)’ (Densley, 2012: 47) as indicated by the Metropolitan Police Service’s 2007 Pan-London Gang Profile. Consistent with Thrasher’s (1927) observation that gangs form from recreational playgroups, he found that gangs start as small recreational friendship groups with between five and ten members and ‘a few hangers on’ (Densley, 2012: 50). As these groups increase in size with more members, they usually split into sub-groups. Loyalty remains high, yet gang activity derives from the sub-groups (referred to as ‘crews’ by the participants in his research) rather than the gang as a whole. Densley found that the recreational groups participating in opportunistic crime operated without any specific aim or motivation and were loose structures with fluid members. However, once these gangs ‘expand in size and evolve in substance’ (2012: 51), original members become leaders and adopt certain roles and responsibilities according to skills. Describing these

⁵ The Crime Survey for England and Wales is a victim survey which has been measuring crime since 1981. The survey is given to people living in England and Wales about their experiences of crime over the last twelve months (Office for National Statistics, 2018b)

⁶ Densley (2012) identified a gang member as any individual who self-identified as being a member of a gang and who had this identity confirmed by other gang members. Gang associates were, according to him, potential gang members who had displayed a desire or intent to join a gang.

gangs as ‘never very large’ (ibid), he notes that there were around 40 members in the average gang that he came across with the largest having up to 140 members. These, like many other gangs, were highly territorial, claiming ownership over a particular housing estate.

Manchester

Perhaps one of the first studies on gangs in the North of England, and the only British contribution to Klein et al’s. (2001) ‘Eurogang Paradox’ – a collection of research reports on street gangs and problematic youth groups in Europe - was Dennis Mares’ (2001) ethnographic study of ‘*Working Class Street Gangs in Manchester*’, conducted between September 1997 and January 1998. Using participant observation and interviews with gang members and ‘stakeholders in the community’ (Gunter, 2017: 88), Mares (2001) discovered the Gooch Gang and the Doddington Gang - named after streets that have since been demolished in the Moss Side district of Manchester, which the author described as ‘Britain’s Bronx’ (Mares, 2001: 154). Mares reported that these gangs were responsible for increasing violent crime and homicide rates due to becoming involved in illegal drug dealing in the 1980s. He noted however, that the gangs were ‘not drug gangs ... drug dealing was carried out on an individual basis ... the gang as a whole was not an organisation aimed at drug dealing but primarily existed as a social group’ (Mares, 2001: 155). Mares also estimated that both gangs had 90 members each – although Hughes (2009) stated that due to lengthy prison sentences the true number of ‘active’ members was difficult to pinpoint - of which 80 per cent comprised of individuals of African Caribbean descent, however this could simply reflect the demographic of Moss Side. Some of its members were in their thirties and others were as young as 10 years old. Gunter (2017: 89) noted that the gangs were not organised around ethnicity, but rather around territory, that there was no hierarchical organisation to the gang and that they lacked formal or identified leaders. However, the older members of the gang had more influence on the younger members and used them for the tasks which carried the most risk. The ‘Gooch Gang’, ‘Longsight Crew’ and the ‘Doddington Gang’ were collectively responsible for 27 deaths and 250 shootings in Manchester over a period of five years in the 1990s (Hughes, 2009). This paved the way for an increased political focus and earned the city the infamous title ‘Gunchester’.

In a Home Office report into *Shootings, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester*, Bullock and Tilley (2002: 2) identified four main gangs in South Manchester that were 'loosely area-based', had 'differences in the make-up, origins, activities and organisation', and were involved in 'a wide range of criminal behaviour', ranging from, but not limited to, drug-related offences, violence and the possession of firearms. These gangs were comprised of same-age friendship groups, relatives and recruits. Unlike the street gangs in the Moss Side area of Manchester, Salford's street gangs comprised of white working class males with ages ranging from ten to 25 (Gunter, 2017). Each gang had up to 60 members and were highly involved in car crimes, robberies and the supply and distribution of drugs. With an increase in shootings and gun violence beginning in the 1990s and echoing through the early 2000s, Greater Manchester Police developed and implemented the Manchester Project, which, borrowing from the US, was an initiative that branded 'gang membership as a social problem', aiming to 'prevent young people from joining gangs' (Bullock and Tilley, 2008: 38) and diverting them if they had already become involved. The Project followed what was 'one of the best known and most successful attempts to reduce violence associated with gangs' (Bullock and Tilley, 2008: 38); the Boston Gun Project, based in Boston, Massachusetts.

The Boston Project, also referred to as Operation Ceasefire and the Boston Miracle, was heavily focussed on deterrence. Gang members were offered educational and diversionary opportunities whilst being informed of the behaviours that would not be tolerated and the consequences if they were to be carried out. Gang members were identified by police and invited to meetings with the Boston Gun Project Working Group, which included police, street workers, probation, church leaders and other community groups. During these formal meetings, gang members were informed of the Project's plans of clamping down on any violent and gang-related behaviour. In the words of Braga et al. (2000: 5/6) writing about the original Boston Project:

The deterrence message was not a deal with gang members to stop violence. Rather, it was a promise to gang members that violent behaviour would evoke an immediate and intense response.

Those that chose to remove themselves from gangs were offered jobs, counselling and any other support that they needed. Those that remained in gangs were given harsher

sentences which often resulted in spending large amounts of time in prison. For example, following implementation of the Project in Boston, a gang member named Freddy Cordoza was given a 19-year prison sentence for possession of one single bullet (Shukor, 2007).

What followed was a stark decrease in the amount of fatalities in Boston caused by the use of knives and guns (Kennedy et al., 1996) and an estimated 68 per cent reduction in firearm violence in one year (National Institute of Justice, 2008). In addition, homicide rates fell from an average of 45 to an estimated 15 a year (Braga et al., 1999).

Operation Ceasefire was implemented across Manchester following the Project, an intervention which took a new approach in the UK in dealing with gangs and gun crime. However, the Manchester Project did not see the same success, experiencing a number of problems which impeded its effectiveness. Firstly, it failed to adopt the multi-agency approach that appeared to be an effective deterrent to gang-related violence in Boston. Secondly, of most significance, the Manchester Project was thought to have focussed too much on gang membership and the labelling of such, rather than mirroring the Boston Project in ‘tackling the situational determinants of shootings’ (Bullock and Tilley, 2008: 44). Practitioners were, unsurprisingly, confused over what constituted a gang and, consequentially, many young people were drawn into the Project (a criminological process known as ‘net-widening’ (Cohen, 1985)), making it difficult to run. Nonetheless, the Boston Gun Project has inspired many law enforcement agencies across the UK and is still used as an example of good practice. According to the Centre for Social Justice (2009: 28), both the Matrix Gun and Gang Unit in Merseyside and Strathclyde Police Violence Reduction Unit have adopted the Boston Project model and, in the author’s words, saw ‘very promising early results’.

Glasgow

Once labelled as ‘Britain’s most violent city’ (Davis, 1998: 251), the issue of gangs in Glasgow is deep-rooted and embedded throughout its history. Glasgow is home to an estimated 110 gangs including: Carmunnock Young Team, Duke Street Fleet and Real Calton Tongs (Patrick, 1973). Although somewhat dated now, in 2005 Strathclyde Police estimated that there were 1,760 people involved with gangs. The true figure of gang-involvement in Glasgow is left contested with reports of a decline in youth

violence and gang crime (Fraser, 2015). Glasgow has now lost its title of being the most violent city with a report from Community Safety Glasgow (2016) showing that between 2005 and 2015, violent crime had fallen by 40 per cent - the figure for gang-involved youth may have fallen too.

In *A Glasgow Gang Observed*, one of the first ethnographic studies on gangs in Glasgow, Patrick (1973: 123) suggests a 'reign of terror' dating back to the 1920s and 1930s. Indeed, territorial groups have been reported in Glasgow since the 1880s (Patrick, 1973; Deuchar, 2009; 2013; Davies, 2013), with some gang names appearing throughout the twentieth century. Davies (2013: 1) discusses the 'Penny Mob', based in Glasgow city centre, during the 1880s, 'who's members ... paid a penny a week ... for the payment of fines', they were not criminally motivated but instead motivated by their 'love of mischief and fighting'. Some features have thus recurred consistently over time. Discussing gangs in the 1960s, Patrick (1973: 178) notes that the members were 'afraid of fighting other gangs but more afraid of not fighting them'. He later revealed that it was the level of violence that forced him to withdraw from the research. One of the greatest factors contributing towards violence and social disorder in Glasgow during the 1920s and 1930s was the suggested 'sectarian ... attachments' (Holligan and Deuchar, 2009: 734) that saw years of conflict between Catholics and Protestants, and still heavily impacts upon certain parts of Ireland, Northern Ireland and Glasgow. Holligan and Deuchar (2009: 732) note that young people in Glasgow may have a disposition to 'sectarian habitus', which is reinforced through territoriality and particularly brought to life during football rivalry. Indeed, 'sectarianism involves bigotry ... or hatred towards others and is notorious for legitimating complex territoriality'.

Like many of the other cities described in the literature, Glasgow gangs in the twentieth century were, suggested by historian Andrew Davies (2007: 408), found in 'the poorer districts of the city', in communities exposed to significant overcrowding and high numbers of young people (Fraser, 2010). These areas also suffered from a severe lack of amenities. Thrasher (1927) noted a similar period in Chicago, arguing that gangs formed in the most highly populated areas. Fraser (2010: 17) attributed the overcrowding to an increase in migrants at a time when Glasgow became the 'shipbuilding capital of the world'. The population of Glasgow reached over one

million in 1911 with individuals migrating from Ireland and the Scottish Highlands. Checkland (1981: 18) emphasizes the population density writing that ‘by 1914 no less than 700,000 people liv[ed] in three square miles, thus creating the most heavily populated central area in Europe’.

Following the Depression in the 1920s and 30s, Glasgow witnessed a sharp decline in industry which eventually brought with it a reversal of its industrial success and a decrease in the overall population. According to Fraser (2010), Glasgow lost 10,000 people a year for forty years. Those that could afford to, moved out of the city, leaving many working class people without employment and in slum accommodation. The decline in industry and rise in unemployment were, according to Davies (1998), synonymous with increases in gang-related crime such as theft, burglary and robbery. According to Bannister et al. (2010), gangs in Glasgow still reside in communities over-populated with young people who have to share already lacking amenities. Conditions such as these, according to Thrasher (1927), are conducive to the development of gangs in that young people develop strong loyalties to their villages/neighbourhoods and have to defend the limited spaces they have. Gangs form identities and fight to protect these, in addition to the safety of their members.

Gangs in Glasgow can be closely compared with those in Merseyside (the focus of the current study) as they share many similarities. Like many other large cities, they have both suffered at the hands of deindustrialisation and experience high levels of deprivation, youth unemployment, worklessness and social breakdown (Squires et al., 2008; Ellis, 2015). The two cities and their gangs can be compared due to ethnic composition with those found in Merseyside and Glasgow to be the least ethnically diverse in the UK, i.e. predominantly of white heritage (Fraser, 2010). Accessibility to drugs and firearms are common with routes of importation through their ports. Most commonly, literature on Glasgow gangs gives rise to the strong codes of silence that, like the gangs in Merseyside, inhibit gang-involved young people from discussing gang-related activity with anybody outside of those circles:

There is often a strong ‘no grassing’ presumption: the communities in which gun crime is most common tend to have the lowest levels of trust and confidence in the police and, invariably, the worst experiences of policing (Squires et al., 2008: 74).

Merseyside

In recent years, Merseyside has been described as one of the worst areas in the country for gang affiliation (Home Office, 2013). Home to the ‘Crocky Crew’ (Croxteth), the ‘Strand Gang’ (Norris Green) and the ‘Kirkstone Riot Squad’ (Litherland) in Liverpool; and the ‘Fernhill gang’ and ‘Linacre Young Guns’ (Bootle) in Sefton, it is reasonable to suggest that Merseyside has significant gang issues in many of its boroughs, mostly in Sefton and Liverpool. Although accurate figures about the extent of the problem of gangs in Merseyside is not known, a decade ago the Tackling Gangs Action Programme (Dawson, 2008) noted that there were more gangs in the county (N=96) than in the more highly populated, Greater Manchester (N=76). Of course, this needs to be interpreted with care as government figures combined with definitional sensitivity create a nebulous picture of gangs. According to the Liverpool Echo (Merseyside’s daily newspaper) there were 89 shootings in Merseyside between April 2016 and April 2017, a rise of almost 50 per cent on the previous year. This mirrored an increase in police recorded violence in Merseyside during the same twelve months. Whilst it is currently unknown how many of these can be attributed to gang-involvement, amongst the shootings have been nine fatalities, the last five of which have included victims aged 18 or under - and appeared to be spur of the moment, tit-for-tat, attacks (Thomas, 2017). Hales et al. (2006) highlight the effects of shootings amongst rival groups that rapidly spiral out of control:

So called ‘diss’ shootings become common ... in the context of a criminal culture in which conflict and firearms are to some extent normalised, conflict can quickly develop into what is effectively a ‘shoot or be shot’ scenario and even very trivial precipitating incidents may result in fatal violence (Hales et al., 2006: 82).

Of notable difference when comparing the gangs in Merseyside to those in Glasgow, London, Manchester or Birmingham are the demographic characteristics, particularly ethnic composition. In Merseyside, an estimated 96 per cent of gang members are white (Centre for Social Justice, 2009; 52). As noted, Glasgow gangs are similarly ethnically white European (relative to the population of Glasgow which is 97 per cent white (Fraser, 2010)). This is starkly contrasted with 2.5 per cent in London, eight per cent in Manchester and three per cent in Birmingham, where gang members are

predominantly black (Dawson, 2008; The Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 52). The ethnic composition of a gang usually denotes the ethnicity of the population residing in that area because, as Pitts (2008) explains, gangs are frequently estate-based and so their ethnic makeup mirrors that of their estate. Similarly, according to The Centre for Social Justice (2009: 76), African-Caribbean and Mixed Heritage young people are over-represented in some gangs because of their ‘disproportionate concentration in social housing’. In Merseyside, in 2011 Black and other Minority Ethnic (BME) groups represented only 4.6 per cent of the population (Office for National Statistics, 2012).

Merseyside, like many other urban areas (Ellis, 2015), has suffered at the hands of deindustrialization, deprivation and poverty with long-term and deep-rooted issues of unemployment. Inequality and social exclusion has impacted upon the majority of the five boroughs that comprise Merseyside. Such is the extent of economic and social deprivation that 16 areas in Merseyside feature on the 100 most deprived areas across England; eight of those are located in Liverpool, four in Wirral and two each in St. Helens and Knowsley (Phelan et al., 2018).

With its large port and numerous dock employers, Liverpool was once thriving in manufacturing and was, in 1970, the ‘largest exporting port in the British Commonwealth’ (Sykes et al., 2013: 1). The success was not to remain however, as during the 1980s, Britain’s industrial base shrank by 20 per cent (Pitts, 2008) with Merseyside disproportionately losing industry and service jobs in comparison to the rest of Britain. Boasting a population of 870,000 in the 1930s, by 2001 the population stood at just 430,000 (Sykes et al., 2013). Indeed, Merseyside sank into sharp decline with some of the highest unemployment rates in Britain. In the Liverpool Borough for example, the rate of unemployment reached 40 per cent in some areas (Census, 1981) with Belchem (2006) describing it as the ‘shock city’ of the post-industrial age. As a result of the decline in dock work and manufacturing jobs, male unskilled workers below the age of 40 became one of the key concerns for Liverpool (Andrew, 2018).

With efforts to regenerate the city and relying largely on money from the European Union, Liverpool witnessed numerous transformations in the form of infrastructure, retail development, hospitality and leisure-based activities and an improved business

sector. Such has been the success of the aim to regenerate the city, that Liverpool earned itself the title of European Capital of Culture in 2008, and saw economic growth outweigh that of the rest of Britain between 2002 and 2009. With economic growth rising, so too have employment rates and rates of population. Indeed, in 2010 Merseyside was home to 1,353,400 people (Liverpool City Council, 2011). Despite positive improvements, it appears that these have been centred predominantly on the city itself, leaving many of its surrounding areas still heavily plagued by deprivation.

In a 2012 comparison of the UK's urban areas, the think-tank *Centre for Cities* identified Liverpool as having some of the worst problems with regards to economic, demographic and social indicators (Centre for Cities, 2012 as cited in Sykes et al., 2013). Seventy per cent of the city's 33 regions were within the 10 per cent most deprived in England and Wales with 'healthy life expectancy' fluctuating by up to 30 years between the city's wealthiest and poorest areas (Sykes et al., 2013). Stark differences can be evidenced between these areas, where the poorest live in the over-populated inner city regions and those that could afford to relocate to more suburban neighbourhoods outside of the city. In 2015, Liverpool and Knowsley - two of Merseyside's boroughs - were ranked amongst 20 local districts with the highest proportion of their neighbourhoods in the most deprived 10 per cent of neighbourhoods nationally on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Statistics such as these demonstrate that children and young people in these areas are disproportionately raised in poverty and workless households, thus reliant on state welfare. Rough estimates (based on income) report that around 30 per cent of children in Liverpool were living in poverty at the end of 2017 (Phelan et al., 2018). These factors impact upon educational success and aspiration and seriously inhibit young people's transition from education to employment.

Merseyside has been selected as the sole focus of this study because of the apparent rise in youth street gangs, the rise in tit-for-tat shootings evidenced most significantly in the first six months of 2017; and because academic research on gangs here is scarce.

Media Representations and Application of the Gang Label

Reports of stabbings, shootings and violence across the UK by many mainstream media outlets, and the links that they make with young people, have increased attention and debate amongst academics, politicians and the media alike. Sensationalist headlines claiming a rising gang problem, in addition to an array of television documentaries about gangs that exploit and vilify young people involved in street violence, have increased public fears and promoted an abundance of governmental responses (Cox, 2011; Densley, 2013; Hesketh, 2017). The result has been what Stanley Cohen (1972) would have recognised as a moral panic – where ‘a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests’ (Cohen, 2004: 1). Indeed, the media, tireless in its pursuit of reporting on modern-day youth violence on British streets, has unsurprisingly promoted the use of the gang label. Recent media coverage has included a headline from the Independent:

‘Crime figures rise sharply amid fears gang members becoming more ruthless...’ (Morris, 2016).

While the Daily Mirror suggests:

‘Kids aged 10 caught with guns, as gangs lure thousands of youths into crime epidemic’ (Pettifor, 2016).

The general public’s understanding of gangs has been constructed and distorted through persistent media rhetoric, resulting in increased support for tougher legislation and more punitive measures in dealing with youth crime and gangs. As Golding (2011: 4) noted:

If concern had been invoked in November 2000 by the death of 10-year-old schoolboy Damilola Taylor, killed whilst he walked home from school in Peckham, London, it was reactivated and bolstered further by the seemingly random, but fatal, ‘drive by’ shooting of 18-year-old Charlene Ellis and 17-year-old Latisha Shakespeare in Aston, Birmingham, in January 2003. Perhaps more than any other single case, however, the death of 11-year-old Rhys Jones in Liverpool in August 2007, the victim of a ‘stray bullet’ dispensed from a handgun by an 18-year-old youth, set the agenda.

With the shooting of Rhys Jones high in the public's interest, Heale (2012: 186) wrote that '2007 was the year that violent youth crime became a major story'. The total number of killings in London that year were, according to Hallsworth and Young (2008: 176), 'attributed to the rise of armed organized gangs in the UK and to what many termed a burgeoning 'gang culture' among young people'. This may hold some truth, however where it has already been argued that gang organisation in the North of England is limited, it is likely that these 'organized gangs' were largely evidenced in London. In a 2008 document entitled *Saving Lives, Reducing Harm and Protecting the Public* (HM Government, 2008), the New Labour administration made the widely popular interpretation clear where 'the gang was for the first time explicitly linked to the problem of urban violence and rising weapon use in the UK' (Hallsworth and Young, 2008: 176).

Such has been the application and willingness to use the gang label that it could be asserted that policy makers and law enforcement agencies have contributed to the moral panic (Hesketh, 2017) and the problem overall. In widening the scope of who can be classified as a criminal or 'gang member', a term given by Stan Cohen (1985) as 'net-widening', more young people have been drawn into the criminal justice system under the assumption of being gang-involved, which has led to this group of young people being over targeted by police and increased media reporting as a result. McAra and McVie (2005: 9) state:

Once identified as a trouble-maker, this status appears to suck young people into a spiral of amplified contact, regardless of whether they continue to be involved in serious levels of offending.

Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (Legislation.gov.uk, 2019a), there was an emphasis placed on multidisciplinary working in the Criminal and Youth Justice Systems. As a result, many boroughs (led by the police) hold monthly meetings to discuss serious and organised crime in the community. In the Sefton Metropolitan Borough, for example, the meeting is given the acronym MARSOC (Multi-Agency Response to Serious and Organised Crime). Practitioners working in Criminal Justice settings from all over Sefton discuss key individuals who cause the most harm, with a heavy emphasis on gangs. The gang label is entrenched in the language used by practitioners working with young people and, rather than helping, the label means

practitioners seem to be ever too willing to identify a young person as being gang-involved.

Alongside increased practitioner intervention, was the introduction of punitive community sentences for young people, which served to place criminal behaviour as a result of individual pathology. Indeed, no such consideration was given to experiences of structural inequality and violence present in the everyday lives of children and young people who offended, particularly when developing techniques of control and surveillance to restrict anti-social and criminal behaviour. The most common of these was the Anti-Social Behaviour Order (ASBO) later being replaced by the Criminal Behaviour Order (CBO) after receiving criticism (Brown, 2020). Interestingly, anti-social behaviour as defined in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (s.1(1)(a)) was not a criminal offence (Cornford, 2012). Yet, it was behaviour that ‘caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress...’ (Legislation.gov.uk, 1999) that warranted the application of the ASBO. Whilst great importance was placed on the capabilities of these orders to enforce positive behavioural change (through the attendance of targeted sessions and workshops for example), more attention is drawn towards the preventive elements of the orders, imposed through the use of curfews. The idea was to deter young people from criminality and divert them away from the Criminal Justice System. However, a breach of the order *was* a criminal offence, with the possible sanction being a prison sentence of up to five years. The hopes of being a deterrent resulted in the ASBO being deemed by the then Home Secretary, Theresa May as ‘a conveyer belt to serious crime and prison’ (May, 2010). Once again drawing upon Cohen’s (1985) notion of net-widening, where an increasing amount of young people were being drawn into the Criminal Justice System.

Government Policy: Dealing with Gangs

After the shooting of Mark Duggan (a young black man from Tottenham) by police in 2011, what began as a peaceful demonstration in London rapidly turned into four days that was not predicted by anyone. Riots, looting, deaths and enormous amounts of damage, in addition to almost 4,000 arrests, took place in London, Liverpool and Birmingham and many other places. What followed was a culture of blame on poor parenting and failures in education (Treadwell et al., 2012), and an all-out war on gangs

by the then Prime Minister, David Cameron. The culture of blame was easier to adopt than to admit that the riots could be attributed to desires to exercise consumer rights (Treadwell et al., 2012), social exclusion, income inequality and deprivation (Densley, 2013). That most of the rioters and looters were not gang-involved demonstrated that it was wider social issues such as these that contributed towards the destruction. For example, at both national and local level, violent crime is closely attributed to income inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2008; Whitworth, 2013). What this shows is that the term 'gang' has been used, firstly as a way in which the government can appear to be doing something about crime and secondly as a scapegoat to deflect from society's wider problems.

Following the riots, David Cameron sought advice from Bill Bratton⁷, Los Angeles and New York's former police commissioner, who was invited to develop strict new measures on gangs (Densley, 2013). One of the recommendations imposed by Bratton was the creation of anti-gang units. Such was the perceived issue of gangs in New York and London, that London's already installed 'Trident Gang Crime Command' expanded from specifically tackling gun crime in 1998, to more broadly targeting gang crime in 2012. Merseyside followed London with the creation of the 'Matrix' gun and gang unit. In mimicking America's zero-tolerance stance to violent crime, Densley (2013) highlights the ability of these units and the police within them to use stop and search powers on young people - under Section 60 of the 1994 Public Order Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2018) - without reasonable suspicion. The aim was to deter weapon carrying, but in turn increased the risk of Child Criminal Exploitation. Rather than carrying the weapons themselves, gang members have become creative and encouraged young people to carry them instead. A gang member in Densley's (2013) ethnographic study⁸ notes:

⁷ Bill Bratton was associated with making New York safer whilst working as police commissioner under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. Known for his zero-tolerance practices, New York's most common crimes decreased by at least 80 per cent during the two terms that he held his post as police commissioner (Zimring, 2011).

⁸ Densley (2013: 7) conducted ethnographic research into gangs. His sample included 52 'self-nominated 'members' and 17 'associates' from 12 different London gangs, drawn from six of London's 32 boroughs. He conducted face-to-face interviews, observations and analysis of media reports.

They're making the sentencing harsher for carrying a gun. So rather than me take the risk, I'm the middleman ... I've got a 'young man'. That's the term for kids around here. I'll get them to hold that gun for me ... if he gets stopped by the police, that's five years for him. I don't care. Bye, Bye. I'll just get another young gun (Member 50, cited in Densley, 2013: 150).

Whilst there are profound issues with stop and search legislation, particularly the divide along racial lines⁹, Zimring (2011) notes that there is currently no evidence of a more effective deterrent or alternative to stop and search.

Society, Economy and Deprivation

There are a whole host of reasons as to why someone might become involved in gangs. Not only is it important to look at the individual themselves but to look at the environment and the social world around them. Gang culture is symptomatic of the poor socio-economic conditions in which many young people live. Representing an 'alternative society' (Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 35), the gang provides an identity (Deuchar, 2009; 2018) and a sense of belonging that the young person is otherwise unable to achieve. American social theorists Merton (1938) and Cohen (1955) argued that crime and delinquency are a product of an individual's – perceived or otherwise – inability to achieve legitimate goals, success and/or middle-class status in society (Broidy and Agnew, 1997). For them, this produces anomie, which Merton (1938) argued is when society sets universal goals which only a select number of people can achieve, leaving many people without the same opportunities. Thus, according to this perspective deviance and criminality are products of being unable to achieve material rewards. This idea stems from and is reinforced by the desire to live up to the American dream (Messner and Rosenfield, 1994, cited in Hopkins Burke, 2009: 125) 'where the emphasis is on seeking the most efficient way to achieve economic success'. Merton (1938) argued that gangs form because of the perception of having limited access to middle-class goals. Unable to meet this status and harbouring feelings of alienation and exclusion, young people are drawn to gangs because they provide a different, perhaps unconventional form of status that is deemed to them, more achievable

⁹ Black people are six times more likely than white people to be subject to stop and search powers (House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, 2007). Further, a report from the EHRC (2012) reported that the Metropolitan Police stop and searched 33 per 100 black people in 2012 (Densley, 2013).

(Vowell and May, 2000). The created alternative society 'parallels that of mainstream society' (Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 35). According to Braithwaite (1989: 287):

When respectable society rejects me, I have a status problem; I am in the market for a solution to this status problem. Criminal subcultures can supply that solution.

Street gangs therefore provide criminal opportunities, provide skills, contacts, and a means of accessing illegal local markets in drugs and stolen goods (Webster et al., 2006). As many young people perceive themselves to have limited access to gaining legitimate work, the gang becomes an attractive option of work and, in turn, provides them with the status and identity that they so badly desire.

Risk Factors of, and Motivations for, Gang Membership

Taking into consideration the many negative consequences of being in a gang, many scholars (Decker and Curry, 2000; Smithson et al., 2009; Hounstlea, 2011) have been curious to discover why a young person would aspire to join one. With estimates of children as young as 10 being involved in gangs in England and Wales (Centre for Social Justice, 2009), some researchers (Squires et al., 2008; Aldridge and Medina, 2007) have narrowed their focus and aimed to develop an understanding of the very factors that motivate young people to become members of a gang. Farrington (1996) identified five main domains of risk factors for general offending. These were family, neighbourhood, school, individual and peers. In examining these risk factors, Hill et al. (1999) conducted the Seattle Social Development Study which looked at risk factors for children aged between 10 and 12 years as predictors of gang membership between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Using the domains outlined by Farrington (1996), they found that predictors of gang membership were found in all of the measured domains (Hill et al., 1999: 308). Of all the risk factors, they found the most significant to be 'neighbourhood youth in trouble' and 'availability of marijuana', 'family breakdown (residing with one, or no, parent)', 'low achievement' and 'associating with other criminally involved young people'.

In a more local study, Smithson et al. (2009) conducted a mixed methods study into 'young people's involvement in gangs and guns in Liverpool' by way of interviews, focus groups, observations and analysis of North Liverpool's gun crime nominals

profile¹⁰. The researchers gathered data on gang involvement and gun crime in addition to personal accounts from 'gang members'. They too found the five domains of risk factors to be the most significant predictors of gang membership. These were 'family background/parenting', 'neighbourhood and community factors', 'academic and school factors', 'socio-economic deprivation' and 'individual factors' (Smithson et al., 2009: 34). What appears in most of the research to be the biggest predictor of gang membership is parenting (or lack thereof). Smithson et al. (2009: 35) noted 'poor parenting skills and an inability to exercise sufficient control and supervision' stand as some of the key factors driving young people's involvement in gangs. They highlighted the role that deprivation and poverty plays in motivating young people to join gangs. Indeed many of the practitioners in their research spoke of a second or third generation of unemployment, the consequences of which can lead to issues that exist decades after experiencing it. Research has suggested that these commonly include lower pay later in life, reduced expectations - and therefore ambitions - and issues with mental health (Strandh et al., 2014).

Smithson et al. (2009) were keen to stress that having some of the risk factors did not imply that an individual would become involved in gangs, nor did it serve to mean that gang members would possess any of the factors. Rather, they wanted their findings to facilitate policy makers in developing interventions that focused on addressing the risk factors in the hope that it would, in turn, reduce gang involvement. Perhaps one of the most useful features of using risk factors in predicting gang involvement is that it 'provides academics, policy makers and practitioners with a ready set of targets for intervention' (Case and Haines, 2009: 1). If such factors - considered to be so influential to adolescent offending - can be changed, then the offending can be prevented. For some (Hill et al., 1999; Esbensen et al., 2009; Smithson et al., 2009; Harris et al., 2011), risk factor research can be seen as one of the most significant breakthroughs in understanding and explaining crime and delinquency and has been

¹⁰ Following its inception in 2005, Matrix, Merseyside's Gun and Gang Unit, used a new initiative on gang members, aimed at cracking down on gun crime. Called 'gun nominals' 'police targeted armed gang members by handing out 'gun nominal' orders' (Johnson, 2013). Nominals were ranked either gold, silver or bronze, with gold status awarded to the most dangerous gang member in Merseyside. These gang members would receive a letter from Merseyside Police - informing them of their status - and daily visits from police officers to check on their safety and dissuade them from being involved in criminality.

used widely to predict the likelihood of gang affiliation. Such is the popularity of risk factor research in explaining gang membership and youth offending that it has been widely used in youth justice policy and practice in many western countries, particularly England and Wales. It is, of course, not without its limitations. Muncie (2009) argues that risk factor research has been blamed for encouraging governmentality – a political ideology that encourages the governance, control and management of, in this instance, offenders, instead of prioritizing other factors such as ‘welfare, justice or rehabilitation’ (Case and Haines, 2009: 5). This mindset has allowed offending to be seen as an issue relating to individual pathology – encouraging a culture of blame - rather than a symptom of social policy (Stephenson et al., 2007). As a result, many institutions (e.g. Youth Offending Teams) tasked with reducing offending have become target driven and over-controlled, having to prove how they are addressing risk, whilst limiting practitioners’ ability to use their discretion and expertise.

In exploring some of the motivations, or in their words ‘immediate causes’, for young people joining gangs, Smithson et al. (2009) asked participants to identify the main motivations for becoming involved in gangs and found five key motivations, ranked in order of how frequently they were mentioned in interviews:

- ‘Respect/Identity/Belonging;
- Income/Drugs;
- Protection/Safety;
- Defending territory, and;
- Boredom/Excitement’ (2009: 41).

In interviewing both practitioners and gang members it is interesting to note that, where gang members most frequently cited income/drugs to be the motivation for joining gangs, practitioners agreed among themselves that it was respect/identity/belonging. Practitioners felt that it was ‘a sense of belonging for them to be involved with a group of people, they feel protected, and they feel loved. They feel their own self-worth is something rather than nothing’ (police officer, cited in Smithson et al., 2009: 41). These findings are mirrored in Robinson’s (2016) study in Liverpool where sense of belonging was quoted by practitioners as the primary reason for young people joining gangs.

It could thus be suggested that motivation for income/drugs is secondary to the sense of belonging that comes with gang-involvement, however drug dealing and gang

membership often go hand-in-hand (Klein et al., 1991; Spergel, 1995) and drug dealing becomes a form of income. Conversely, practitioners working with gang-involved young people could be wrong to predict that it is respect, identity and sense of belonging which drives young people. It may simply be a way for young people lacking legitimate opportunities to make money. Indeed, it is the voices of these young people that are the most significant in obtaining a realistic understanding of gangs because it is these young people that live in these worlds.

In a government paper entitled ‘Understanding the psychology of gang violence’ and based upon previous gang research, Harris et al. (2011) concluded that there were a number of other risk factors linked with gang affiliation – i.e. being male (Marshall et al., 2005), pro-criminal tendencies or absent role models (Aldridge and Medina, 2007), having family members that are linked to a gang (Young et al., 2007) etc. But research suggests that many of these were synonymous with predictors of offending and violence in general. Kallus (2004), however, argued that once gang-involved, there is a greater chance that the young person will engage in criminal and violent behaviour. Decker and Van Winkle (1996) interpreted these variables as push factors, pushing young people into gangs. Thus, the researchers deemed it necessary to examine the pull factors, or psychological motivations, that contribute to gang involvement. Supporting Smithson et al.’s (2009) findings, Harris et al. (2011: i) suggested that these included:

- ‘the need and/or desire to make money;
- seeking protection against victimisation;
- gaining a sense of belonging or connectedness with others; and
- a means of achieving status and respect’.

It could be suggested that the majority of the motivations for, or drivers of, gang membership mirror Maslow’s (1943) hierarchy of needs. Indeed, certain academics (Kallus, 2004; Sharkey et al., 2011; Sonterblum, 2016) have made this connection which, in its most basic form, could be applied as a potential theoretical framework in understanding why young people join gangs and the perceived benefits of such. Maslow (1943) noted that humans have a hierarchy of basic needs that, once met, have positive outcomes. Thus, the desire to meet these basic needs drives nearly all motivation (Sonterblum, 2016). He asserted that individuals will go to any means necessary to fulfil these needs, regardless of the consequences. The hierarchy is as

follows: physiological (food, shelter, warmth), safety (security and protection), love/belonging (affection, family, acceptance), esteem (achievement, respect, recognition) and self-actualisation (fulfilment). Though money is not a physiological need, it does however provide food, shelter and warmth. It could be suggested then, that the financial motivation for gang membership – for instance through drug dealing - fits in with the physiological needs in Maslow's (1943) hierarchy. In interviews with gang members, Kallus (2004) found that gangs provide a source of love, protection, discipline and excitement. Also interviewing gang members, Omizo et al. (1997) analysed interviews and found that sense of belonging, self-esteem and protection were the most common reasons for joining a gang.

Safety/protection

For many young people, gang membership is fundamentally pragmatic, a way of obtaining some degree of protection from their own and rival gangs (Pitts, 2007). Gang members often report that being involved in - or associated with - a gang provides a seemingly necessary level of protection that is unachievable elsewhere (Aldridge et al., 2009). Indeed, in a small Merseyside study, Robinson (2016) interviewed practitioners working with gang members and found a recurring theme of fear continued to appear when interviewees were asked why young people join gangs:

They'll say 'it's safer to be with them than to be on my own when they're around' ... (rival gang) ... 'they know I'm with that gang so if they see me on my own they're gonna get me and if I'm with others I'm a bit more protected' ('Joey', cited in Robinson, 2016: 41).

With over 50 per cent of young offenders having been victims of crime (Roe and Ashe, 2008), fear of victimisation could be attributed to the level of gang activity in certain areas, in that young people residing in those areas have limited choice but to come into contact with gangs because of where their home is situated. Indeed, in areas with high levels of gang activity, young people may be targeted by gangs upon leaving their house. The majority of street gangs comprise of members that claim territory over their own roads and postcodes (Pitts, 2008). For example, in Bootle, Merseyside the 'Fernhill gang' mostly reside in or around the Fernhill Road area. Opposite this is Linacre Road, home to the 'Linacre Young Guns' (LYG). For a young person living on either one of these estates, avoiding persistent gangs with a heavy street presence would require a level of tenacity and determination that they may not have developed.

Young people may therefore perceive joining a gang, to reduce their level of victimisation, as a safe option.

Upon entering a gang, there is an expectation of criminal activity (Wood and Alleyne, 2013) and violence (Pitts 2008). To prove their worth, credibility and trustworthiness, young aspiring gang members will be forced, coerced, bribed or otherwise to partake in criminal behaviour. In addition, gang members are subject to a level of victimisation by rival gangs and members of their own gang, which is most commonly passed off as 'banter'. Many gang members are thus considerably more likely to be victimized than non-gang members (Thornberry, 1993 as cited in Young et al., 2013). Reluctance to commit criminality in addition to an increased level of victimisation can make young people want to leave the gang, something which is deemed highly unfavourable amongst typical gang circles. 'Resistance to or disaffiliation from the gang is often regarded as an indication of disrespect or disloyalty' (Pitts, 2007: 55). Those wanting to exit the gang firstly lose its protection and secondly gain a level of vulnerability to the rival gangs that they had initially been protected from. Decker and Van Winkle's (1996) study on gangs in St. Louis in the US, found that the level of violence the gang members had endured, served to be the primary reason for wanting to leave the gang. Further, they feared for the violence and threats of violence that their friends and families had undergone (Young et al., 2013). It is interesting to note that the very factors that are supposed to unite and increase solidarity in the gang (violence and the [perceived] threat of violence) are the very things that 'destroy allegiances to the group' (Young et al., 2013: 29). Paradoxically, the very cause for wanting to join the gang (fear of victimisation), becomes the precise reason for wanting to leave.

In addition to individual experiences of violence and victimisation, Taylor (1990) and Pitts (2007) highlighted the dangers that plague the families and friends of gang members. Families are often subject to threats and actual violence (Thornberry, 1993, as cited in Young et al., 2013). For example, it is not uncommon for gang members to target the homes of rival gang members as a result of petty disputes and shoot at the windows or petrol-bomb the house (Fitzsimmons, 2016). When victimisation plays a key role in gang life, fear is believed to be one of the most significant motivations for continued gang membership. Faced with wanting to exit the gang, putting it into

practice can have ominous consequences for both the gang member and their families.

This is because:

Gang members who want to leave the gang not only lose its protection, becoming vulnerable to other gangs with which they have previously had a beef; they may also fall foul of their former associates because of the disrespect or disloyalty implied by their departure (Pitts, 2007: 59).

A young person that has distanced themselves from their gang, can be labelled a 'rat', 'grass' or 'snitch'. They are scared of both leaving the gang and scared of remaining in the gang and are consequently highly likely to spend most of their young adult lives living in fear, whether they commit to staying in the gang or not. Offering a new discussion to the fear and safety element of gang membership, Young et al. (2013) argued that rather than being fearful of victimisation or punishment from their former (or rival) gang, a greater concern is fear of life outside, or after the gang, particularly where many gang members have found gang membership to be a lucrative business. They fear not being able to provide for their families and being unsuccessful in a society where they have previously had poor experiences (Metcalf et al., 2001 as cited in Young et al., 2013), struggled to find employment, and achieve the highly desired middle-class goals through legitimate means.

Sense of belonging

Individuals have an innate need for love and belonging (Maslow, 1943). According to Muncie (2014: 33) 'the gang provides an alternative refuge and source of belonging and support in otherwise socially disorganised communities'. Problems within the family environment are thus key predictors of gang culture as gangs are thought to 'provide the belonging, loyalty and 'unconditional love' that many young people are not finding at home' (Centre for Social Justice, 2009: 94). Fatherlessness, poor parental supervision, lack of a male role model and criminally entrenched families make up but some of the significant influencers which drive young people towards gang culture (Young et al., 2013). Sharkey et al. (2011: 49) posit that gang life may provide the familiarity of family structure and 'offer clear expectations and reinforcement regarding how to achieve success, respectively'. Wells and Rankin (1991) conducted a meta-analysis of 50 research studies that examined the relationship between familial breakdowns and delinquency. Their results showed that children from single-parent households were 10-15 per cent more likely than children from two-parent families

(containing both parents) to commit acts of delinquency and crime. Williams (2004) has criticised this study as it was only for minor offences rather than the more serious crimes that are often associated with gang affiliation. Disputing the relationship between family and delinquency, Hoffmann (2006) argued that it was neighbourhood characteristics that influenced pathways into criminality. Indeed, he suggested that, regardless of whether a child was being reared in a one or two parent family, it was areas with high levels of unemployment, disorganization and socioeconomic disadvantage that had the most effect on delinquency. Shaw and McKay (1942) first gave credence to the theory of social disorganization, stemming from research in Chicago where high rates of criminality were found in the most socially disorganised areas. Further findings from research on Chicago gangs supports Hoffmann's (2006) claims where, according to Short and Strodtbeck (1965), a large number of gang members were reared in two-parent families.

The literature appears to suggest that it might not be family structure that influences gang membership per se, but the relationships between parents and children in particular (Young et al., 2013). Hirschi (1969) uses his theory of social control to explain why positive relationships with family members discourage criminality and delinquency. When a strong bond is created between parent and child, the child adopts the values and beliefs of the family and the wider society and is discouraged from engaging in behaviour which may go against this. On the contrary, when a child is lacking these bonds, they are more likely to engage in criminal behaviour. Finkelhor et al. (2009) highlight a number of factors which impose on the ability to form bonds and positive relationships between parent and child. These include substance misuse, domestic abuse, sexual abuse, lack of boundaries or too harsh parenting style and parents being absent from the home for long durations (Young et al., 2013). Of course, it is easy to blame parents and families for delinquent children and young people; and the state has a long history of doing so (see for example Centre for Social Justice, 2009). Little attention is given to addressing the structural issues which encroach upon parent's abilities to give their children the time and attention that they need (such as working long hours to provide for the family financially).

Looked after children and those in care are also over-represented in the criminal justice system. Of the 31,820 looked after children in England and Wales between the ages of

10 and 17, five per cent (1,650) had either been convicted or given a final warning or reprimand between 2014 and 2015 (Home Office, 2016). This compares to one per cent of all children (Home Office, 2016). The research appears to support the link between parental factors (that is, lack of attachment with parents), offending and gang involvement; however, it must be interpreted with care as looked after children are much more likely to come into contact with the Criminal Justice System for a number of reasons. Parents might be less inclined to contact law enforcement agencies should their child commit an offence for fear of reprisals. The same principle should stand for care homes, where the registered person in the care home should have an agreement in place with the local police to reduce unnecessary police involvement. Indeed, whilst it states in the guide to children's homes regulations (Department for Education, 2015: 47) that 'children should not be charged with offences resulting from behaviour within a children's home that would not similarly lead to police involvement if it occurred in a family home', there is likely to be less consensus among staff (than parents) on how much they are willing to deal with, thus they may naturally be more willing to involve the police.

The second biggest influence on the lives of young people is the company in which they keep, their peer group. Indeed, Walker-Barnes and Mason (2001) found that female gang members rated their friends as having the most influence on their gang involvement, stating that the gang offered them opportunities to fit in. Smithson et al. (2009: 40) supported this finding, stating that gangs provide a 'sense of belonging ... group identity ... and feelings of respect and pride'. They highlighted that it was this motivation that was persistently being cited by practitioners as reason for joining a gang. Similarly, Robinson (2016) found that sense of belonging served as the biggest motivator in wanting to join a gang. This was closely followed by money, identity and status.

Masculinity, identity and status

Once young people have established themselves in the gang, experiencing [perceived] love and belonging they begin to form an identity within that gang which gives them a certain amount of self-esteem. In trying to understand the link between young men, gang membership and the perceived benefits, masculinity theories must be considered. That is not to say that exploring females' involvement in gangs is any less important,

as it will be explored in detail later in this review; however the vast majority of academic literature on masculinities proposes that men are disproportionately violent in comparison to females. This is even more the case in gangs, at least in part, because participating in violent behaviour is one socially acknowledged way of ‘being a man’ (Harris, 2000: 782). Masculinity theories have long since been associated with discourse where gangs are concerned (Deuchar, 2009; 2018). Particularly, notions of hegemonic masculinity which, according to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005: 832), is different from other masculinities and ‘understood as the pattern of practice that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue’. They suggested that hegemonic masculinity was by no means the norm as, in reality, only a handful of men might ‘enact it’; however, it was ‘certainly normative’ in that it was the most ‘honored way of being a man’.

In his most recent work on gangs and spirituality, Deuchar (2018) argues that masculinity is a socially constructed phenomenon and that occurrences of violence and criminality are largely dependent upon how masculinity is enacted in any given society. From Scotland, to Denmark and Los Angeles, the men involved in his research experienced numerous forms of disadvantage which impeded upon their ability to demonstrate hegemonic masculinity. Deuchar (2018: 248) contends that this disadvantage arose through ‘economic deprivation combined with [a] lack of social support and attachment ... early exposure to traumatic events, peer pressure and ... a sense of marginalised subordinated masculinity’. Participation in gang membership and gang-related offending was how the men ‘reassert[ed] a sense of masculinity’ (ibid). Firmin et al. (2007) have highlighted the implications that the need for ‘doing’ masculinity can have for young men involved in gangs, stating that:

It produces men who will retaliate at the slightest provocation; ... ‘Feminine’ values such as forgiveness, care and compassion are rejected in favour of masculine ideals of strength and power; ... trivial arguments are amplified and believed to be ‘wars’ or ‘battles’. Neighbourhoods and estates become re-branded as ‘turfs’ or ‘territories’, and ... it creates unstable men who consider themselves invincible and untouchable (2007: 28).

Further;

The use of guns and weapons become related to imagery and machismo. They become a symbolically powerful method of demonstration, far more effective

in their message than fist-fighting ... issues of respect, and importantly disrespect, may lead individuals and groups to have 'beef' with others (2007: 28).

One way in which many young people further their perceptions of having masculine status in gangs is through the possession and use of weapons (Deuchar, 2018). Hales et al. (2006: 55) note the 'symbolic value' of guns and the feeling of 'overwhelming power' that they bestow upon their users. They conducted interviews with 80 males in England and Wales convicted of firearms offences between the ages of 18 and 30. They found that feelings of empowerment are often accompanied with feelings of having control:

Power man, powerful, that is the addictive side of it. It is like, you know, you have the control, the power you have got when you have got that [gun] in your hand... ('London', Hales et al., 2006: 96).

With power and control contributing to qualities that make up masculine status (Canham, 2009), possession and use of guns may provide a number of young men with the traits that they deem necessary for being a 'real man' (Canham, 2009). If they feel that other aspects of their life are not in their control (unemployment, income and opportunity, etc.), then they can compensate for that by exerting power and control over other people with the use of firearms.

Masculinity theories could, to some extent, explain why young men might wish to become gang-involved. Where traditionally men are encouraged to be successful and high earners - making up a large majority of top executives, staff in the military, intelligence agencies, prison and court systems (Connell, 2000) - young men without work, embracing ideals of 'manhood', may struggle with their perceived failure. This resonates with ideas of protest masculinity (Connell, 1987) which Deuchar (2009: 7) states arises from men viewing themselves as 'subordinate in terms of class position' and having to portray aggression in order to counteract their lack of success in such professional and managerial positions.

Many cities - affected by deindustrialisation - have gone from being able to offer large amounts of unskilled work to working class men, to large amounts of working-class

men having to compete for skilled work (Ellis, 2015). Although steadily declining from the previous year, the unemployment rate for males under the age of 25 years in England and Wales, stood at 13.6 per cent (305,000 men) between the August and October of 2017 (House of Commons, 2017). Where men feel they are not reaping ‘the benefits of social dominance and political economic control’ (Owen, 2012:975) and where they feel pressured by the expectations to be successful, they may have a ‘crisis of masculinity’. Those features that define masculinity such as ‘risk-taking, aggression, responsibility [and] irresponsibility’ (ibid: 975), thus become appropriated through violence and gang membership as a means of ‘doing masculinity’.

Trauma and Mental Health

Across the US, there is a wealth of research emerging (Abram et al., 2004; Bennet et al., 2014; Kerig et al., 2016) which draws attention to the link between trauma exposure and post-traumatic stress symptoms amongst young people in the justice system. Indeed, American research concludes that rates of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in young offenders are far in excess of those found in the wider community (Wood et al., 2002). The same can be seen in prevalence rates for children in the UK justice system with mental health problems, where these rates significantly increase when compared to the general population (Newman et al. 2012). Indeed, children in the UK Criminal Justice System are three times more likely to suffer from mental health problems (The Mental Health Foundation, 2002) - a finding which has remained constant across many other countries including Scotland (Dyer and Gregory, 2014), Australia (Kinner et al., 2013) and the US (Abram et al., 2007). The Mental Health Foundation (2002) reported that for both community-based populations and youth offending populations, the most common disorders are conduct disorders, emotional disorders, attentional disorders and substance misuse.

In an analysis of the IVY (Interventions for Vulnerable Youth) Project in Scotland¹¹, Dyer and Gregory (2014: 4) found that young people accessing the service were likely

¹¹ The IVY Project is funded by the Scottish Government, developed to help young people in Scotland that do not meet the criteria for CAMHS (Child and Adolescence Mental Health Service), however do show significant psychological difficulties that are necessary to understanding their risk of violence

to have been exposed to domestic violence and experience difficulties in attachment 'secondary to interpersonal trauma in the form of childhood maltreatment'. Trauma can be induced through the experience of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, in addition to physical and emotional neglect, and can have damaging effects on later life. There are a number of environmental stressors that may act as perpetuating factors, such as going through the care system and the Criminal Justice System. Other factors include family breakdown, poor coping skills, rejection and low self-esteem (Dyer and Gregory, 2014).

The link between early childhood trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder and illicit drug use (and dependence) among adolescents is well established amongst American scholars (Dube et al., 2003; Khoury et al., 2010). For example, Kilpatrick et al. (2003) found that teenagers who had been exposed to physical and/or sexual abuse were three times more likely to report that they had previous or current issues with substance abuse than teenagers without a history of trauma. Indeed, in a study of 297 adolescents aged between 15 and 19 years undergoing treatment for substance abuse, Deykin and Buka (1997) reported that 70 per cent of patients had been exposed to some form of childhood trauma. Khoury et al. (2010: 1078) indicate that young people who have experienced childhood trauma may use drugs as an attempt to self-medicate, or to 'dampen mood symptoms associated with a dysregulated biological stress response'. They also suggest that whilst drug use may have many short-term benefits for the user, the long-term effects may actually contribute to the risk of PTSD and depressive symptoms, due to disrupting biological stress responses.

Of significant importance to the relationship between mental health, PTSD and illicit drug use, is gang-involvement. Whilst it has already been noted here that gang membership does not always equate to offending, the risk of offending is much higher for young people involved in gangs (Wood, 2015), so too, is their risk of having mental health problems and PTSD (Kerig et al., 2016). Almost all - UK and US - research on gang-involvement and gang violence suggests that gang-involved young people experience disproportionate levels of violence when compared with non-gang-involved young people (Pitts, 2008; Katz et al., 2011; Young et al., 2013; Pyrooz et al., 2014). Yet, literature on mental health and gang involvement is sparse (Hughes et al., 2015). More recently, Kerig et al. (2013) have begun to examine the role of trauma

in gang-membership. They highlighted Bocanegra and Stolback's (2012 cited in Kerig et al., 2016) research, stating that not only did gang members report high volumes of exposure to violence, but these also met the criteria for being identified as traumatic events. In a US study looking at rates of psychiatric disorders amongst gang-affiliated youth in prison, Harris et al. (2013) found that gang membership was associated with a greater likeliness (than non-gang membership) of having PTSD (1.77), substance abuse (2.58), Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) (1.24) and Conduct Disorder (CD) (4.05).

In their paper 'Harm as Harm' Kerig et al. (2016: 636) begin to look at the link between gang membership and trauma from a different angle than perhaps other gang researchers have. They argue that the 'associations between delinquency and trauma are reciprocal' in that, whilst exposure to 'trauma increases the risk of delinquency, involvement in antisocial behaviour ... [it] also increases the risk for traumatisation through exposing youth to violence'. Where childhood trauma has traditionally been considered a consequence of victimisation, perpetration of violence against others may also induce trauma. In writing about soldiers in combat, McNair (2002) coined the term Perpetration-Induced Traumatic Stress (PITS) and suggested that perpetrators of violence in a war-time setting may experience post-traumatic stress symptoms. Such was the gravity of soldiers experiencing these symptoms that she suggested it possible that the act of killing was more traumatic than being a victim of trauma. To this point, the relevance of Perpetration Trauma (referred to as 'PT' by Kerig et al., 2016) to gang membership has not been developed in terms of gangs. Kerig et al. (2016: 636) compare gang-involved young people to child soldiers 'in international contexts', stating that they are both forced, or otherwise (discussed later in this chapter), to perpetrate violence against others during initiations, 'turf wars, or ongoing gang-related activities'.

This debate opens up new avenues of thought and casts a negative shadow on the future mental states of gang-involved young people that experience, observe and perpetrate violence. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2016), the most common offence committed by young people between March 2015 and March 2016 was violence against the person. Their report further states that an estimated 418,000 violent crimes were experienced by young people aged between 10-15 years. Of these,

76 per cent resulted in injury to the person, therefore signifying a clear perpetrator and victim, both of which are vulnerable to developing a range of mental health problems. Whilst there is no doubt a difficulty for many in accepting gang members as victims in need of therapeutic treatment, this area is one which requires a significant amount of further inquiry by academics and health professionals.

Girls and Gangs

Whilst gang research has certainly helped in the production of knowledge, it can be criticised for identifying gangs as a primarily male phenomenon (Miller, 2001). There is a growing body of knowledge to prove that this is not the case. Indeed, in one of very few female gang studies, Young (2009) explores female involvement in gangs and their violent behaviour. Similarly, Batchelor (2009) highlights the limitations of the qualitative data on girls in gangs, highlighting that much of the research has been conducted by male adult researchers, often using male gang members and male adult practitioners as a source of information about females. She finds that gang life for girls can be both rewarding and devastating - as will be discussed later in this section.

Although they are not the dominant form of gangs, American research (Chesney-Lind and Eliason, 2006) identifies that there are all-girl gangs and in 2007, the Metropolitan Police Authority reported that there were three girl gangs in London. Girl gang research is much less well developed in the UK and discourses often refer to girls in relation to – or accompanying - male gangs, rather than formulating gangs themselves. Batchelor (2011: 110) notes that UK accounts of girls in gangs have been separated into two categories: girlfriends of gang members, or, deviating from traditional norms of femininity, or ‘appropriate femininity’ (Berlant, 2008), those that regard themselves as ‘one of the lads’. Other studies have briefly touched upon girls in gangs (Aldridge and Medina, 2007; Pitts, 2008); however, the views and experiences of girls and young women have seldom appeared in academic inquiry in any great detail and so understandings of their roles in gangs, their reasons for joining and the reality of gang life for them, remains theoretically weak (Batchelor, 2011). Indeed, the lack of studies on girls in gangs also makes it difficult to quantify their involvement. In their 2014 report entitled ‘Girls in Gangs’, The Centre for Social Justice (2014: 8) claimed that ‘it has been estimated that 12,500 girls and young women are closely involved in gangs’;

however, the authors admit that these figures are ‘crude at best’. Using case studies and findings from Pearce and Pitts (2011), the report provides an insight into gang life for girls, their roles, and some of the problems that they face. They found that girls take on five different roles in gangs:

- ‘gangster girls, who adopt male personas within gangs’,
- ‘female family members of gang members’, ‘wifeys/girlfriends: young women in a recognised relationship with gang-involved males’,
- ‘baby-mothers: young women who have children with gang-involved males’ and
- ‘links: young women who are associated through ‘casual’ sex with one or more members of the gang’ (Centre for Social Justice, 2014: 5).

Again, these roles predominantly refer to girls relative to male gangs. In addition to Batchelor’s (2011) claims that there are two categories of girls in relation to gangs, Pitts (2007: 40) notes that there are ‘other girls’ who do not perform the same sexual role as the girlfriends of gang members who regard themselves as soldiers and concentrate on violent street crime. Fishman (1995: 87) notes that gangs help young women in ‘guarding themselves’ by ‘providing opportunities to learn traditional male skills’ like ‘fighting and taking care of themselves on the streets’. However, like males, young women may join gangs for the (perceived) protective aspect in which they hope to receive from male gang members. Beckett et al. (2013) report protection as a key motivation for many young women joining gangs and state that some women align themselves with gang-involved males as a way of achieving the protection. They note, however, that the associations often lead to more violence and are thus counterproductive. Moore (1991) notes a nexus of familial problems that are attributable to increased gang membership for women. These include experiencing:

- abuse, violence and neglect;
- alcohol or drug addictions either individually or in the family;
- family members in prison;
- experiencing the death of a loved one at a young age;
- low self-esteem;
- lack of positive role models, and;
- having a close family member in a gang.

It can be concluded that young women, like young men, involved with gangs are most likely to come from troubled families and backgrounds (Deuchar et al., 2018). Huff

(1993: 6) asserted - which was later reaffirmed by the Centre for Social Justice (2009) - that 'the gang can serve as a surrogate extended family for adolescents who do not see their own families as meeting their needs for belonging, nurturing and acceptance' (See also Deuchar, 2009; Deuchar et al., 2018). Women may be attracted to the same enticing forces as males when it comes to motivating factors of gang membership in that support, solidarity and friendship heavily compensate for the lack of stable family relationships usually found at home.

In a recent study analysing female gang membership in Los Angeles and Glasgow, Deuchar et al. (2018: 23) provide some interesting findings regarding points of entry into gangs and consequent position within the gang hierarchy. The researchers proposed 'two key models of entry'. The first was linked to 'drugs and debt' in which the females entered via some form of 'deficit'. Women here were identified as having little to offer, thus starting at a lower position in the hierarchy and having to work harder to prove themselves to the rest of the gang. The second model related to those women who brought numerous forms of capital to the gang. Termed the 'credit-model', Deuchar et al. (2018: 23) contend that these women offered 'skills, expertise and agency' and were well-connected, therefore providing qualities that the gang can benefit from. These findings provide a good grounding into analysing gender roles in gangs and can also be used to predict gang life for girls and their hierarchical position within the gang.

Whilst girls can turn to gangs for the compensatory benefits of a lacking supportive familial environment, being part of a gang produces a myriad of issues. It undermines their educational attainment, impacts on their friends, families and communities, increases the risk of sexual – and other forms of – exploitation, and often leads to participation in criminal activity (The Centre for Social Justice, 2014). According to Pitts (2007: 40):

The relationship [between gang members and their girlfriends] tends to be abusive; one of dominance and submission. Some senior gang members pass their girlfriends around to lower ranking members and sometimes to the whole group at the same time. Unreported rape by gang members, as a form of reprisal or just because they can, is said to occur fairly frequently and reports to the police are rare.

In a study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people, Beckett et al. (2013) conducted interviews with young gang-involved males and females. They noted that females who associated with gangs were often described in derogatory terms by male gang members. These included: 'sket', 'bitch', 'junge', 'ting', 'skank' and 'ho' etc. One young male participant in their research claimed that the girls 'just get passed around the guys' and 'that is mainly their role' (Participant Q, cited in Beckett et al., 2013: 19). Gang-involved young women are subject to many different forms of harm and exploitation as a result of being in the gang environment. Pitts (2007: 40) states that for gangs in the London borough of Waltham Forest, girls 'play an ancillary role often carrying or hiding guns or drugs for the boys'. These girls are said to be 'attracted to the 'glamour' and 'celebrity' of gang members'. According to Pitts (2007) these girls also commonly find themselves in exploitative situations. Harm experienced by gang-involved women, according to Beckett et al. (2013: 19), comes in many forms, however the researchers discuss three of the most common to be: 'domestic violence, non-relational physical violence and exposure to other illegal activity'. In one interview, Beckett et al. (2013) provide strong evidence of a female being exploited into illegal activity:

I got passed a knife and weed as well cos I couldn't get searched. And they couldn't search me cos I was 13 when it happened ... they would need a female police officer [to strip search me] so I got away with it (Participant C2, cited in Beckett et al., 2013: 21).

As will be discussed in the remainder of this chapter, gang members often exploit other people to avoid the risk of being caught themselves. Perceived innocence is a key feature of the exploitation, where those that look more innocent (and are thus less likely to be stopped by police) are taken advantage of the most. Age is a significant contributor to appearing innocent, so too is gender, as shown in the above quote.

Exploitation stands as one of the most concerning issues in relation to girls' involvement in gangs. Like the criminal exploitation of male gang members, females are manipulated, coerced and forced into doing things they otherwise would not have done (Pitts, 2007). For some this is because they aspire to be in the gang, some because they are under the pretence that they are in a loving relationship, and some because they are being controlled by a gang. These experiences seldom occur as a one off and

often formulate gang life for girls (The Centre for Social Justice, 2014). Child Criminal Exploitation in relation to gang membership is considered next.

Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines

Though an official definition for Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) is yet to be established, Knowsley Metropolitan Borough in Merseyside and the Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board (2017) define it as activity which:

Involves exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people (or a third person or persons) receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affection, gifts, money) as a result of them completing a task on behalf of another individual or group of individuals; this is often of a criminal nature. Child Criminal Exploitation often occurs without the child's immediate recognition, with the child believing that they are in control of the situation. In all cases, those exploiting the child/young person have power over them by virtue of their age, gender, intellect, physical strength and/or economic or other resources. Violence, coercion and intimidation are common, involvement in exploitative relationships being characterised in the main by the child or young person's limited availability of choice resulting from their social/economic and/or emotional vulnerability (2017: 1).

Their definition incorporates all possible features of Child Criminal Exploitation. Of most importance, is the receiving of drugs, alcohol and cigarettes (illicit goods that those under the age of 18 would not normally be able to purchase), completing tasks of a criminal nature, gang members using violence, coercion (Hales and Hobbs, 2010), extortion, force (Windle and Briggs, 2015b) and intimidation to control their victims, and the taking advantage of victims' economic and emotional vulnerability. Merseyside Police's (2017) much narrower definition, however, states that:

The criminal exploitation of a child refers to the use of a child in any way for economic gain. Children are often used to help sell and distribute illegal drugs and firearms. They can also become involved in violence through gang associations (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

A key theme throughout the literature (Hallsworth and Silverstone, 2009; Hales and Hobbs, 2010; Windle and Briggs, 2015b) – and one of the main causes of Child Criminal Exploitation - is the relationship between gangs and illegal drug markets, attributed in most part, to the generous profits that can be made.

In their 2017 report '*Criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults*', the Home Office stated that the criminal exploitation of children and vulnerable adults is a feature of County Lines activity. County Lines – also commonly referred to by those involved as 'Going Country' or 'OT' (out there) (Daly, 2017) - is a concept that has been developed and reinforced by the Police to explain a process whereby:

A [criminal] group ... establishes a network between an urban hub and county location, into which drugs ... are supplied. A branded mobile phone line is established ... to which orders are placed by introduced customers ... the group exploits young or vulnerable persons ... [who] regularly travel between the urban hub and the county market, to replenish stock and deliver cash ... the group is inclined to use intimidation, violence and weapons including knives, corrosives and firearms (National Crime Agency, 2017: 2).

With a prominent aspect of County Lines activity relating to the harnessing of vulnerable populations (usually those under the age of 18) to undertake the supply operation at street level (Coomber and Moyle, 2017), the Home Office (2017) has also adopted it to cover Child Criminal Exploitation. It is argued here, however, that the two are separate entities with many overarching features and that County Lines drug dealing is synonymous, but not identical, to Child Criminal Exploitation - standing as just one way in which gangs can increase their profits whilst minimising their risk of interaction with the law. Children can be criminally exploited without participating in County Lines drug dealing and vice versa. Not every criminally exploited child has participated in County Lines drug dealing, i.e. travelled across county borders to distribute drugs. Indeed, Windle and Briggs (2015a: 14) note that many of the drug dealers in their research sold drugs in open or closed markets within their own borough. Whilst they were 'operating as independent drug dealers ... [gang] membership ... provides ... a protective function against robbery'. Some of these young people were working for drug dealers higher up and some of the relationships were suggested to be 'based upon extortion and force' (Windle and Briggs, 2015a: 17). Similarly, not every child that has taken part in County Lines drug dealing has been criminally exploited. Of course, there exist children and young people that partake in illegal activity such as drug dealing without the use of force or coercion and there are exploited children that are at risk of becoming perpetrators (Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board, 2017).

The current narrative surrounding those involved in County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation – and reinforced by the media (BBC, 2017; The Independent (Deardon, 2017)) – portrays them as either helpless victims or thugs in possession of weapons and drugs, therefore signalling the need for further exploration into the people involved in this world.

According to the Home Office (2017: 2) Child Criminal Exploitation is where ‘gangs use children and vulnerable people to move drugs and money’. Again this refers predominantly to County Lines activity. County Lines occurs when the drug markets in urban cities reach saturation point, usually affecting cities like London, Birmingham, Manchester and Liverpool, that have traditionally acted as national drug supply ‘hubs’ (National Crime Agency, 2016). When the ‘growing number of dealers is not accompanied by a growing number of users’ (Ruggiero, 2010: 51) gang members are faced with a problem and so through County Lines, travel to ‘provincial towns and cities within a wide radius of their home turf’, not only to deliver their product, but also ‘to retail it there themselves’ (Coomber and Moyle, 2017: 1323), the motivation being to find new customers to sell to and maximise their profits.

The use of mobile phone lines is incumbent to the success of this drug supply process and it is this which connects the new customers to the city dealers operating in their area (Coomber and Moyle, 2017). The use of children in these operations offers distance and anonymity for dealers who can manage the supply from their local areas without having to go to the markets themselves (National Crime Agency, 2015). Windle and Briggs (2015b) highlight that as well as the use of children, more specifically children in care, vulnerable women and adults living in poverty are all used as ‘runners’ and ‘commuters’, with vulnerable drug users most commonly being used for ‘cuckooing’, a police term ‘signifying an unwelcome or unwanted intruder after the nest invading tendencies of cuckoo birds’ (Spicer et al., 2019: 2) and used to describe the taking over of someone’s (usually a vulnerable drug user) accommodation by a County Lines drug dealer. In a recent report, the National Crime Agency (2017) noted that three-quarters of police forces in England and Wales had an issue with the exploitation of vulnerable people by gangs and organised groups. Of these forces, 12 per cent reported having issues with gangs exploiting people with physical disabilities, 61 per cent of forces reported gangs exploiting vulnerable drug users, 37 per cent of

forces reported gangs exploiting people with mental health issues, and 65 per cent of forces reported gangs exploiting children and young people (National Crime Agency, 2017). Behind London, Merseyside is the second highest exporting hub of County Lines (National Crime Agency, 2017).

Whilst the National Crime Agency (2017) acknowledges their lack of understanding surrounding Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines, they draw attention to a number of methods used by gangs to recruit children and vulnerable adults. Children have been lured in with the promise of monetary reward, clothing, jewellery and other tangible gifts. More sophisticated gang members have ‘attended drug rehabilitation centres to seek out potential drug users ... targeting vulnerable people in crisis’ (National Crime Agency, 2017: 14-15). Of particular concern is the glamorisation of the gang lifestyle that is put forth on social media platforms for young people to view, admire and aspire to. Pictures on sites such as Instagram and Snapchat, of young men sporting fashionable designer clothing items, in addition to jewellery and expensive cars, have all added to the desire for children living in poverty to join gangs. Such is the attraction of these items that many young people see more benefit in becoming gang-involved than progressing through education. ‘Junior’ a participant in Heale’s (2009) research described his difficulty in progressing through school and the appeal of the ‘glamorous’ gang lifestyle:

School? School just didn’t appeal to me. Let me break it down for you as simply as I can. That cat with the Porsche was my fucking education. How many people in my ends make it through school? Fuck all is how many. All I saw was guys with their cars, their clothes ... that ain’t gonna come out of exam grades... (‘Junior’, cited in Heale, 2009: 49)

The latter half of 2017 gave rise to the issue of Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines within national media which, up until then, had largely remained under the radar. Recent media headlines have included:

‘Thousands of children used as drug mules by ‘county lines’ gangs expanding into rural parts of the UK’ (The Independent) (Deardon, 2017);

‘County Lines: The children forced to sell drugs’ (BBC, 2017);

‘National Crime Agency reveals hundreds of ‘county lines’ used by drug dealers to move supply around the UK’ (ITV News, 2017).

An increase in political attention and government reports, have put the issue on the map and highlighted it as a deeply concerning social and criminal justice issue. The APPG (All-Party Parliamentary Group) Missing, Gangs and Exploitation Roundtable report (2017: 16) claims that ‘County Lines are now a national issue’, standing as one of the priorities for the Ending Gang Violence and Exploitation (EGVE) programme.

Whilst Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines are new concepts, the characteristics that comprise these terms are anything but new. In their case study on drug markets in a London borough, Hales and Hobbs (2010: 14) found the illegal drug market was becoming saturated, with crack cocaine ‘available in 15 out of 16 wards’ and cannabis available in all 16 wards. They found that the dealers in these areas were thus striving to compete by being the quickest deliverers of the product and utilising teenagers that worked for ‘more senior criminals’. Of note, Hales and Hobbs (2010) wrote:

The general pattern seems to be that more senior criminals are actively seeking to use local youths to conduct retail-level drug dealing activities, in some cases using intimidation to get the youths to work for them. This evidently includes youths being intimidated into joining ‘gangs’ for the purposes of furthering drug dealing activity (2010: 21).

Densley (2013) defines this multi-level marketing system as a pyramid – with few senior members at the top, a few more distributors in the middle and an array of drug runners at the bottom - where the emphasis is on the recruitment of young drug dealers rather than on selling the products. His research highlighted the notion of Child Criminal Exploitation where gang members spoke openly about the exploitative nature of relationships between ‘youngsters’ and ‘elders’. One self-identified gang member ‘member 37’ (of 52) highlighted:

Elders normally use these people to do their dirty work ... like, hold this in your house or give them something to do outside the streets. They just use the young people because ... police wouldn’t really stop a younger person (Member 37, cited in Densley, 2013: 80).

In another study focussing on ‘a saturated drug market’ in London - and perhaps one of the first academic articles to discuss the County Lines phenomenon in detail - Windle and Briggs (2015b) noted that all gangs in the borough under study were involved in the supply of cannabis, heroin, cocaine and crack cocaine. Interviews with gang members gave an insight into the drug markets. The researchers concluded that whilst demand for cannabis was high, the profits were relatively low when compared with those of heroin and crack cocaine. Indeed, ‘one gang member estimated that crack cocaine sales were worth double that of cannabis’, indicative of why gang members concentrate mostly on the development of crack cocaine markets (Windle and Briggs, 2015b: 8). In support of Hales and Hobbs’ (2010) findings, the gang members in this study adapted to the problem of saturation, with one 17-year-old explaining that members of his gang would travel (or commute) to sell drugs where there were more drug users:

Most gang members will go to like in Scotland, Aberdeen coz you know there’s more crack heads up there ... (‘Maxwell’, in Windle and Briggs, 2015b: 9).

‘Cuckooing’ was also evidenced in their findings when talking to YOT staff, who explained that one young person was missing from London for around six months and was located by police in Reading, Berkshire in what the police described as ‘high level crack houses’ (‘Adam’, in Windle and Briggs, 2015b: 10). Some crack houses according to Briggs (2010), are not ‘high level’. In fact, most will be unhygienic, unfurnished homes where environments of normalised crack and heroin consumption and risky sexual acts are common (Briggs, 2010). Young drug dealers using crack houses as a base to sell from will be in constant contact with adults who are consumed by crack cocaine addictions, a drug commonly linked to psychosis and violence (Briggs, 2010; 2012).

Of most concern to practitioners, law enforcement agencies and policy makers, is the young age of those involved in gangs, Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines. Windle and Briggs (2015b) mention children as young as twelve years old in their study, whilst recent media reports have suggested children as young as eleven (Davenport, 2017) and even eight (Bayliss, 2017) being exploited to sell drugs. The true age may be younger but less likely to be drawn to the attention of law enforcement

agencies due to the legal age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales being ten years. Between April 2015 and March 2016, the Metropolitan Police Service (2016: 4) recorded 208 offences committed by children under the age of 10, where the prosecution was 'prevented due to age'. The most common offence was violence against the person.

Parents and families can often play a large role in the exploitation of children. Indeed, parents, sibling and other family members are sometimes the perpetrators of CCE. They can have a primary role in that they are exploiting their own children into committing criminality, or they can have a secondary role and become ignorant to the fact that their child is partaking in delinquency, turning a blind eye to the criminality because of the rewards that they, and the family, are receiving:

You see young boys give their mum money and she knows what they're doing. She knows they're selling drugs ... because your parents love you, they keep a blind eye to it (Member 47, cited in Densley, 2013: 38).

As was the case with risk factors of gang membership, family and background circumstances play a key role in some cases of exploitation. Families that seek to gain financially from their child being active in gangs and drug dealing can encourage, or turn a blind eye to, their children becoming involved in the gang life style. Where some of these children go missing from home for long durations, often involved in County Lines drug dealing, or where there is a lack of parental boundaries (Young et al., 2013), some parents will refrain from informing the authorities.

Going missing - or running away - from home or care is a key indicator that a child may be being criminally exploited by a gang (National Crime Agency, 2016). A 2016 inquiry into the safeguarding of absent children reported how criminal exploitation by gangs fell under the radar for children missing from home. In particular, boys were categorised as being 'at no apparent risk' (APPG, 2017), therefore leaving them without support until the risk had escalated. In a national survey of 7,349 young runaways, Rees (2011: 17) highlighted some of the risks associated with running away from home and concluded that 26 per cent of young people aged 14-16 who had run away overnight had either 'been hurt or harmed', 'had slept rough or with someone they had just met' and/or 'had stolen or begged in order to survive'. A consistent

finding is the relationship between children in care, or looked after children (LAC) and missing from home. Rees (2011) reported that 52 per cent of children in his survey that had run away from home were in care. Being in care has been strongly associated with running away from home, along with being in trouble with the police, problems with alcohol and drugs, mental health issues such as depression, and problems with school attendance (Rees, 2011). The National Crime Agency (2017) report that the use of missing persons (MISPERS) is a common feature of County Lines activity; however, they also state that the correlation is unknown due to there being gaps in understanding and intelligence.

Comparing Child Criminal Exploitation with Child Sexual Exploitation

Participation in sexual acts by children under the age of 18 was, until the late 1990s, given the title child prostitution. This was often attributed to risky behaviour and seen by the majority as the victim's fault (APPG, 2017), so much so that children and young people arrested and cautioned were identified as 'child prostitutes', a term used widely by politicians and practitioners that served only to encourage victim-blaming. During 1995, The Children's Society (2015), a charity that works with vulnerable children and young people, began campaigning for the young people involved to be recognised as victims of sexual exploitation. The sexual exploitation of young people was slowly becoming recognised as a national scandal with the first major breakthrough in 2003. Changes to the Sexual Offences Act 2003 meant that offenders were no longer able to escape being charged for sexual abuse of a child if they could argue that the act was consensual (The Children's Society, 2015). More progressively, under the 2015 Serious Crime Act the term was removed from legislation and replaced with the term 'Child Sexual Exploitation' (CSE) (Sanders et al., 2017).

With strong links between CSE and gang involvement, Beckett et al. (2013: 21) have argued that females involved in gangs are victimised twice, firstly they are harmed (through CSE, CCE, domestic violence etc.) and secondly apportioned blame for the harm in that: 'she knew what she was getting into; boys have to act that way because girls are untrustworthy and cause trouble; or her actions and attitudes brought it upon herself'. Advances in research (driven mainly by children's charities (Barnado's, 2011)) - and detailed accounts from the children involved - have inspired significant shifts in attitudes towards victims of CSE. Practitioners thus began to see the young

people involved as victims (rather than at fault) of Child Sexual Exploitation. With research on Child Criminal Exploitation in its inception, there is, understandably, a significant lack of academic literature or otherwise detailing the exact scale and nature of the problem. However, mirroring historical attitudes towards victims of CSE, the victims of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) have also traditionally been perceived by the criminal justice system to have made a choice. As such, until recently they have been treated as perpetrators rather than victims.

A two-year inquiry into CSE among gangs and groups in England confirmed that there were 2,409 victims of Child Sexual Exploitation between 2010 and 2011, and a further 16,500 identified as at risk (Berelowitz et al., 2013). With difficulties in accessing these groups of people, many of the victims were already known to the services, facing some sort of childhood adversity, and so issues of sampling bias are evident. What can be concluded from the literature on Child Sexual Exploitation is that, whilst the activity that young people are exploited into doing is different (of a sexual nature), the patterns and tactics involved in Child Criminal Exploitation are almost identical with those identified in cases of Child Sexual Exploitation, with a major finding being that victims of CCE are predominantly male and victims of CSE are predominantly female (National Crime Agency, 2017). That is not to say that males cannot be sexually exploited, and females cannot be criminally exploited, the two do have many overlaps. Both forms of abuse involve a perpetrator exercising their power over vulnerable individuals. Indeed, perpetrators control their victims through intimidation, threats, violence, grooming and coercion (Berelowitz et al., 2013). Other differences lie in exactly what the victim is exploited, coerced or manipulated into doing, with CCE victims exploited into criminality and CSE victims exploited into sexual activity.

In analysing the factors that make young people vulnerable to CSE it is estimated that victims of CCE will share many of these difficult childhood experiences. That is, 'disrupted family life', 'problematic parenting', 'disengagement in education', 'exploitative relationships', 'drug and alcohol misuse' (Clutton and Coles, 2007: 8), 'a history of abuse', 'homelessness', 'low self-esteem or self-confidence', 'being in or leaving care', 'links to gangs through relatives, peers or intimate relationships' and 'living in a gang-affected neighbourhood' (NSPCC, 2017). There is a significant lack of understanding surrounding the victim-perpetrator nexus in Child Criminal

Exploitation. Hilton and Mezey (1996) support the contention that there is an exploitation cycle in some cases of Child Sexual Exploitation, where the victim progresses to victimiser. They further noted that there is often a ‘tendency to abuse the victim in a way that replicates the offender’s own experience of abuse’ (Glasser et al., 2001: 482). It is possible that a similar process occurs in cases of Child Criminal Exploitation whereby children exploited into selling drugs become sophisticated drug dealers with their own supply chain and exploit children younger than themselves to act as runners. This is something that the current study considers.

Responses to Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines

In February 2018, the Home Office (2018a) launched a thirteen million pound fund to help front-line staff develop positive relationships with children at risk of sexual and criminal exploitation, and/or relationship abuse. Entitled the *Trusted Relationships Fund*, local authorities were invited to apply for funding to develop and implement projects aimed at establishing relationships between practitioners (i.e. youth workers, nurses, police, social workers, etc.) and children at risk of sexual exploitation, county lines gang crime and/or relationship abuse. In acknowledging that lack of trusted relationships between children and adults was often linked to failures around child sexual abuse and exploitation, the Government asked local authorities to design projects that established ‘a safe space where young people can share their concerns with professionals who will listen to them’, provide ‘specialist counselling services’, deliver ‘positive activities including sport, music, arts and volunteering’, improve ‘the way local organisations work together to support the most vulnerable young people’, and work ‘with children who repeatedly go missing to ensure that they are kept safe and well’ (Home Office, 2018a: 1).

Whilst the Home Office (2018a) stated that the Trusted Relationship Fund could provide the social support that would ‘help children avoid risky situations, as well as help them overcome adverse circumstances in their lives, and that a trusted relationship can make young people significantly more likely to disclose when abuse is happening to them’, the issue with victims of exploitation is that they usually do not identify that they are being exploited. In addition to this, having been groomed, many young people think that they already have a trusted relationship with the person that is doing the exploiting (The Children’s Society, 2018) and so will be reluctant to disclose

information to anyone other than this person. The sensitive nature of the research and difficulty in getting victims of exploitation to open up will be heavily considered throughout this study.

Conclusion

In exploring the literature surrounding gangs, both British and internationally, in-depth analysis has considered motivations for, and risks of, joining gangs, the relationship between drugs, weapons and gangs, male and female involvement, Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation. This literature review has highlighted the need for further academic inquiry into many aspects of the gang and what gang life entails. Knowledge pertaining to the role of girls in gangs, masculinities, violence and shootings, gang organisation and structure is lacking. Most importantly, due to a significant lack of academic literature and an increased political focus, it is the phenomenon of Child Criminal Exploitation that will be the focus of this research.

The review of the literature has identified a particular gap in the knowledge relating to gangs and Child Criminal Exploitation and the remaining chapters of this thesis are devoted to consider the many nuanced issues about the topic. The aim then, is to develop a thesis which provides an in-depth contribution to knowledge on Child Criminal Exploitation and its relationship with gangs; to identify those that become involved in gangs and their motivations for involvement; to explore both the victims and perpetrators of Child Criminal Exploitation and identify the qualities of those involved, in addition to investigating their relationships with each other; to explore the power dynamic between exploiter and exploited and to create a true picture of the cycle of abuse from the young people involved in these worlds. Lastly, the thesis aims to provide recommendations at practice level for those working with gang-involved young people and those affected by Child Criminal Exploitation; and at policy level for framing and shaping legislation that will help reduce the gang situation and the number of children and young people being criminally exploited in the future.

Chapter Three

Methodology and Methods

Introduction

This chapter outlines the steps taken to complete the research and answer four primary research questions. With Merseyside as a focus, the research aimed to gain an understanding into the issue of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and to assess the role that gangs play in perpetrating (and being victims of) CCE. To address this, the following questions were at the centre of this research:

1. What are gang-involved young people's understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation?
2. What are practitioner's understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation?
3. To what extent does Child Criminal Exploitation occur within street gangs?
4. Do gang-involved young people identify when they are being criminally exploited?

This chapter begins by outlining the researcher's methodological rationale, including the epistemological and ontological beliefs that have contributed to the design and completion of the research. The chapter then details the methods of data collection employed, including the adoption of ethnographic techniques and the rationale behind their selection. Information is given on the research sites, including Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Alternate Education Providers (AEPs), and details of the two samples of participants involved in the study and the methods of data collection adopted with these participants. One of the most vital aspects of this chapter is the analytical strategy used to produce the findings that will be outlined in chapters four and five. Through the use of thematic analysis, detail is provided on how data were analysed, the themes identified and how the reliability and validity of these themes were ensured.

The following section outlines the many ethical and political considerations of the study. Here, issues of consent, risk and harm, and confidentiality and anonymity are discussed at length to provide thorough accounts of how the study was conducted as ethically and risk-free as possible. To conclude, a reflexive account is provided that outlines any difficulties with the research, any points to consider for future research and any other necessary information.

Methodological Rationale

According to Mills et al. (2006: 2), the strength of a research design is largely dependent upon the researcher's beliefs about the 'nature of reality' and their ability to match the most compatible research paradigm with such beliefs. A research paradigm is a 'system of ideas, or world views' (Fossey et al., 2002: 718) held by an individual that is reflected upon and used to generate knowledge. Further, the research paradigm should encompass the researcher's epistemological, ontological and methodological beliefs (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Research philosophies comprise of assumptions about the way in which, as a researcher, the world is viewed and reinforce the research strategy and methods.

Ontology refers to the way in which researchers have developed their own personal views and beliefs about the way the world works, the nature of being. As such, ontology also denotes their commitment to these views and beliefs (Saunders et al, 2009). Indeed, it ventures into the 'researcher's sense of what is 'there' in the world we investigate' (Taylor et al., 2015: 17). Subjectivists believe that social phenomena are developed from the perceptions and actions of social actors. Put simply, individuals attach meanings to social phenomena. This is a theoretical process known as social constructionism. For instance, gang-involved young people may hold different interpretations (than other populations) of the situations that they become involved in. These interpretations influence their actions and social interactions with other people. It is these interpretations, actions and interactions that the researcher was interested in investigating. Creswell (2014: 8) notes that the aims of social research is to firstly listen intently to the participants' views of the phenomenon under study, and secondly to rely as much as possible on these when formulating an in-depth picture of the situation. Understanding gangs and Child Criminal Exploitation was at the forefront of the

researcher's aims. Most importantly, she was aiming to investigate understandings of CCE from the gang-involved young people's point of view, in addition to the views of practitioners that were working with these young people.

Epistemology is concerned with knowledge and beliefs, and how the two are formed. The researcher holds an interpretivist epistemology. One of the main ideas of interpretivism is that people continually interpret and re-interpret the world around them, one which is ever-changing.¹² Researchers holding this epistemology thus believe that the social world is constructed by people and is therefore different from the world of nature. Interpretivism is focussed on 'understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective; and examining how the world is experienced' (Taylor et al., 2015: 3). Indeed, Saunders et al. (2009: 116) argue that to hold an interpretivist epistemology, the researcher's objective should be to understand 'differences between humans in our role as social actors'. The metaphor of 'social actors' is common in social research and demonstrates that we, as humans, have a role to play on the stage of life. As such, researchers holding these beliefs prefer studies that adopt a naturalistic enquiry, where the research is free from laboratory or controlled settings. The emphasis then, is on the use of qualitative research, where the researcher can gather detailed data on human emotion and experience. For the interpretivist researcher, the aim is to produce in-depth qualitative data, which is primarily done through face-to-face interviews, a method that was adopted in this research.

In acknowledging that, as a social researcher, it is impossible to separate the researcher from the researched (Becker, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2008) the researcher holds a subjectivist ontology and an interpretivist epistemology. During the research it was necessary to develop and adopt an empathetic attitude (Saunders et al., 2009). It is argued here that this type of methodology was the most appropriate for researching

¹² An alternative philosophical tradition is positivism which bases knowledge on what can be observed and experienced. Research methods are therefore scientific, based on measurable phenomena and objective analysis. Positivistic inquiry relies on quantitative research and is argued to be more statistically valid and reliable (Powell, 1997), but data is often limited to highlighting the extent of issues and demonstrating a cause-effect relationship only.

young people and crime because the researcher was entering the young person's social world and trying to understand it from their point of view. Not only is the relationship between young people, gangs and their offending behaviour a complex matter, but also unique in that it is incidental of an array of capricious circumstances which many young people face. Therefore, the researcher needed to portray a certain level of sensitivity and empathy to deal with these circumstances and gain the young people's trust and openness.

Whilst it could be argued that the majority of social research is connected with the development of theory, the very nature of this relationship is significantly influenced by the approach to research that is taken (Gilbert and Stoneman, 2015). Where a deductive approach owes more to positivism, the alternative, an inductive approach, is better matched to interpretivism and so was consequently the selected approach for this research. Deductive approaches have previously been criticised for identifying cause-effect relationships between variables, without understanding interpretations of these variables and the social world (Saunders et al., 2009). A strength of the inductive approach then, was developing understandings of the variables and social world. The researcher was concerned with the context in which gangs develop and how CCE begins and the path that it takes. Whilst arguably small in comparison to other gang studies (see Aldridge et al., 2012; Williams and Clarke, 2016), the sample size in this study provides contextually rich, in-depth data and is more appropriate for answering the research questions than a 'large number as with the deductive approach' (Saunders et al., 2009: 126).

The researcher was also concerned with the experiences of practitioners that work/have worked with gang-involved and criminally exploited young people and how they interpreted their experiences. Of most importance though, was the experiences of the young people involved in the research. That is, gang-involved young people, young people with a knowledge of gangs and victims of CCE. It was the voices of these young people that were invaluable to the study. Being able to speak directly to the people affected by these issues was both a privilege and a necessity. In so doing, the study consulted both adults and children and young people, practitioners and gang-involved youths, those on the fringes of crime and those that have been, or at risk of being, criminally exploited.

Sampling and Access

Throughout the research, a total of eleven institutions were accessed from a range of criminal justice agencies, Alternate Education Providers, local authorities and third sector organisations. Further information on the recruitment sources/institutions accessed can be located in appendix 10.

Gatekeepers

A total of five individuals acted as formal gatekeepers during the data collection process. These included one from Merseyside Police, two from local YOT/YOS and two from the Lewis Dunne Foundation (LDF)¹³ who also had full responsibility for the young people in the AEP¹⁴. These gatekeepers granted access to practitioners who they worked with and young people who they thought would be appropriate for the research. Throughout, the gatekeepers selected young people and confirmed whether the researcher thought they fit the criteria, which usually, they did. Thus, the gatekeepers were essential to data collection. Though the gatekeepers selected who they thought were appropriate, the researcher also had the ability to select other practitioners and young people who she thought would be useful. In meeting these participants in the AEP or hearing of them in YOT-based meetings, the researcher requested to speak to them, which was rarely an issue. Whilst gatekeepers can sometimes limit access to certain participants, this was not found to be a problem at all in the AEP, where the researcher could interview who she thought was appropriate. What was found to be an issue was in the recruitment of young people via the Youth Offending Team (YOT). Whilst (formal) gatekeepers provided access to the premises and their staff (informal gatekeepers), the staff were responsible for suggesting - and introducing the researcher to - (gang-involved) young people. This proved difficult. Instead of providing young people for the researcher to make introductions with, some YOT staff reported that they had already asked the young person, and had received an outright rejection to

¹³ The Lewis Dunne Foundation is a Merseyside charity aimed at helping young people desist from gang-involvement and crime. It provides support and guidance to young people who may be victims of CCE and encourages desistance through educational interventions.

¹⁴ Gatekeepers from the Lewis Dunne Foundation also had managerial responsibility in the AEPs and so had authority to grant access to the young people there.

participate in response. Without insulting the YOT staff, there was little that the researcher could do, other than accept the rejection.

The issue of gatekeepers in social science research has recently been under scrutiny (Davies and Peters, 2014) and is exacerbated when the focus of the research – like this study - is on vulnerable populations. Those typically identified as vulnerable include children and young people, victims of abuse, those with psychological and physical impairments and offending populations; ‘many of whom are likely to be of interest to criminologists’ (Davies and Peters, 2014: 36). The need to protect such vulnerable populations often means that they are excluded from research. There are advantages to having gatekeepers. For example, gatekeepers can ensure that risk of harm to these vulnerable populations (in theory) is minimised. In addition, they can introduce and encourage individuals who trust them to participate (Davies and Peters, 2014). Yet, quite often gatekeepers can have a negative impact upon the research process, as was evidenced at times in this study. During the research, there were a number of formal gatekeepers who had granted initial access to premises and staff, and a number of other individuals who acted as informal gatekeepers. It was the latter group that made some aspects of the research difficult. That is, practitioners working in the YOTs who did little to encourage young people to participate, even making decisions on their behalf and denying them the opportunity to participate (Scourfield, 2012). Practitioners showing a genuine desire to protect young people from harm could be excused in their reluctance to allow young people to participate. However, it was felt by the researcher that some practitioners felt her presence was a hinderance, rather than trying to protect the young people.

Sampling method

A purposive sampling technique was used to select participants for the research. In simple terms, participants were criterion based (Mason, 2002), selected for their knowledge and experience of - working with or being in - gangs and experiencing CCE. Whilst gang-involved young people were at the centre of the research, it was also a key aim to explore the meaning of a phenomenon (CCE) from the participants’ point of view. It was therefore important to select ‘a sample from which most can be learned’ (Merriam, 2002: 12). Building on previous research conducted by the researcher (Robinson, 2016), access was granted immediately to a youth offending team in

Merseyside. This was the first organisation accessed and where the majority of the practitioner-based participants were selected from. Almost all staff in the YOT participated, with the exception of administrative staff – who had little knowledge of gang-involvement and CCE - and some of the case managers due to availability. The researcher also already had strong links with members of Merseyside Police, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council and Child Criminal Exploitation advocates working for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. Other organisations and practitioners were recommended and contact details provided by each of these organisations. The then head of Serious and Organised Crime for Merseyside Police acted as a gatekeeper and recommended four other members of Merseyside Police who held specialist roles in dealing with gangs and/or exploitation. Through involvement in the Lewis Dunne Foundation¹⁵, the researcher had access to staff and the young people that the foundation aimed to help, that is, gang-involved young people and those on the cusp of criminality. She was able to shadow the founder of this foundation and thus was granted immediate access to the AEPs in which the service was operating.

A total of 45 individuals participated in the research. Participants were separated into two categories: practitioners and young people. Practitioners included in the research were any staff members working at the organisations accessed that currently worked, or had previously worked, with gang-involved young people, or had a knowledge of gangs and CCE. Twenty-eight practitioners (M=13, F=15) participated in the research in total. These included 5 members of Merseyside Police, 14 YOT workers, plus 9 other interviewees including gang intervention/prevention workers, teachers, a social worker, members of a local Neighbourhood safety team, a Child Criminal Exploitation advocate and a key worker from Catch 22 (a social business working with people at risk of gang involvement).

Young people involved in the research included any gang-involved young person (i.e. gang member, or associated or affiliated to a gang), any victim of CCE and/or young

¹⁵ Through ongoing voluntary work and a close working relationship with the founder, the researcher was invited to be on the board of directors of the Lewis Dunne Foundation. In this role, she participates in promotional events, consults with the other directors and engages with schools in Merseyside on how to reduce youth violence and gang involvement.

person with a knowledge of both gangs and CCE. Young people selected for the research did not need to self-identify as being in a gang as mostly all young people reject the gang-label and profess that they are just a group of friends (Harding, 2014). Gang-involved young people were thus selected based on Merseyside Police intelligence, intelligence from the YOT or recommendation from those working with young people at the AEPs. Seventeen young males participated in the research, fourteen of these were selected from AEPs and three young people were referred from the YOT/YOS – of which two participants were currently serving sentences in a YOI. In line with ethical clearance for this study, all of the young people were of 14 years and above, with an age range of 14-19 years (Mean age=16). They were of white or mixed heritage and from either Sefton, Liverpool, Knowsley or Wirral, with the exception of one young person who was from London but currently residing in St. Helens due to welfare and safety issues. Ex-gang members, or previous victims of CCE, were selected for participation in the research due to their experience and knowledge of gangs and CCE. The researcher gained access to these participants through practitioners who she had interviewed through a snowball sampling method, or, as described earlier, from the AEP. These practitioners recommended the researcher speak to these participants as they had ‘interesting stories to tell’. The details of young people involved in the study are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Demographics of the young people sample including method of data collection implemented

Young people / pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Living situation	Location	Service accessed	Victimisation	Data
Smurf	M	17	Alone	Sefton	YOT – PWITS Class A drugs	Stabbed, assaulted, injured with weapon, house targeted	Interview & informal conversation
Elliot	M	16	Father	Liverpool	YOT – PWITS Cannabis, attempted murder (No further action (NFA))	Threatened with gun, stabbed, injured with weapon, robbed, assaulted, house targeted	Interview & informal conversation
Coxy	M	16	LAC	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Shady	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Not3s	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Biggs	M	14	Mother	Wirral	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group
Froggy	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Giggs	M	16	LAC	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Informal conversation
B	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Informal conversation
Wade Pal	M	14	Mother	Liverpool	None	Injured with weapon, assaulted, family/friend targeted, house targeted	Interview
Skept	M	14	Two-parent	Liverpool	None	Assaulted	Interview
Eazi	M	16	LAC	St. Helens	YOI – welfare. Moved from London for safety	Shot/shot at, stabbed, assaulted, criminally exploited	Interview
Big Dog	M	14	Mother	Liverpool	YOT – PWITS	Shot/shot at	Interview
Nines	M	17	Father	Liverpool	YOI – burglary, PWITS Class A drugs, attempted arson	Stabbed, criminally exploited	Interview
Dezzy	M	20	Alone	Liverpool	YOT – Theft	Assaulted	Interview
Snoop	M	17	Two-parent	Knowsley	YOI – PWITS Class A drugs	Assaulted	Interview
Kenny	M	19	Alone	Liverpool	HMP – PWITS Class A drugs	Assaulted	Informal conversation

Methods of Data Collection

This study encompassed a range of methods of data collection. The researcher originally wanted to complete an ethnography on gangs in Merseyside. However, thought was given to the current context of youth violence and gang-related offending, particularly within the geographical area under consideration, and it was deemed inappropriate to continue with this method of data collection for safety concerns of the researcher and participants. Ethnography has its origins in anthropology and has been a common methodological choice for many researchers studying deviance - particularly urban street gangs (Peters, 1994). Alternatively, some of its techniques were adopted in order to obtain data as in-depth and as true to the young people and the gang situation in Merseyside as possible. These included demographic questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and focus groups. Data collection ran from February 2017 to August 2018 and was conducted in four out of the five Merseyside boroughs - that is, Sefton, Knowsley, Wirral and Liverpool (the latter being one of the 33 areas across England and Wales that was prioritised in the Ending Gang and Youth Violence (EGYV) Programme (HM Government, 2011)).

Before agreeing to participate, each young person and practitioner was provided with an in-depth information sheet which they had to read through to ensure that they understood what their participation would involve. There were two information sheets, one for practitioners (appendix 1.) and a simplified version for young people (appendix 2.), the reason for which will be explained below when discussing research ethics. In some cases, the researcher read the information sheet to the young people, condensed the information and/or prompted them to ensure she was happy that they understood. Following this, each participant was asked to sign a consent form. Again, there was one for practitioners (appendix 3.) and one for young people (appendix 4.). Participants had to consent by firstly ticking boxes to signal that they understood what was involved in the study, their rights, and that they were happy for the interview to be recorded. Secondly participants were asked to sign and date the form. The methods of data collection are described below.

The research for this project included the following:

Young people

- Use of demographic questionnaires with gang-involved young people (n=17)
- 1 semi-structured interview with a gang-involved young person accessed via a local Youth Offending Team (YOT)
- 8 semi-structured interviews with gang-involved young people accessed via a local Alternative Education Provider (AEP)
- 9 informal conversations (ethnographic interviews) with gang-involved young people accessed via a local AEP
- 2 semi-structured interviews with gang-involved young people who were in custody at Wetherby Young Offender Institute (YOI), accessed via a local Youth Offending Service (YOS)
- 1 focus group with 5 gang-involved young people at a local AEP

Practitioners

- 28 semi-structured interviews with practitioners (M=13, F=15) including police personnel, YOT staff, Child Criminal Exploitation advocates, safeguarding officers, gang intervention/prevention workers, substance misuse workers, employment advisors and members of the Neighbourhood Safer Community Partnerships.
- Plus field note observations.

1. Demographics questionnaire

The children and young people who participated in the research were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire (appendix 5.). This was to gather background information to aid understanding of some of the factors that contributed to the situations the young people were in, as well as their gang-involvement and levels of victimisation that they had been subject to throughout their lives. The data here could also be used to compare to the demographics of those involved in gang research in other locations and check for any similarities and differences among samples.

The questionnaire asked participants their sex, ethnicity, birth town, living situation, educational situation, length of duration of gang-involvement, location, name of the gang (if possible), whether they were still active in the gang, whether they had been open to YOT services or Young Offender Institutes (YOI), and whether they had been victimised. All young people agreed to complete the questionnaires, however a small number left some questions unanswered, particularly the name and location of the gang. This was not surprising as the young people did not want to appear to be divulging too much information and thus be labelled a 'grass'. To examine levels of victimisation, participants were asked to circle whether they had been sexually assaulted, physically assaulted, threatened with a gun, shot/shot at, stabbed, injured with another weapon, robbed, kidnapped, had their house targeted, had a family member or friend that had been threatened, or asked to do something that they did not want to do. Again, the participants were reassured that they did not have to circle any of the boxes if they did not want to.

2. Semi-structured interviews

Cited as one of the most common qualitative research methods (Kitchin and Tate, 2000) and the 'ethnographer's most important data gathering-technique' (Fetterman, 2010: 40), semi-structured interviews were selected as they are one of the most efficient ways of eliciting information from a research subject (Dunn, 2000). Semi-structured interviews allow flexibility and encourage reflection on both the question and the participant's answer during the interview. This approach allowed the researcher to ask meaningful questions and promote in-depth detail from the personal experiences of the participants (Bryman, 2008).

As previously noted, two separate semi-structured interview schedules were compiled. One for practitioners (appendix 6.) and one for young people (appendix 7.). This was firstly in order to answer the different research questions (i.e. practitioners' understanding, and then gang-involved young people's understanding of CCE), and secondly because the researcher wanted to refrain from using the term 'Child Criminal Exploitation' as much as possible when interviewing young people. The researcher was advised by staff in the YOT against using such terms with young people as they often reject the victim status and thus might have been less willing to participate if they thought they did not fit the criteria of being a victim. The researcher also wanted to

investigate young people's understanding and perceptions of CCE before introducing them to the term. This, it was hoped, ensured that the term 'exploitation' did not dictate the findings and influence the data that was produced. As such, initial questions included, for example 'has anybody ever asked you to do something that you didn't want to do?' and 'have you ever been offered something (a gift/present) in exchange for doing something criminal?' This question addressed one of the features of such exploitation which involves:

Exploitative situations, contexts and relationships where young people receive 'something' (e.g. food, accommodation, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, affections, gifts, money) as a result of them performing ... activities (Li, 2016: 1).

Only towards the end of the interview were young people asked about their knowledge and understanding of the term Child Criminal Exploitation. The interview schedule aimed at gang-involved young people began by acquiring some contextual and background information in order to examine the individual's association with gangs. Where appropriate the interview schedule was slightly amended to tailor the questions for participants who had been identified as criminally exploited by practitioners, and had accepted that at some point they had been a victim of CCE. These included young people that were in custody, discussed in more detail in the following section. Tailoring the interview schedule meant that the researcher could be more direct with the questions and obtain the most relevant information regarding CCE, rather than interviewing the young person as if they had no knowledge on the topic.

The interview schedule aimed at practitioners began much the same in that it first acquired background information such as the practitioners' role in working with gang-involved young people. Following this were questions that explored understandings and perceptions of criminal exploitation from the practitioners' point of view and also what they believed gang members' understandings of the concept were. The final part of the interview schedule sought to explore how practitioners identified CCE, how they responded to it and how they thought it could be prevented on both a local and national level. Again, where appropriate, the interview schedule was slightly amended depending on the practitioners involved and their role. For example, wording of questions changed slightly or were added when interviewing members of the Police when compared to staff in the YOT. The ability to do this lies heavily in the flexibility

of the semi-structured interview, where the researcher was not bound to strict questions, but had the ability to be more flexible and go with the flow of the interview.

In acknowledging that it is impossible to separate the researcher from the researched, one cannot ignore the effect that power and powerlessness can have on the research process. Indeed, there was a power imbalance between the researcher and the young people in this study due to the very nature of the research and the vulnerability of the participants. There was also a power imbalance between the researcher and the practitioner participants when conducting interviews. According to Grenz (2005), power is fluid, meaning that both researcher and participants can slide up and down on the scale of power. At times, the researcher felt powerless in terms of time restrictions. Conducting the interviews at the practitioners' place of work meant that they often had to fit around any time available. At times, practitioners had 20 or 30 minutes spare in-between meetings and so the interview needed to keep to that time, possibly restricting the amount of data gathered. Another factor that may have influenced the research process is the relationship between the researcher and the gatekeepers that provide access to participants (Davies and Peters, 2014). Whilst gatekeepers were an essential element in completing the research, many young people were either selected or rejected for participation by these professionals based upon their level of vulnerability; a process which demonstrates the gatekeepers' level of power (Boden et al., 2009) and the researcher's inability to use her own discretion in selecting participants. Whilst this was not deemed an issue in the AEP - as the researcher could select who she considered most appropriate for the research – as noted, this was not the case in the YOTs.

All interviews with practitioners were recorded using a dictaphone and later transcribed by the researcher. These interviews were conducted on the premises in which the practitioners worked. The practitioner interviews lasted between 20 minutes and one hour and 55 minutes. With exception to one young person who was happy for their interview to be recorded using a dictaphone, interviews with young people were written by hand. Whilst recording interviews was desirable, many young people expressed their concerns with being recorded. This was anticipated beforehand, as it was advised by YOT staff that the only time many of the young people would have been recorded would have been during a police interview, therefore the recording of

their interviews could have encouraged distressing memories and affected their willingness to participate.

Whilst it was certainly convenient to use the organisation's premises to conduct interviews, and a place free from interruptions and noise disturbances, research suggests that the place in which research is conducted can significantly influence the findings (Darrow et al., 1986). Indeed, interviewing staff in their place of work may have attracted feelings of ease and relaxation; however, in occupations with high levels of discretion and confidentiality such as the police and YOTs, participants may have been restrictive in their level of openness and honesty due to fear of being overheard. The same could be assumed for young people using meeting rooms of the service where they are already under scrutiny for their offending behaviour. Where appropriate, participants were given an option of where they would like to be interviewed to ensure that they get a chance to air their thoughts fully, without worrying about external influences. A more neutral environment may have provided richer and more open and honest responses from participants. Naturally, this could not be provided for all young people due to safety concerns; however, on occasion it was allowed. On one occasion for example, a young person specified that it was too dangerous for him to travel to the YOT due to ongoing issues with rival gangs in the area and so, with the YOT's permission - and after making an amendment to the project's ethical approval - it was agreed with the young person that the interview could be conducted in a café, near to his home. For those in the alternative education provider (AEP), the young people were happy to be interviewed on the premises in small classrooms. The interviews were always held at times and places convenient for the young people and their safety and comfort was considered of utmost importance when arranging these locations.

Towards the end of data collection, one Youth Offending Service (YOS) arranged for interviews with two young people who were in custody at Wetherby Young Offender Institution (YOI). These young people were suggested by the YOS as invaluable to the research as they had both been criminally exploited and had come to realise this themselves after having been sent to custody. The young people's workers at the YOS asked them during one of their meetings whether they would consider participating in an interview with the researcher, they were also provided with an information sheet

that they could take away and read at their own convenience. After some time, both young people agreed to participate and so after further amendments to the ethical application form, a date was arranged for the researcher to travel to Wetherby YOI in York on two separate occasions and have an hour with the young people during their usual meeting with their YOS worker. The young people's decision to participate was unclear. In considering the ethics of interviewing those in a prison institution, Bosworth et al. (2005) suggest that motivations include both instrumental and affective influences. These may include: time out of cells, the desire to appear compliant to staff, contact with someone outside of the prison and speaking to someone with a genuine interest in their experiences. However, one must not forget the lack of power and control that those in prison experience and the coercive nature of the institutions. There was a risk that young people felt pressured into complying, for fear of receiving negative treatment or further criminal sanction. The researcher ensured that the information sheet clearly stated that participation was voluntary and any refusal to participate would have no consequences, she then also reiterated this to the participants upon meeting them.

Both interviews lasted for around thirty minutes. The researcher found the second interview more successful than the first. Due to security issues surrounding the environment in which the participants were in, both the young person's YOS worker and social worker were in the room at the time of interview, which was a small meeting room inside the YOI. The presence of both staff members could have affected the participant's willingness to be open and honest. The researcher was also unable to use any recording device as this was taken upon arrival, therefore the interview was recorded in note form as quick as possible whilst trying to maintain a coherent flow. After a short space of time it became obvious that the young person was becoming agitated and uncomfortable, therefore the interview came to an end. Whilst the interview with the young person was not as in-depth as one would hope, the participant's YOS worker allowed the researcher to view and make notes of their case file. This offered background information, offending history and reason for being sent to custody; including all details of the criminal exploitation that the young person had been subject to.

The researcher found the second interview to be more coherent with a better flow. In knowing what to expect, the researcher was able to effectively record interview data and field notes by hand whilst keeping the interview running smoothly. The participant's YOS worker was in the room and the interview was held in a small room on the side of the visiting room, where the young person usually had visits and so was used to the environment. This could have been the reason why the interview was more effective and the researcher was able to illicit more in-depth data.

Over the course of data collection, interviews with practitioners became easy to conduct and flowed well. This is attributed to the number of practitioners interviewed and the confidence of the researcher in the questions that were being presented. After the first few interviews, the researcher was able to memorise the main questions and concentrate on maintaining eye contact with the participants, building a positive rapport throughout. In doing this, the direction of the interview was guided by details that were key to the research. Practitioner interviews were extremely useful in addressing the research questions. Particularly, the researcher was able to answer question 2 (What are practitioners' understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation?), in addition to touching upon what they thought gang-involved young people understood about CCE and how prevalent the issue was in gangs.

3. Informal conversations

A key aspect of ethnographic research (Fetterman, 2010) is informal conversations, more commonly known as ethnographic interviews. According to Spradley (1979: 58) 'it is best to think of ethnographic interviews as a series of friendly conversations into which the researcher slowly introduces new elements to assist informants to respond as informants'. Where the semi-structured interview has an explicit agenda, informal conversations have a 'specific but implicit research agenda' (Fetterman, 2010: 41). They allow the researcher to investigate meaning, shared values and perceptions among those being studied. Though informal conversations may seem easy to conduct, Fetterman (2010) argues that they can be the most difficult to conduct properly and effectively. He states that 'done well, informal interviewing feels like a natural dialogue but answers the fieldworker's often-unasked questions' (ibid: 41). Here the researcher can pick and choose what questions to ask and at what point. Finding the most appropriate moment is an important skill to have as an interviewer, particularly

when asking sensitive questions. Tone of voice, Fetterman continues, is ‘critical’ to these interviews. Ironically, in his step-by-step guide to ethnography, he highlights the importance of sensitivity to timing when interviewing gang members:

The chance ... might be lost if during the interview that individual receives a phone call from another gang member warning about an unidentified informer in the community. That moment, however, might be the best time to ask about informants and the pressure of community life (Fetterman, 2010: 42).

The researcher thus learned to pay close attention to her participants throughout her time at the research sites. For instance, she spent time discussing with the participants their weekends and activities prior to accessing the AEPs in order to gauge the group dynamic and individual attitudes. She was aware of changes in the environment and how the participants interacted with one another. She selected topics to discuss during the conversations and went with the flow when the participants directed the conversation towards something different yet equally as important to the research. Lastly, she knew when to divert the conversation away from a topic that was causing, or likely to cause, distress to her participants.

The informal conversations took place in a number of different locations. These most frequently included the premises of an AEP during school hours where the young people were participating in activities such as playing pool, sitting in communal areas and walking around; and thus, at their most relaxed. The researcher was able to engage in a variety of different conversations and topics with the young people without being restricted to an interview schedule. It was during these conversations that the researcher gained some of the most honest and in-depth detail about the nature of gang-involvement and the lives of the young people in question. Informal conversations were held with eleven out of the seventeen young people that participated in the study. Detailed field notes were recorded as regularly and as soon after the conversations as possible.

4. Focus groups

Focus groups are a form of group interview that use interaction between participants in order to gather data (Kitzinger, 1995). They are essentially a group discussion in which the researcher asks a specific set of questions and encourages the participants to

talk to each other, ask each other questions, share stories and comment on these stories and experiences. According to Kitzinger (1994: 109), 'focus groups reach the parts that other methods cannot reach – revealing dimensions of understanding that often remain untapped by the more conventional one-to-one interview or questionnaire'. They stop the researcher from assuming understanding of meaning and language that is used in the participants' environment and allow them to add context to language used in interviews for example. A further advantage of conducting focus groups is allowing the researcher to understand group norms and complex behaviours and motivations (Morgan and Krueger, 1993) For example, paying close attention to phrases and body language allows the researcher to investigate 'group consensus', if all of the young people are in agreement about a particular phrase or behaviour (ibid). Morgan (1996) highlighted the interactions between participants during focus groups, claiming that participants have a tendency to explain themselves to each other and extract different perspectives on a given topic. Such a process allows the interviewer to develop more thorough insights into participants' answers and provides the opportunity to compare the participants' views and experiences at the same time, rather than having to look at whole data sets for similarities and differences (Morgan, 1996). An issue with focus groups can be located within group dynamics and psychosocial factors. That is, the effect that participants have over other participants and their willingness to share their views honestly. In any group there will be individual differences and factors that make discussions easier or more difficult to participate in. For example, insecurities and lack of confidence can affect the quality of data produced during focus groups. There is also the issue of peer pressure and the impact that this has upon conformity to the group's consensus (Carey and Smith, 1994). Lastly, it is important to note that focus groups lack the ability to provide each participant with confidentiality, as other participants are present at the time of interview. This is something that must be considered when conducting focus groups, as confidentiality must be promised in other methods of data collection.

Only one focus group was conducted during the research process and this was held in an AEP. Five young people participated in the focus group which lasted around thirty minutes and was recorded using a dictaphone. Focus groups were not originally intended to be a method of data collection but the opportunity arose when a staff member got the group together and prompted a conversation about gang-involvement

and weapon use. As a result, the focus group was more of a group discussion than the researcher participated in and did not flow as well as it could have due to lack of control over the direction of questions. The researcher had not prepared a particular set of questions and so was thinking on the spot. Whilst transcribing the data, it was difficult to distinguish one voice from another and pick out clear sentences. Nonetheless, some important data were gathered surrounding weapon carrying amongst the young people accessing the provision and so the discussion was considered useful to the research. Furthermore, it was also interesting to be a direct witness to one participant's exaggeration of events. It is not always possible as a researcher to distinguish between exaggeration, bravado and outright lies, however the focus group made this possible. In discussing his status as a 'gang member', this participant was immediately confronted by others in the group who agreed that he was not being honest. From this, the researcher was able to approach any data gathered from this young person with care.

5. Field notes

A key element in ethnographic work is understanding how a researcher comes to turning their lived experiences into a written text (Emerson et al., 2011). The way in which many ethnographers do this is through the use of field notes. Described as the 'brick and mortar' of ethnography (Fetterman, 2010: 116), field notes are made up of observations of the research process. Emerson et al. (2011) states that field notes are usually personal to the researcher and, as a result, can be messy and unorganised. Ethnographers will select excerpts of their field notes and reorder them to compliment sections of verbatim interview data (ibid) - meaning that the process of recording field notes is largely subjective.

Field notes proved extremely useful during the data collection process. It is here that the researcher noted her observations of meetings between practitioner and young person; and general observations whilst in the YOT. In the AEP, field notes were used primarily to record the numerous informal conversations that the researcher held with young people and her observations of behaviours and language. The field notes were recorded firstly by the researcher bullet-pointing as much information as possible either on a mobile, laptop or notepad. An extensive, complete field note was then developed as soon as the researcher was able to, that is, when she arrived home or was

in a safe environment without interruption. The failure to record all data by Dictaphone often results in important information being surpassed by subsequent events, and thus the researcher was sure to record as much detail as possible. Indeed, completing the field notes as soon as possible was of top concern for the researcher. She was conscious that a delay in recording information limits the rich immediacy of concurrent notes (Fetterman, 2010). Upon completion, a total of 13 field note documents were available. Whilst this is not a great number of documents, the detail they hold is rich and invaluable to the findings of this study.

Analytical Strategy

Having considered other approaches to analysis including discourse analysis (which focuses on discourse and language) and Pierre Bourdieu's (1985; 1986; 1990) social field analysis in which he views 'habitus and fields as homologically intertwined' (Savage and Silva, 2013: 112), thematic analysis was selected as the most appropriate form of data analysis. Thematic analysis, although regarded by many as a tool rather than as a specific method (Boyatzis, 1998; Ryan and Bernard, 2000), is defined by Braun and Clarke (2006: 6) as 'a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data'. They further state that, thematic analysis is not married to any 'pre-existing theoretical framework and so it can be used within different theoretical frameworks' (2006: 9). Both discourse analysis and social field analysis were rejected for this reason. Indeed, thematic analysis carries with it an element of theoretical freedom and has the potential to allow for 'rich and detailed, yet complex account[s] of data' (Braun and Clarke, 2006:5). Thus, it has been selected as an appropriate inductive approach to data analysis and compliments the researcher's interpretivist epistemology and subjectivist ontology. Adopting Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis involved following a six-step guide of generating codes and identifying themes and patterns. In order to formulate an in-depth comparison of the two data sets (young people sample and practitioner sample), it was deemed necessary to analyse these separately, where the young people sample was analysed first, followed by the practitioner sample. Data from each sample were kept separate and analysed as such.

The initial phase of thematic analysis required the researcher to familiarise herself with the data. Whilst this was a natural part of transcribing the data, it was then necessary to read and re-read all interview transcripts in order to acquire some general ideas about the data, these were then noted down separately.

The second phase involved generating initial codes. This involved reading interview transcripts and highlighting codes that stood out as potentially answering the research questions and providing understandings of Child Criminal Exploitation. One-code names were avoided as it was necessary to be able to make sense of them should the data be taken away. Notes were also made regarding the codes, and were then put to one side to be analysed after phase two had been concluded. A total of 2,759 codes were generated for the young people sample and 3,694 codes were generated for the practitioner sample.

Third, it was then necessary to organise these codes into potential themes. Similar codes were clustered together and, using a thematic map, codes were organised into potential themes. Themes identified as important included: any theme that sought to answer the research questions; and themes that were given significance for providing detail and understanding of Child Criminal Exploitation and anything else that stood out as interesting or unusual and could place emphasis on a particular topic.

The fourth stage of thematic analysis involved reviewing and refining the potential themes. This process ensures that themes remain accurate to the data, that there are enough data to support the themes and that there is a clear distinction between themes (Patton, 1990). Successfully completing this stage involved two parts. The researcher read the data extracts for each theme and ensured that they formed a coherent pattern. Some themes were removed as it was identified that the data did not support the theme, and other themes were collapsed and merged together as there was little clear distinction between the two. Second, the reliability of themes was considered amongst the whole data set. This involved reading the data sets again and determining whether the themes worked in relation to the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During this process, some themes were removed and collapsed once again, to ensure reliability and a coherent pattern amongst the data. Once this phase was complete, the researcher had

identified a total of four themes for the young people sample and three themes for the practitioner sample.

Phase five of thematic analysis involved defining and naming the themes. Themes were given names that automatically signified and captured the essence of the data, even when data were removed. Themes were identified on a thematic map, in addition to providing numerous examples of the codes for each theme. Whilst the thematic map was developed by hand, the researcher created an Excel spreadsheet detailing each theme and providing examples of the codes that collated to generate each theme. This can be located in appendix 11. A short, detailed analysis of each theme was written which identified the story of each theme and how it fitted into the broader story of the data and answers the research questions.

The final sixth phase of thematic analysis involved writing up the thematic process, as evidenced in this section and writing up the data as provided in chapters four and five. Under each theme in the findings chapters, are extracts of data that have been carefully selected to firstly support the theme, and secondly to tell a story that surrounds the research questions. Moving beyond a basic description of the data, the findings section provide an analytical narrative that ‘make[s] an argument’ (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 23) with regards to the research questions.

Ethical and Political Considerations

The biggest problem in conducting a science of human behaviour is not selecting the right sample size or making the right measurement. It’s doing those things ethically, so you can live with the consequences of your actions (Bernard, 2006: 26).

The ethical and political considerations for this study were based on a number of guidance documents by relevant governing bodies to ensure that every aspect of the research was conducted in a safe and ethical manner. These included Edge Hill University’s ‘*Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People*’ (2016a), ‘*Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research*’ (2016b), and ‘*Framework for Research Ethics*’ (2016c). The six key principles outlined in the former of these documents include ‘choice’, ‘consent’, ‘risk, harm and distress’,

'benefit', 'privacy and confidentiality', and 'dignity'. These ethical principles state that all research 'should ensure respect and fairness and protect vulnerable participants from potential harm' (Edge Hill University, 2016a: 1). In addition, the British Society of Criminology's (2015) '*Statement of Ethics for Researchers*' and the National Youth Agency's (2004) '*Ethical Conduct in Youth Work*' were both adhered to throughout the duration of the research. Prior to the commencement of data collection, ethical approval was sought and granted by Edge Hill University's Faculty Research Ethics Committee. Whilst the ethics application and the university's principles were strictly adhered to at all times, the researcher deemed the following ethical and political considerations to be of utmost importance throughout.

1. Choice and Informed consent

As outlined in the methods of data collection, each participant was provided with an information sheet before they agreed to participate in the study. There were two information sheets, one for practitioners and one for children and young people. This is because 'information about research should be provided in a language style that is accessible to the specific age group of children from whom consent is sought' (Edge Hill University, 2016a: 2). In this case, the researcher had ethical clearance to conduct research with children aged 14 and above. Whilst children of this age should have an adequate reading level (Juel, 1988), it is acknowledged that many of the young people under study may have had learning difficulties or difficulties reading and writing. Indeed, children in the Youth Justice System are amongst those from 'the poorest and most disadvantaged families' with one quarter having a learning difficulty and around 60 per cent having a 'speech, language or communication difficulty' (Barnardo's, 2018: 1). Further, children with low socioeconomic status are more likely to have poor awareness of school English (Juel, 1988). Taking this into consideration, in addition to one of the main objectives of the research being transparency, the researcher read the information sheet and consent form to each young participant to avoid embarrassing those that were not competent enough to do so alone and to ensure the participants were fully aware of what they were agreeing to.

All participants were given adequate time to decide if they wished to participate. Information sheets were left on work spaces for practitioners to read at their leisure, and the researcher introduced herself to young people and provided them with an

information sheet and a brief introduction to the research during their meetings with YOT staff or upon arrival in the AEP. In these meetings, young people could ask any questions about the research and what their participation would involve. Children and young people in the YOT were under an obligation to be there, therefore it was constantly reiterated that participation was completely voluntary and that, should they decide not to participate, their treatment in the service would remain unaffected (Edge Hill University, 2016a). In other words, the researcher did not want any participant - practitioner or young person - to feel obliged to participate because they either worked at the YOT, or were under an obligation by the Court to be there.

Participants were informed of their rights to withdraw from the study up to four weeks after taking part. Should the participants have wanted to take part in one part of the study but not another, this was also possible. For example, some participants were happy to be observed and have informal conversations with the researcher, however they did not want to undertake a formal interview. Indeed, for the participants that did not wish to be observed, they would be made aware of when the researcher was observing the group and that she had no control over who entered and left the room; however any data collected on the person in question would be excluded from the analysis and their presence would not be counted in the final write-up.

According to Edge Hill University's ethical guidelines (2016a), young people are presumed to be competent enough to consent upon reaching the age of 18. In addition, the NSPCC ethics guidelines (Barnard et al., 2012: 6) note that upon careful consideration by the researcher, it is appropriate for young people aged 16 and over to consent without the need to obtain parental consent. Whilst this was useful, the young participants were predominantly aged 14 and 15 and so other guidelines had to be sought. Gillick (NSPCC, 2016) and Fraser's (Barnard et al., 2012) competency guidelines were addressed when applying for ethical clearance for this age group. These state that in certain cases a child may be deemed Gillick competent, in which case 'parental right yields to the child's right to make his own decisions when he reaches a sufficient understanding and intelligence to be capable of making up his own mind on the matter requiring decision' (Lord Scarman, 1985 cited in NSPCC, 2018). Gillick competency arose from a medical case in which it was argued that doctors

should be able to give under 16-year-olds contraceptive advice/treatment without the consent of their parents:

Whether or not a child is capable of giving the necessary consent will depend on the child's maturity and understanding and the nature of the consent required. The child must be capable of making reasonable assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of the treatment proposed, so the consent, if given, can be properly and fairly described as true consent (Gillick v West Norfolk, 1984 cited in NSPCC, 2018)

Whilst subjective, the guidance has since been used more widely to argue that young people are mature enough to make their own decisions and understand the implications of these (NSPCC, 2016), and are thus competent to provide consent in other scenarios. The Fraser guidelines also refer to the contraceptive case, however they can be interpreted to suggest that for some young people under the age of 16, consent alone may be acceptable. If there is doubt surrounding whether the young person is competent enough to consent, it may be necessary to gain consent from a parent or guardian. During the research project, consent was granted by the organisations involved for the researcher to be on the premises and access their young people. The organisations adopted the role of the young people's guardian whilst they were accessing the service. In the AEPs, consent had been provided by each of the young people's parents for their children to be involved in research. This had been obtained by the gatekeeper and was deemed appropriate by the researcher for her general presence. This was further supported in Edge Hill University's (2016a) guide to conducting ethical research with children and young people. When any further activity was taking place, the researcher deemed it necessary to gain consent from each young person, for example, when the researcher wished to conduct an interview or conduct informal conversations. Whilst parents had provided consent to participate on behalf of their child, the child's wishes were paramount and so their lack of consent at any stage would have overridden that of their parents/guardians (Barnard et al., 2016).

Consent to participate in this study did not end once the consent form was signed, but rather continued throughout the research where participants were given the option of declining to participate at any time, even if they had already participated in one aspect. In some instances, there was a long gap between participants signing a consent form to them being interviewed or holding informal conversations. The researcher thus

confirmed once again with the participant that they were happy to participate and knew their rights. Indeed, not only did this confirm that the young people agreed to participate and understood what participation would involve, but it reiterated the reason for the researcher's presence at the YOT or AEP.

2. Risk, harm and distress

Whilst there are many issues in conducting research with children and young people, this group of people were the most important part of the research and without directly speaking with them it would not have been possible to complete the study to its full potential. The researcher acknowledged that 'the risk of causing harm or upset can never be entirely mitigated' (Barnard et al., 2012: 11). The main risk to participants was causing emotional or psychological distress, mostly through interview questions. This was because some questions may have brought back 'old feelings or memories', may have 'uncover[ed] hidden or suppressed feelings', may have 'create[d] additional concerns', and 'the participant may [have been] concerned by what they have shared' (ibid: 11). The questions that were asked in the interview schedule were appropriate for the research and, whilst the participant did not have to answer all questions, in doing so the researcher was able to identify issues which can be addressed to benefit the participant and others. Thus, in providing an accurate representation of the data collected with young people, there was an obvious benefit to both themselves and other children and young people following in their footsteps. Those participating in the research had the ability to provide details of their lived experiences and have their voices heard regarding a sometimes difficult topic. The information that they provided had the ability to provide understandings into an area severely lacking understanding by practitioners and the wider public. In developing these understandings, there was a potential that other young people facing similar situations could be helped and the treatment that they received by the Criminal Justice System could be improved.

The greatest benefit for those involved was simply having their voices heard. On numerous occasions, young people were more than willing to participate and appeared happy that the researcher was interested in what they had to say. They also acknowledged that, to an extent, whatever they discussed was confidential. The experience for young people in the Criminal Justice System is often one of powerlessness. Children seldom have a say in their treatment and are rarely asked of

their opinions. This research therefore involved consulting with them and trying to engage them and giving them a platform to be heard. Thus, whilst there could have been possible risks, the benefits were perceived as outweighing these.

All individuals working with children and young people 'must undergo security screening' (Edge Hill University, 2016a: 4). The researcher had full enhanced clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) supplied both in paper form and electronic format throughout the duration of the research. Participants were made aware that, to the best of the researcher's knowledge and expectations, there were no limitations in taking part in the research. Of course, the participants had some reservations that they saw as limitations, however these were regarding identification and being seen by others to be divulging information to an outsider. This was rectified by assuring anonymity, which will be discussed in the following section. The nature of the research meant that some of the young people were involved in criminality and gangs. Therefore, when arranging interviews with young people, their case worker was always consulted first to evaluate the risk attached to the young person. The researcher was flexible and so, when necessary, exceptions were made when it was not safe to conduct research with a young person on the premises of the organisations involved, as has been elaborated on in the methods section earlier in this chapter.

Before data collection began, participants were provided with details of the NHS counselling service should they have felt that they needed any support during or after taking part in the research. In addition, young people were encouraged to discuss with their case worker if they had any issues with the research. Contact details of the researcher were provided on an information sheet, as well as those of her supervisors and the head of the department at Edge Hill University. Thus, details of support were made readily available throughout (Edge Hill University, 2016a).

Though safety of participants was deemed the most important aspect of data collection, the researcher also took into consideration the fact that participants may disclose distressing details about their lives and others involved in the gang lifestyle as a whole. The researcher was provided with both formal and informal mechanisms for support throughout the study. Formal support came in the form of discussions with supervisors, in addition to Edge Hill University's free counselling service should it have been

needed. Informal support was gained from other academics. These were often from outside of the University and sometimes outside of the discipline. Indeed, participants did discuss events that they had experienced and on occasion these were both sensitive and emotional to the participant and researcher. At no point, however, did the researcher feel that she needed support or counselling or that this had an impact over her ability to conduct the research.

3. Confidentiality, anonymity and data protection

According to Heath et al. (2009: 34), 'Confidentiality refers to promises not to pass on to others specific details pertaining to a person's life' and 'anonymity refers to the protection of the specific identities of individuals involved within the research process'. Confidentiality and anonymity and the protection of personal data remained as some of the most important ethical considerations throughout the study and were also key concerns for those involved. Participants were asked not to disclose names or personal information that would make either themselves or others identifiable. Participants were advised that pseudonyms would be used in the thesis where the researcher wishes to directly quote part of the interview data. Participants were asked before they took part (on a demographics sheet) how they would like to be identified. For example, they were given the opportunity to create their own nickname, or simply be referred to as a participant number. Where they chose to create a nickname, participants were informed that this should not make them identifiable to any of their peers or friends. Evidenced in the analysis and findings section, many of the young people chose the names of their favourite rappers. The association to these rappers and the glamourisation of gangs, drugs and crime indicates that many young people were visualising themselves as part of this culture.

The level of sensitivity with regards to the nature of the research topic, meant that there would have been implications for the participants and the organisation if they were to become identifiable by a wider audience. For example, if a gang member disclosed information about previous events that involved other gang members, those individuals would have deemed this as 'grassing' and thus the participant would be in significant danger. In addition to this, one of the benefits of remaining anonymous allowed for a greater freedom of response; as stated by Heath et al (2009: 34), 'it is likely to be easier for a young person to be honest about their views if they are offered anonymity',

therefore increasing the quality of the data that were generated. In acknowledging this, in addition to maintaining integrity, protecting the participants and aiming to leave the field as it was found, anonymity was crucial in being able to successfully carry out this research.

Confidentiality also played a major role within the research, however it was not without its difficulties. Under the 1989 Children Act (Legislation.gov.uk, 2019c) , the researcher had a duty of care to children under the age of 16 (NSPCC, 2016b) to report any instance deemed to be a danger to the young person and others. Research into criminal exploitation might have, for example, revealed evidence suggestive of sexual exploitation. Under these circumstances, the researcher had a responsibility to share this information with a responsible adult (Heath et al., 2009) at the YOT or in the AEP. ‘Danger’ is largely subjective and was dependent on the researcher’s moral compass as to what they defined it as. Whilst many of the participants were involved in gangs, it was taken for granted that they would discuss aspects of criminality. The researcher thus defined danger as anything that would cause significant and prolonged physical or psychological harm to themselves or others. For example, the researcher knew that some young participants had access to weapons as soon as they left the premises in which they were being interviewed, and she knew that on a daily basis many of them did indeed carry weapons. This was common knowledge amongst the organisations and staff working with the young people and so informing a member of staff would have had minimal impact, only putting an end to the relationship between the researcher and young person (and possibly others) using the service. If, however, a participant had described their wishes to use a weapon on another person, then the researcher would have a moral obligation to share this information with another member of staff at the risk of breaking the trust between the researcher and participants (Kobrin, 1964). The researcher informed all of the young participants that she had a responsibility to safeguard that young person and should a situation like this arise, she would have had to liaise with their worker as soon as possible (Edge Hill University, 2016a). The researcher informed all participants of the possibility of a breach of confidentiality on the participant information sheet and made them aware that under these circumstances, she was obliged to break the promise of confidentiality, but would have informed the participant before doing so.

In line with the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), those using personal data must follow the data protection principles. According to the Government website information must be:

Used fairly, lawfully and transparently; used for specified, explicit purposes ... relevant and limited to only what is necessary; accurate ... kept for no longer than is necessary, and; handled in a way that ensures appropriate security (Gov.uk, 2018).

Personal data of the participants included their names (on the consent form) and their gender, age, living situation, educational situation and victimisation (on the demographics questionnaire). All electronic data were stored on a password protected and encrypted MacBook and hard drive. All hard copies of information (consent forms, interview transcripts, field notes, etc.) were stored in a folder in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's university office, also with a lockable door. The hard drive was used as a back-up, should any issues have arisen with the MacBook. This hard drive was removed from the locked filing cabinet/office door only when backing up work. When not in use the MacBook was securely stored in the researcher's house, again password protected and encrypted. Consent forms were stored separately from interview transcripts and field notes. This ensured that the participants were unidentifiable, thus ensuring anonymity at all times. All data were accessed only by the researcher. Personal data and interview recordings will be kept for no longer than twelve months after the thesis has been complete, thus ensuring that non-anonymised data is kept for no longer than necessary.

Limitations and Reflection

Validity and reflexivity

There are numerous limitations married to this research project. Naturally, many of these reside with the general limitations of qualitative research, however one is firstly urged to examine the overall validity of the study. Unlike quantitative research, there are no strict methods that can be adhered to in order to test validity. As qualitative researchers, the aim is not to measure or test, but rather to 'understand, represent or explain ... a fairly complex social phenomenon' (Pyett, 2003: 1170). Hammersley (1987: 69) argued that research is valid 'if it represents accurately those features of the

phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise'. In addressing this, the focus is on how this can be achieved. A number of academics (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Lincoln and Guba, 1985) have created guidelines for researchers on how to demonstrate academic rigor throughout research projects - from sampling methods through to the use of in-depth, 'thick' accounts when writing up findings. In addition to this, researchers are also encouraged to demonstrate their honesty, transparency and reflexivity.

Reflexivity is an essential aspect of qualitative research and has been described by Hertz (1997) as a process that all researchers should embark upon at all stages of the research. Researchers must acknowledge the role and influence of the self when conducting research and working with people, and accept that aspects of their personality and their outlook will influence the research process (Finlay, 2002; Whitemore et al., 2001). This is known as 'the human factor' (Patton, 1990: 372) and widely accepted among researchers as both a strength and weakness of qualitative research.

Since researchers are acknowledged as active participants in the research process, it is essential to understand the researcher's location of self (Hertz, 1997: viii).

That is, the researcher is aware of their positioning in certain power hierarchies, and embedded within a range of factors such as class, race and gender. All of these were acknowledged as things that could shape the analysis. The idea was to produce an accurate representation of the social world under study (Harding, 1986), therefore it was essential that the researcher questioned her reflexivity at all times. Throughout the research process, the researcher was aware of her own position compared – and in relation – to those under study and how this position, in addition to her own knowledge and interests, imposed upon this process. It is hoped that throughout the analysis and findings chapter, it is evident that the researcher deemed reflexivity as an important process and that what has been reported is an honest and accurate reflection of the phenomenon under study.

Multiple realities

The researcher found that the participants interpreted her in one of two ways depending on the environment in which she was in. For example, young people accessing the YOT asked the researcher if she worked for the YOT or the police. Even after reassuring these young people of her researcher role, the young people were wary and less willing to participate. On the contrary, when in the AEP, the young people assumed that the researcher was a teacher. However, after advising the young people of the research, unlike in the YOTs, the researcher role was accepted and the young people were more than willing to participate. This could suggest that when young people decided not to participate in the research, it was the environment in which they were in that deterred them, rather than the prior assumptions that they held about the researcher.

The researcher found it easy to engage the young people in the AEP. Many young boys were willing to participate and even put themselves forward for interview. The researcher acknowledged that many of these young boys were adopting a more 'masculine' role and in some case putting on bravado as if to participate in the research would be 'cool' in front of their peers. The same could not be said for those in the YOT, who were difficult to engage and on occasion outright refused to even speak to the researcher for an introduction.

Methods of data collection

One also cannot ignore the limitations of some of the methods of data collection employed. Firstly, semi-structured interviews rely largely on reflective accounts (Densley, 2013) acquired mainly through memory - which is, at best, nebulous and selective (Sudman and Bardburn, 1973). As Densley (2013: 11) points out, 'salient events are recalled more easily than events that are frequent or mundane'. Further critiques of qualitative research have implied that the research is too subjective, difficult to replicate and has problems of generalisation (Daymon and Holloway, 2002). The researcher acknowledges these limitations, however she had no interest in creating large amounts of data through replicable and generalizable research. Rather, she wanted to produce in-depth, contextually rich data.

It is important to also consider the location of the research when being reflective. Merseyside was at the crux of the study and there were numerous reasons for this. Firstly, as a geographical area, Merseyside has been largely left out of any real academic debate on gangs. As demonstrated in earlier sections of the thesis, it is larger cities such as London, Manchester and Glasgow that have been given the most attention. This makes any such research on gangs difficult to apply and generalise to Merseyside. The notion that gangs are context specific and vary dependent upon location, urges the need for research in each of those areas. Secondly, through previous research, the researcher had established a strong network of practitioners in Merseyside that would be willing to participate, only needing to access gang-involved young people to complete the sample, of which there were no concerns. Thirdly, the academic literature identifies that outside London, Merseyside is the centre for organised crime (Heale, 2012), with the National Crime Agency (2018) identifying Merseyside as a top exploiter of young people. It can therefore be concluded that this study was timely and extremely necessary.

Numerous ethnographic monographs on gangs (e.g. Patrick, 1973; Densley, 2016) have given rise to the myth-making and exaggeration that takes place when young people are interviewed, claiming that many young people often engage in 'storytelling'. Such is the extent of maintaining masculine values amongst gang members (Gutmann, 2003), that their accounts are often amplified by elements of bravado in order to appear more macho. The researcher could also not ignore her own gender identity and the influence that this may have had on the young boys that participated in the research. The effect of the researcher's gender on the interview process has been paid wide attention by those conducting qualitative research (Padfield and Proctor, 1996; Manderson et al., 2006; Broom et al., 2009). Indeed, Manderson et al. (2006) noted that female interviewers found little difficulty in introducing the research topic and encouraging men to open up. The researcher was thus aware that her gender could have influenced the young male's willingness to participate, in addition to the length, quality and reliability of their interview data. The researcher therefore paid close attention to the details given of the accounts provided by the boys in their interviews. Throughout the research process, and in spending more time with the majority of the participants, data that they had previously provided was returned to in subsequent discussion wherever possible and appropriate. The purpose of this was

to check for consistency and determine whether the participants provided the same answers second time around. In addition to this, where possible data from the young people were cross-validated with data from the practitioners that worked with them. Through informal conversations with practitioners, the researcher was able to direct questions towards particular stories that the young people had discussed (whilst cautiously maintaining confidentiality) to see whether the practitioners' accounts matched those provided by the young people. For the most part, these details appeared to be accurate and so the researcher was happy to include such data in the final analysis.

This chapter has provided insight into the foundations behind the research, detailing a step-by-step guide to how the research was conducted, under what circumstances and with whom. Beginning with the methodological rationale, the researcher described her epistemological and ontological beliefs to argue that understandings and beliefs about the world are socially constructed and are, therefore, different for each person. From this standpoint, she was thus interested in how different people experience different phenomenon. Predominantly, for the purposes of this research, how gang-involved young people experience and interpret gang membership and Child Criminal Exploitation. Of note, it was stated that it is impossible to separate the researcher from the researched (Becker, 1967; Corbin and Strauss, 2008) and thus acknowledged that the researcher will have had an influence over the participants and vice versa. This chapter has also outlined the methods of data collection applied to the two samples - that is, semi-structured interviews, informal discussions, observations and focus groups – and the participants for each sample; gang-involved young people and practitioners. Whilst divulging information on who the participants were, this chapter also outlined the various institutions that they had been selected from (YOTs, AEPs, YOIs) and how they had been accessed for participation. Most importantly, the analytical strategy adopted for data analysis was described at length, detailing each stage of thematic analysis and providing information on the themes that were identified in the two findings chapters. The ethical and political considerations were paid wide attention to demonstrate that all possible risks to both the researcher and participants had been taken into account and mitigated. The chapter closed with a reflexive account that highlighted issues and limitations with the research.

Chapter Four

Findings: Young People

Introduction

Participants consisted of seventeen young people from a range of Alternate Education Providers (AEPs), Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) and Young Offender Institutes (YOIs). More information on the demographic of participants in this sample can be found in appendix 8. The participants were all male with an age range of between fourteen and twenty. The young people were given pseudonyms in order to maintain anonymity. Thematic analysis of the data identified four themes from the young people who participated in the research:

1. The **norms and beliefs** held by young people on topics such as criminality, weapon carrying, codes of the street, and Child Criminal Exploitation.
2. **Marginalisation** and how the young people have been affected by deprivation, poverty, rejection and lack of opportunity and how this has prompted their involvement in crimes such as drug dealing.
3. **Child Criminal Exploitation**, that is, how young people become drawn into criminal activities, how they are exploited by others, the relationships between young people and their exploiters, County Lines drug dealing, and differences in the lived realities of young people and the opinions of practitioners/policy makers on what Child Criminal Exploitation is and the form that it takes.
4. **‘Deviant entrepreneurship’**, identifies how exploited young people deal with their exploitative situations. That is, becoming entrepreneurs of deviant behaviour, embracing more criminally active roles and exerting power over vulnerable drug users. This theme highlights some important findings which follow the transition from exploited to exploiter. It also identifies how young people rationalise and deal with their criminal behaviour and role in criminal exploitation by incorporating techniques of moral neutralization (Ribeaud and Eisner, 2010). Interview data demonstrates how the participants used these techniques to self-justify behaviour that conflicted with their internal moral beliefs. This chapter will present these findings in detail.

Norms and Beliefs

Interview data highlighted a number of norms and beliefs that the participants held that enabled them to survive life on the street. The norms and beliefs were generally consistent across the young people sample. Social interaction in the form of hanging out with other like-minded young people had encouraged conformity and the internalisation of group behaviours and attitudes. The normalisation of violence and criminality, the social acceptance of cannabis use, and codes of the street engendered what it meant to be gang-involved or gang-associated.

Young people at the Alternative Education Provider (AEP) - that is, a group of young people that had been excluded from mainstream education and instead attended the AEP - discussed their involvement in crime flippantly. This usually came in the form of comparatively petty crime which was committed either in groups or with the support of their peers. Anti-social behaviour, theft, drug dealing and fighting were the most common activities – and the result was often being chased by police:

I was chased at the weekend by the bizzies¹⁶, I nicked one of them green city bikes ... everyone nicks them, you'd look like a massive wool¹⁷ if you were caught on one though ... I've stole a bike from somebody in Southport once ... it was worth about five grand, I rode it from Southport back to Norris Green (Liverpool) and sold it for fifteen hundred quid (Giggs, 16).

We used to just do stupidness and just take bikes and that (Eazi, 16).

In terms of associating themselves to gangs, all participants in the sample were adamant that they were not in a gang, but rather 'just a group of mates'. They were aware that these groups held many of the characteristics commonly associated with gangs, such as involvement in criminal activity as well as being in dispute with other likeminded individuals from different areas; whom they suggested *were* in gangs. However, they had disassociated themselves from this label and any negative connotations towards it:

¹⁶ The 'bizzies', short for busybodies, is a colloquial term for the police

¹⁷ 'Wool' is a derogatory term short for 'wooly back', given by people from Liverpool to those from outside the city – i.e. Lancashire or Cheshire

It's just your mates, but you just do bad things, sell drugs n tha ... buy weapons n tha ... I loved it, the money, the bikes, running from the police, everything, it's awesome (Smurf, 17).

I wouldn't have called it a gang at the time, just a group of mates and we used to just do stuff to play like robbing stuff from shops, alcohol, just all different things (Dezzy, 20).

It's not a gang we just sit there, like if people say suttin then we're all together, I wouldn't say it's a gang though 'cause we don't just go and find trouble, we just sit there for people to come to us (Wade Pal, 14).

Rejection of the gang label in this study resonates with other studies in the UK (Hallsworth and Young, 2008; Harding, 2014), where it has been suggested that the label has been applied without criticism to any group of young people who appear to engage in anti-social behaviour. Dissociation, or moral neutralization techniques (discussed in more depth later in the chapter) played a role in the participants' denial of gang membership as they perhaps did not agree with the norms and behaviours typically associated with discourses of 'chaotic' gangs situated in Merseyside. Further, denying this label, in their eyes, warranted less attraction from authority and kept information between 'us' and 'them' to a minimum. Dezzy (20) - the eldest participant in the sample - was the only participant to adopt gang member status; however this was verbalised through reflection of past behaviour. For him, being in a gang meant being feared by others. Like many other young people who join gangs, Dezzy wanted a sense of status, belonging and respect. The gang provided him with these elements, where he was able to build social capital (Harding, 2014) through street robbery and drug dealing:

I'd say it was a gang when we started to rob people on the park 'cause [the gang] was well known ... there was a bit of fear I suppose ... it gets you in with different crowds so I suppose it impresses certain girls as well ... I dunno you get in there with everyone, you become ... it's like a bit of a status symbol as well ... so there are benefits (Dezzy, 20).

Participants spoke openly about the disputes that they had with other young people in Merseyside. For them, it was part of normal street life to have long-term conflicts with a range of individuals who were from different postcodes and boroughs. This left the young people restricted in movement in their own localities (see Deuchar, 2009) and,

if courageous enough, having to travel to neighbouring towns to minimise the risk of violent attacks:

The whole area of Anfield is like ... Tuebrook, Kenny (Kensington), Breck [Road] ... every single one of them have got beef. [Anfield] had beef with Breck [Road] and then I started going out on Stanley [Road] 'cause I couldn't be arsed with all the beef, then all them Breck heads started coming there, [I] ended up going out on Breck and then I ended up going out on Kenny and then the Brook and they've still got beef, it's heavy (Not3s, 16).

I argue with kids down here, I'm from Belle Vale, I go out in Belle Vale and Woolton which is like L25, L26 [postcodes], like that's where I go out mostly, I don't go out of the area unless I need to and if I do I'm going with me mum or me dad (Skeptta, 14).

When determining what these conflicts were attributed to, participants could rarely pinpoint a defining moment in time, describing them as generational grudges (see Deuchar, 2009) postcode wars or petty arguments over money and girls:

Postcode wars, that's what it basically is (Skeptta, 14).

Dunno like, the way you'd just have a stupid argument, could be over a bird, could be over money (Not3s, 16).

It was years ago when the beef happened like, think it was over someone's little sister getting called a slag and then from there on kids have been getting cut over stupid things, like [name] got stabbed up by that kid, not proper stabbed up like but... (Not3s, 16).

People chat about dead people and in the end they get cut up, it's how it is, like kids nowadays don't care who ya are, who ya family are, ya say suttin about them, they're gonna come and get ya (Skeptta, 14).

Harding (2014) notes that identifying such territorial disputes as postcode wars is reductionist and fails to identify the main sources of youth violence evidenced in many urban neighbourhoods. More recent academic inquiry highlights the developing nature of gangs from participating in recreational crime (Densley, 2014) and violence due to defending their local area, to more organised gangs that are predominantly motivated by financial gain - using involvement in illicit drug markets as their primary source of profit (Whittaker et al., 2018). Drawing upon Densley (2012; 2014) and McLean's

(2017) typology of gang organisation¹⁸, whereby ‘organisation exists on a continuum’ (McLean et al., 2018: 152), with delinquent youth gangs located at one end and organised criminal groups at the other, the data demonstrates that the majority of young people from AEPs were situated in the ‘recreational’ stage of gang involvement. In McLean’s (2017) Scottish study into gang evolution, young people involved in Youth Street Gangs (YSGs) engaged in territorial violence and opportunistic crime, rather than crime that was planned to support the gang. This is reflected in this study, where those accessed outside of the AEPs (participating in County Lines drug supply and accessed in YOIs for example) were more likely to be situated in the ‘enterprise’ stage whereby drug supply is the business and the sole purpose is to make profit (McLean, 2017).

Data from this study highlighted the overwhelming fear that the young people had for their safety when on the streets. For example, Skepta claimed to only feel safe when he was with his parents. In order to feel protected on the streets, young people resorted to weapon carrying most commonly in the form of kitchen knives sourced from the family home. Whilst other factors may have influenced their willingness to use weapons, participants stated that personal protection was the sole reason. Awareness of other young people carrying weapons and an innate reluctance to individually seek help from law enforcement, has left many young people feeling that they have to protect themselves. Worryingly, it was not just on the streets that the young people felt they were unsafe. Shady, Wade Pal and Skepta each discussed issues in or around school:

When I first joined here [AEP] I didn’t know who was coming in, I bought a kitchen knife in ... at the time there were kids in the centre that I had beef with ... there was kids from different areas (Shady, 16).

I was at me old school and I had like trouble with like a few of the kids in there and I took a knife with me to like protect meself if they tried to

¹⁸ McLean (2017) proposed an evolving gang model of three typologies of gang organisation. The continuum ranged from delinquent youth gangs at one end to organised gangs at the other. The typologies included ‘recreational’ groups (with an age range of 12-16) that were occasionally delinquent; ‘criminal’ groups whose members were aged 16-25 and predominantly criminal, and; ‘enterprise’ groups who were involved in serious and organised crime with most, if not all, activity centered around crime.

do suttin, cause every time I'd go somewhere they'd try and do suttin so I took a knife with me (Wade Pal, 14).

When I started going out with them it's when I started arguing with all people that were older than me, I had kids that were saying they were gonna come and jump me after school, that's how I first started carrying knives, to defend meself (Skeptta, 14).

Disputes that the young people were involved in continued outside of school. Having been excluded from mainstream schools, the participants often moved to different schools or education providers, accessing spaces which put them at risk of confronting their rivals. Smurf and Not3s had different attitudes towards weapon carrying. After being caught by the police in Cardiff for supplying drugs - and losing his boss's profits - Smurf had longstanding issues with members of his previous gang. His house had been targeted on numerous occasions and, whilst living alone, he felt the need to protect himself against any further attacks:

I'm not scared of anyone or anythink, I've got an arsenal of weapons stashed around my house (Smurf, 17).

This contradictory assertion highlighted two points: that Smurf believed he was ready for any attacks, and that he was prepared to use any means necessary to protect himself and defend his property. Indeed, in order to feel safe on the streets the participants needed to be with likeminded, 'ready' members of the group:

I don't carry weapons no more, I'd just be there with the boys ready, you on it? Wouldn't need weapons, they'd have weapons (Not3s, 16).

This comradery was something that the participants aspired to. Knowing that they had support and protection gave them a sense of belonging, solidarity and power. This supports much of the academic literature (Campbell, 1987; Harris, 1988; Batchelor, 2009; Deuchar, 2009; Goldsmith and Halsey, 2013) which suggests that young people become involved in gangs because of a desire to belong to something and form an identity. Many scholars (Adler, 1939; Maslow, 1971; Mitchell and James, 1998) have highlighted the importance of belonging and having a sense of worth (Crandall, 1981). Participants in this study were no different. They looked to gangs for support, friendship and connectedness.

Each participant in the sample highlighted a number of unwritten rules, or – as described by Anderson (1999) - codes of the street. Accordingly, these were:

... a set of informal rules governing inter-personal public behaviour, particularly violence. The rules prescribe both proper comportment and the proper way to respond if challenged. They regulate the use of violence and so supply a rationale allowing those inclined to aggression to precipitate violent encounters in an approved way (1999: 33).

The codes were identified during analysis, whereby participants described group and personal characteristics of members. The ultimate code of the street was not ‘grassing’ (Yates, 2006b) - refraining from discussing behaviours, experiences and plans with anybody outside of the group. As emphasised by the participants, grassing is perceived as extremely damaging to reputation and puts an end to any involvement in street culture:

I’m not a grass ... I’d rather be dead than be a grass to be honest with ya, cause a grass is worse than a paedophile sometimes, you know what I mean, like that’s just one of the worst things you can be is a grass (Elliot, 16).

[My mate] didn’t tell no one he’d been stabbed, someone asked what was up with him and he said ‘yeah I’ve been hit with a machete’ and he come into college, he needed stitches but he wouldn’t even go the ozzy (hospital) ’cause he’s not a snitch (B, 16).

Once labelled a grass, all street credibility and respect is lost. Afraid of this, the young people were willing to go to extremes to avoid being in the company of authority. Indeed, conferring with police would guarantee immediate rejection from the group and the possibility of reprisals from other gang-involved young people. Seemingly, being tight-lipped under interrogation - even when divulging information would receive lesser criminal sanctions - acquired the respect of the rest of the group. Respect is an essential part of street life (Bourgois, 2003) and guarantees the growth of social capital (Harding, 2014). Those who are respected are at less risk of violence and victimisation (Brookman et al., 2011). Loyalty also played a large role in not grassing. For the participants, loyalty was being honest with each other and reserved with

everybody else. Loyalty was being there when friends needed them. Getting involved in fights and ‘having each other’s backs’:

[Gangs are] loyal for one thing ... in every way, loyal to one another innit, don’t snitch on each other, don’t tell no one nothing and that, they don’t lie, neither do I, you can’t tell lies (Smurf, 17).

The loyalty that you’ve got for certain people like that, I’m out with like my best mates that I’ve been mates with for ages since primary [school], like he’s older than me but I’m alright with him, so like when he argues with people my age like I go and have a fight with the kids that are my age, and when I’m arguing with kids that are his age he’ll come and have a fight with the other kids that are his age (Skeptta, 14).

Whilst all of the participants in the sample were involved in some form of crime and anti-social behaviour, there appeared to be a clear hierarchy of criminality evidenced through their day-to-day discourse. Drug dealing was the most commonly accepted crime that the young people engaged in, and that which received the most respect. On the other hand, certain forms of theft were frowned upon by many of the participants. To steal from other young people was perceived as a disloyalty to the group and a disrespect on the part of the person that had been stolen from. Young people involved in street culture are extremely sensitive to disrespect and signs of disloyalty (Brookman et al., 2011). Anderson (1999) highlighted the ‘punishment of disrespect’ as a code of the street in his research in the US, whereby reprisals could be expected for those that disrespect the group. Findings were consistent amongst the young people during this study:

Froggy’s a thief, no offence ... he’s stolen a peddler (bicycle) from one of our mates ... (turns to Froggy) you need money though don’t you lad? Gotta get it somehow (Not3s, 16).

Froggy got legged¹⁹ ... he got caught slipping so he got legged ... loads of my mates wanna bang him (Giggs, 16).

Whilst Not3s and Giggs were forgiving of Froggy’s antics, they made a point of highlighting what happens to thieves in their area and how this behaviour is usually punished.

¹⁹ ‘Legged’ is a colloquial term for being chased, attacked or beaten up

In terms of norms and beliefs surrounding Child Criminal Exploitation, it became apparent that most of the sample had not necessarily heard of CCE, however they had experienced many exploitative processes whilst involved in criminality, and saw these as a natural progression through life on the street. During Snoop's interview – a seventeen year old boy in a YOI for Possession with Intent to Supply (PWITS) class A drugs (heroin and crack cocaine) - he was adamant that Child Criminal Exploitation had been fabricated in the public domain:

It's a myth, that doesn't happen at all ... no one's forced, I've never heard of that anyway, not round by ours, it's a myth, that's what the kids say when they're scared of getting jail, they say that they've been exploited to try and get a reduced sentence (Snoop, 17).

Snoop unknowingly contradicted himself, however, when he stated that the television documentaries detailing gangs and CCE in the UK during 2018²⁰ were accurate to how exploitation was played out in the public sphere. Snoop had completely dissociated himself from being like other exploited young people, due to the fact that he had received some financial reward from his exploitation. Dissociation is one of the most common coping mechanisms used by children and adults 'to deal with a situation which overwhelms their age-appropriate ability to manage a traumatic event' (Howes, 2014: 13). It allows the individual to detach themselves from experiences that are psychologically or physically overbearing and can occur both during and after the event. Snoop's ability to identify with victimhood and see himself as the same as other exploited young people was distorted by the prospect of making money. This has important implications for victims of exploitation who fail to see the coercion and manipulation that they are subject to because they are rewarded. Such is the manipulative nature of CCE that participants believed that their exploiters were helping them:

They're doing us favours by letting us go and graft²¹ for them so that we can make money for ourselves (Skepta, 14).

²⁰ A number of television documentaries were aired in the UK during 2018 detailing gang life (mainly in the South of England). Features included Child Criminal Exploitation, violence and drug supply. These documentaries included: *Gangland* on Channel 5, *Inside Britain's Moped Crime Gangs* on BBC3.

²¹ Graft, or grafting, is a term adopted by criminally involved individuals which allows for moral disengagement from the notion of criminality, particularly drug

Like Snoop, Smurf claimed that CCE was fictitious - used as a defence strategy in court to receive a reduced sentence. Again, it is possible that – through dissociation - Smurf found it difficult to identify himself as the same as other exploited young people. Elliot was also sceptical of media reporting on CCE and County Lines, claiming that there were stark differences between public perceptions and the realities of these phenomena:

[CCE is] a young person being exploited getting took advantage of by the older gang members, that's what it's like in court anyway, that's what I had to say, 'I was manipulated and took advantage of', well that's what me barrister had to say in court anyway, standard that though (Smurf, 17).

[CCE] is not child abuse, child abuse is proper battering your kid or suttin, exploiting is different than child abuse, exploiting is making them do something without them wanting to do it, you know what I mean? But like, people don't get forced to do it, obviously someone might have been forced to do it when they've owed money or something, you know what I mean? But like no one just thinks 'go and grab a kid off the street, tie them up, get them in the car and force them to sell drugs' like, that doesn't happen ... if it happens they're gonna get grassed on ... it's just stupid, the way like the government just thinks because [people are] dealing drugs ahh like it's the worst thing in the world, it's worse than rape, people who get nabbed for drugs, yeah, fucking get twenty years, but rapist only get three years and they're back on the street in two years, know what I mean? It's a mad one that, everything's about money these days, everything revolves around money (Elliot, 16).

Elliot's belief about CCE strongly resonates with other findings from this study (discussed in detail below) which demonstrate that most of the young people working the County Lines were not forced (although they *were* heavily coerced and manipulated), nor were they unknowing children randomly picked up off the street. Rather, they were already involved in drug supply to some extent and willing to accept the challenge of a new role with the potential for higher return. These participants viewed themselves as apprentices of delinquency, with a vision of progressing up the ranks.

dealing (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019). Once used to define blue-collar work, grafting has been confused for a legitimate form of employment.

In his study on deviant street groups (DSGs) in Knowsley, Merseyside, Hesketh (2018) coined the term ‘delinquent apprenticeship’ to describe the transition through criminality - that is, from occasionally delinquent behaviour, to having a key role in the drug business. His participants described themselves as either ‘youngers’ or ‘elders’ on an apprenticeship through crime with aims of achieving hierarchical stature. Similar discourse was reiterated throughout interviews in the current study, with those in AEPs and YOTs describing themselves as ‘youngers’. The individuals in charge were their ‘elders’ (or bosses). The objective for these youngers was to embrace a more criminally active role that gained more lucrative returns. With that, they hoped, followed status, respect and recognition. Contradicting his previous comments, Smurf made reference to the exploitative nature of drug dealing and the hierarchical structure of working for other people. Regardless of the risk he was taking for his bosses - and the money that they were making through this risk - he had respect for his elders and admired their level of organisation and sophistication:

There’s bosses at the top ... three usually, the bosses don’t touch nothing, they just get passed money, they just let us little ones get shot for them to get them money ... they’re proper OG’s²² innit, original gangsters, got their heads screwed on ... every street gang sells drugs, organised gangs just sell kilos, I don’t know no one like that ... street gangs buy drugs off OCGs²³ to sell, it’s not OCGs getting street gangs to sell for them (Smurf, 17).

The participants had varied and nebulous understandings about Child Criminal Exploitation, but above all, they did not believe that they were victims of exploitation. Reward, most commonly in the form of money, was enough to secure the participants’ compliance and continuation in (County Lines) drug dealing without any real questioning of the risk and/or consequences of their involvement.

In assessing gang-involved young people’s norms and beliefs, findings demonstrate that criminality, violence, weapon carrying, the consumption of cannabis and experiences of CCE had become normalised. Whilst crime did not appear to be a central feature of the AEP group’s activities, they were all, on occasion, delinquent and

²² OG is an urban street term for Original Gangster

²³ OCG is an abbreviation commonly used by the police to describe organised crime/criminal groups/gangs

engaged in criminal activity in the form of stealing bikes, fighting and selling small quantities of drugs. Those accessed via YOTs were more criminally involved, focusing their efforts on making money through involvement in drug supply. Weapon carrying and violence was deemed necessary in order to secure their own safety and protection. Indeed, through regularly moving schools, many of the young people found themselves in spaces which could have provoked attacks from other young people and thus weapons were pivotal in their perceived level of safety. The young people had also internalised a number of codes which allowed for their successful involvement in life on the street. These included keeping rigid boundaries between themselves and authority, not grassing, loyalty and respecting others in the group. Beliefs surrounding CCE were varied and, at times, contradictory. Some believed that CCE was fictional, amplified by the media, others recognised that criminal exploitation was a natural feature of being gang-involved, but distanced themselves from being victims of any such exploitation.

Marginalisation

Marginalisation is an issue present in most social research centred around youth crime and violence (Deuchar, 2009; Goldson, 2011; Harding, 2014; Ellis, 2015; Gunter, 2017; Bakkali, 2019) and was identified as something that could not be overlooked throughout this study. Indeed, issues surrounding poverty and deprivation, rejection, lack of legitimate opportunities and hopelessness appeared throughout interview data. Participants in this sample came from heavily marginalised communities in Merseyside. That is, communities with pockets of deprivation, social exclusion and a significant lack of amenities for young people. In 2015, Liverpool and Knowsley - two of Merseyside's boroughs - were ranked amongst twenty local districts with the highest proportion of their neighbourhoods in the most deprived ten per cent of neighbourhoods nationally on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Fourteen of the seventeen participants in this study resided in either Liverpool or Knowsley. The other three coming from Sefton, Wirral and London (but living in St. Helens at the time of interview). Involvement in delinquent groups, criminality and drug dealing were strategies used by these young people to deal with - and overcome - marginalisation.

Experiences of violence, in addition to the loss of close friends and family members to gun and knife crime, has meant that young marginalised men experience material, symbolic and physical devaluation (Bakkali, 2019). The normalisation of such violence has resulted in these young people failing to hold much significance over their own bodies and lives and placing little value on human life. In addition, it is this group that are at most risk of being victims of violence (Hall, 2002). Upon analysing the demographics questionnaire, it became evident that every young person had been victimised in one way or another during their lives. Most had been assaulted, however a small handful of participants stated that they had been stabbed or injured with another weapon.

Poverty and deprivation had played significant roles in the participants' early adult life. Added to this, many had experienced family dysfunction in the shape of fatherlessness, lack of parental affection, mental illness and/or drug abuse in the home. Together, all of these issues impacted upon their ability to conform to the rules of mainstream school and succeed academically. Rejection became deep-rooted for the participants and followed them throughout their educational life. By the time the participants had got to the AEP, they had been excluded from a number of mainstream schools and exhausted other options of Pupil Referral Units. In trying to form an identity where legitimate opportunities were significantly lacking, participants would act up in school in order to gain attention, or adopt masculine ideals of violence (see Deuchar, 2009; 2018) and engage in fighting in order to increase their reputation and status. They identified themselves as 'wild' and 'bad', labels which they had likely been given by practitioners and internalised as a self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948). These labels had the potential to contribute towards their lack of aspiration (Ralphs et al., 2009):

I was wild when I first came to the centre, I'd been to eight different schools before that, I got kicked out for fighting, I had twenty-four fights and won all but two 'cause I was jumped (Coxy, 16).

I got caught carrying [a knife], I got kicked out of school and got put in a unit and I was bad in that unit so they kept me in there for eleven and a half months and then moved me to [school], then I got kicked out four months after there and then nowhere else would take me so I come here (Skeptta, 14).

I got searched when I was in the school 'cause they said I smelt of Cannabis like, I had a knife on me, they just kicked me out for having a knife (Wade Pal, 14).

I got kicked out when I was in year nine, I went to this college you know for like naughty kids, I really liked it, I got all me GCSEs though, I really liked it there, they just got it, the teachers just like left me to it and helped me with work, let me smoke weed on breaks and tha (Snoop, 17).

These experiences negatively impacted upon the young people's ability to successfully transition into legitimate employment (Ralphs et al., 2009). Participants such as Dezy (20) tried to hold down a number of roles in the legitimate job market, however he found himself selling drugs once again when his employers terminated his contract:

I kept getting sacked from little jobs and I'd always revert back to selling drugs I suppose (Dezy, 20).

Throughout interviews, participants discussed feelings of hopelessness, in that they acknowledged their lack of academic achievements, criminal records and diminishing future career prospects. In addition, participants such as Smurf (17) had observed close family members supporting the family through illegitimate means, thus ending up in and out of prison. Smurf had low aspirations for employment, expressing that he was unwilling to work hard for a job in the legal economy. Rather, he wanted to make fast money regardless of the consequences, something which he appeared to have learned from his father:

What job are you gonna get paid three hundred and thirty quid every two days? Football player maybe, you know what I mean? Grand a week basically, more ... you gotta train for twenty years to get a job when you can just become a crack dealer like that (clicks fingers) ... If I get a legitimate job I reckon it's gonna be something like what they do at Everton [Football Club], if not I'll just end up in and out of jail all me life, robbing n that, if I can't get on any graft I'll just end up robbing, it's what happens, that's what happened to me dad, in and out of jail for robberies all his life (Smurf, 17).

Issues within the home, school exclusion and lack of opportunities, all contributed towards participants spending more time out of the house and on the streets. The streets were somewhere that the young people could associate with other young people

experiencing similar problems. These young people became something of an alternative family, providing support through comradeship, masculine ideals through violence (Deuchar, 2009; 2018), income through drug dealing and theft, protection through solidarity, and escapism from the ‘munpain’²⁴ (Bakkali, 2019) through smoking cannabis and occasionally consuming alcohol. It was on the streets, where Eazi (16) began to observe criminality and the perceived benefits of imitating the criminal behaviour of others. Indeed, he learned from others in his community how to adopt criminal behaviour, values and attitudes (Sutherland, 1947), and was, for a short time, rewarded for this behaviour:

I always had a roof over my head you know what I mean, I didn't have a silver spoon in my mouth but I was always fed, I was always clothed ... some people don't have that innit, so looking at it from that point of view I can understand why people would like go in that sort of lifestyle ... but I'd say personally I wasn't like that ... but you end up becoming a product of your environment ... It was just like to make money, not even like the violence part of it, I don't give a shit about that, fuck the violence part of it ... but the money part of it can be very attractive for everyone, like at the end of the day nobody can say that what they're doing in life aint for money, everything is for money du know what I mean? ... I seen people do (steal) like Rolexes and that and I thought yeah I want one like that du know what I mean and like where did it get you? In a care home ... it's ridiculous to be honest, either you do it till you make it out, or you die or go to jail, simple as that to be honest (Eazi, 16).

For Eazi, it was not factors in the home that led to his involvement in gangs and crime, but rather his environment. Whilst his parents had separated when he was young, Eazi described his relationship with his parents as good. He did however, have teenage family members involved in gangs and his dad resided in an area heavily affected by crime and delinquency. Eazi was hanging around with gang-involved young people from a young age, in what Shaw and McKay (1942) would have recognised as socially disorganised communities. Rather than being a result of personal characteristics, Shaw and McKay argued that crime and delinquency was attributed to the neighbourhoods in which people lived. Poverty and deprivation, community instability, and ethnic

²⁴ The ‘munpain’ is a theoretical term coined by Bakkali (2019) in his doctoral thesis to help understand how marginalised young men experience structural, existential and mundane pains in relation to youth violence.

composition are characteristics that can lead to social disorganization which in turn can lead to crime and delinquency. Eazi detached himself from other gang members, describing himself as intrinsically different from the individuals that found solace in violence. He was not attracted to the violent and aggressive aspects of street culture, something which many young people aspire to in order to acquire status and respect (Anderson, 1999; Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Cohen, 1955; Messerschmidt, 1993; Staff and Kreager, 2014; Thrasher, 1927). Eazi carefully reflected on his criminal trajectory and the end result – being moved to a care home some two hundred miles from his home. Social disorganization theory can be applied to explain how Eazi became involved in crime and drug dealing. He was keen to mention the strong familial relationship he had with his parents, specifically his mother who had provided him with love and support. The pull for Eazi was outside of the home environment however. He noted the impossibility in dealing with feelings of material lack, compounded by media imagery of celebrity culture. Other participants also made reference to the chaotic nature of their environment:

It's just grimy by ours innit, shit started getting heavy in year ten (age 15), you were either involved in it or you stayed in, or moved, a lot of kids have started moving recently (Snoop, 17).

Here, Snoop highlighted the rising occurrence of youth violence on the streets and how difficult it was to remain free of victimisation whilst living in the area. Young people had limited options: become involved in gang-related activity, stay inside, or - if resources allowed - move out of the area. Indeed, young people living in known gang areas are restricted in the spaces in which they can access (Ralphs et al., 2009). Not only this, but gang affected areas are subject to higher levels of police surveillance, specifically from dedicated gang units. One problem with this is the ongoing 'concerns about the risk of labelling and stereotyping young people' (Bullock and Tilley, 2008: 38) as gang members because of where they live, who they associate with and how they dress (Hagedorn, 1990). The result of this leaves young people living in these areas at greater risk of contact with law enforcement. The policing of gangs by specific gang units therefore has the ability to focus police attention on young people who, through no fault of their own, live in known gang areas (Ralphs et al., 2009). This raises important criminological issues surrounding place and space for young people

living in areas affected by gang activity and how they can avoid being drawn into criminality.

The interview data demonstrated some of the difficulties faced by participants affected by marginalisation. In addition, participants had also been exposed to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), such as substance abuse and having a family member in prison (Wade et al., 2014), and had to endure circumstances far outweighing their emotional maturity. The severity of adverse childhood experiences and their effect in adulthood have been well established in academic research, with links to the development of depressive disorders (Chapman et al., 2004), alcohol and drug dependency, suicidal tendencies and diseases in adulthood (Felitti et al., 1998). Research also suggests that adverse childhood experiences ‘increases the risk of becoming a serious, violent, and chronic juvenile offender’ (Fox et al., 2015; 163). In support of this, it soon became apparent that the participants’ involvement in gangs and crime appeared to be influenced by ACEs and a desire to overcome and deal with marginalisation.

Child Criminal Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation, County Lines drug dealing, in-borough drug dealing, drug concealment and other such exploitation is presented here in detail, along with the individuals involved: organised criminals/drug dealers, young people and vulnerable drug users. The theme highlights discrepancies between media discourses of CCE and County Lines, and the lived realities of the young people who experienced exploitation. Participants give their accounts of CCE and what participation in County Lines drug dealing involved.

Interviews began by asking participants to discuss how they became involved with deviant street groups. The testimonies were consistent across the whole sample, highlighting cannabis as the root cause, where every participant reported that their involvement in criminality and drug dealing was related to consuming the drug. At age twelve, Elliot (16) claimed that his involvement in drug dealing came as a result of smoking cannabis with a friend. This, it is claimed, provides young people with a

feeling of togetherness brought on by ‘relaxed social intoxication’ (Jarvinen and Demant, 2011; 165). Similar accounts were put forth by Smurf, Skepta and Snoop:

Me mate ... who I used to smoke with, he said ‘wanna come for a smoke with some friends?’ so I just said ‘go ed yeah’ (Elliot, 16).

Started smoking weed at thirteen, that was it (Smurf, 17).

When I first started going out and first started smoking I was eleven ... it’s [cannabis] what kicks it all off (Skepta, 14).

I started smoking weed in year eight (age 12-13) ‘cause there was nothing to do innit, then just got greedy and started selling weed of me own ... I started gambling loads, but like major money on the roulettes, like I built up a massive debt like and lost loads of money ... I wasn’t smoking much at all really when I first started, at the end I was smoking too much, about thirty quid a day ... I was selling weed in school, I was selling weed and Lucozade, I used to just smoke me profits as well (Snoop, 17).

The motivation to smoke cannabis amongst the sample came largely as a result of trying to cure boredom and the perceived monotony (or *munpain* (Bakkali, 2019)) of everyday life. Against a backdrop of austerity and spending cuts, participants had little in the way of opportunity. As such, smoking cannabis was one of the ways in which they dealt with marginalisation. Yet this has allowed the market in illicit drugs to prosper and become more profitable than before. The normalisation and social acceptance of cannabis (Aldridge et al., 2011) in certain communities has meant that some young people have been exposed to the drug from a young age. The importance here is that persistent cannabis use has been strongly associated with neuropsychological decline (Meier et al., 2012), specifically for those who begin consuming cannabis during adolescence (Volkow et al., 2014). This highlights important ramifications for the future mental health of these young people. Of course, medical cannabis has numerous proven health benefits, such as the management of chronic pain, the treatment of diseases such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s and Multiple Sclerosis, and; its anti-cancerous properties in the treatment of Cancer (Reynolds, 2015). However, over the past decade, developments in the illicit drug market have seen a shift from the importation of cannabis from overseas, to the cultivation (or farming) of cannabis in the UK and the problem lies with the potency and strength of the cannabis. Indeed, increased potency has been linked to adverse mental health

outcomes (McLaren et al., 2008) in the form of psychotic disorders (Knapton, 2018). Over the past two decades, levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) – the psychoactive ingredient in cannabis – have significantly increased in the UK (Freeman et al., 2018) and more than doubled in the USA, rising from four per cent in 1995 to twelve per cent in 2014 (ElSohly et al., 2016). It is this element which impacts upon cognitive function and can lead to psychotic-like symptoms (Curran et al., 2016). In comparison, levels of cannabidiol (CBD) – the antipsychotic component – has significantly decreased, putting young people at increased risk of psychiatric disorders. Despite this, participants failed to see the psychological harm in smoking cannabis, not to mention the financial strain of trying to fund the drug and the risk of developing addictions. Eazi provided his opinion on cannabis:

Drugs? Just weed is all I do, at the end of the day people say ‘weed’s this, weed’s that’, weed doesn’t cause nothing, weed can bring out certain mental health issues innit, it can bring it out but I’ve never heard of it causing anything like that, du know what I mean? (Eazi, 16).

I wouldn’t say I’ve got an addiction but like I’d have like one every ... I’d have like a joint every now and then to help me sleep and that (Skepta, 14)

In terms of describing how they became criminally active, participants used techniques of neutralisation (Sykes and Matza, 1957) and moral disengagement (Bandura, 1986; Bandura et al., 1996) to justify their deviant behaviour and reduce individual responsibility by misattributing blame to other members of the group. The phrase ‘I got with the wrong crowd’ was dominant throughout interviews. Eazi and Skepta provide examples of this:

My cousin is one of the older lot off my estate so obviously I used to hang around with him ... I would get out on the estate when I was seven, du know what I mean? ... I got properly involved when I was twelve ... I had a bit of madness ... I got involved with the wrong crowd n that and erm just one thing led to another (Eazi, 16).

As soon as I got into year seven (age 11-12) I was doing alright, like the first couple of months, then I got in with the wrong crowd, started carrying stuff I shouldn’t be carrying (Skepta, 14).

Such techniques were not only used to detach from involvement in street groups, but were evidenced as rationalisations for the delinquent behaviour that they engaged in throughout their time on the streets. Ribeaud and Eisner (2010) have named this *moral neutralisation* - an umbrella term that combines moral disengagement, neutralisation techniques and self-serving cognitive distortions. Ribeaud and Eisner identified 'cognitive restructuring, minimising own agency, disregarding/distorting negative impact, and blaming/dehumanising the victim' (2010: 311) as the techniques that make-up moral neutralisation. Shady attempted to minimise his own agency, claiming that his actions were not as bad as those of younger generations:

There's probably kids in year seven (age 11-12) that have got kids doing stuff nowadays, like the kids now will be well worse than us ... when I was in year seven I weren't carrying blades around, I was on my BMX (Shady, 16).

In addition, Dezy (20) provided a scenario detailing the trajectory of a family member from exploited young person to exploiter of young people. Dezy had questioned his cousin who had justified his actions by claiming that his victims would have nothing if he had not been paying them to complete risky drug transactions:

I think the sense of belonging is used to exploit the person and money as well for example, so me little cousin has got younger people dropping the ten pound, twenty pound deals of weed off and they do it all day long from nine am till nine pm and they get paid thirty pound a day for it ... I've asked him about this and he says 'no I'm providing them with a bit of a living, they're fourteen or fifteen and they're getting two hundred pound a week out of me, I sort them out with weed and when we go out for food they're with us as well so I feel like I'm giving them some life really 'cause what else have they got' and he's got a point, just for ordinary people who would see that as really bad but from a street side of it that fourteen year old has got a couple hundred pounds in his pocket every week and he doesn't have to buy weed ... I think it is exploitation but at the end of the day the young person doesn't see that and the person who's doing it doesn't see that, obviously there's more horribler cases where people are getting forced to do things for nothing and threatened through violence but as far as it goes I'd say it's a best deal in a bad bunch (Dezy, 20).

At all costs, most participants never willingly admitted that they had been exploited or that they were exploiting others. Only Snoop (17) and Nines (17) acknowledged that they had been victims of exploitation. These participants were in YOIs at the time of

interview. Their understanding may have come as a result of increased practitioner intervention, where YOT staff had spent more time with the young person, explaining CCE and the realities of their situation. Whether the rest of the participants realised that they had been exploited and were in denial - or showing an element of bravado - or had not realised at all; to some extent, they acknowledged that they had been used for somebody else's gain and that their reward had not matched the level of risk for the jobs that they had been tasked to carry out. Participants justified this imbalance by claiming that the criminal act was their choice, that they wanted to do it, or that they were being paid – which to them was proof enough that they had not been a victim of exploitation:

I was never exploited, I chose to sell drugs ... it was for money, or something anyway, you don't do nothing for nothing (Smurf, 17).

I've done it (been exploited) before but like I've wanted to do it, like [the boss] just said 'I'll give ya this' and I've said 'I'll do it anyway' like regardless of what he was giving me I was just doing it anyway for loyalty (Skepta, 14).

They all think I'm up to no good in the youth club 'cause I've got two phones ... they think it's weird that I hang around with a guy that's older ... they think I'm being exploited ... but he's me cousin ... he treats me well (Biggs, 14).

The most common way in which the participants were exploited was through County Lines drug dealing. However, working the lines was not something that every young person was given the opportunity to do. The participants selected to cross borders and manage drug supply in different areas had already proved themselves. They had built up a level of trust, credibility and respect from those higher up in the chain of supply and were recognised as reliable workers. Elliot (16) provided an example of why only certain young people were selected to work the lines and demonstrated discrepancies between media understandings of County Lines and the realities from his point of view:

Them documentaries are all fake, it's not like that, it's proper not like that, [the media] go on as if [drug dealers] just go and grab a kid off the street you know what I mean, [young people have] got to earn their trust first 'cause if you get nabbed you're gonna go and grass aren't ya cause obviously you've been forced to go there ... it's not that bad you know what I mean, like they don't force ya ... they ask ya ... and you either

say yeah or no, if you say yeah you're going, if you say no then sweet I'm not even arsed, you can go next time if you want ... it's mad, [the media] add more stuff into it, they exaggerate ... [Drug dealers] aren't just gonna send anyone you know what I mean? ... You just have to get in with them ... like do things for them basically, just like be good for them ... don't be stupid like don't ask loads of questions, just be normal ... 'cause it's like a job interview, if you wanna start selling their drugs you have to be good (Elliot, 16).

[County Lines workers are] trusted but like they're trusted for a reason 'cause like they've proved themselves to the elders (Skept, 14).

As already highlighted, this study found that although every participant had been criminally exploited, the County Lines workers often approached known drug dealers in their area for work as a way of making money, rather than being 'recruited':

Like I got approached first didn't I, but I said to them 'fucking look I'll do it me, I'm not arsed', easy money for meself innit (Elliot, 16).

Nah it's not like that, half the time they're on the estate, it's all mandem²⁵ innit, you're all in the same gang, when they're chatting about like recruiting people, half the time they're on the estate du know what I mean? ... I asked to go cunch²⁶, the first time I went cunch I asked, 'cause I wanted money innit (Eazi, 16).

They didn't ask me to go on their George²⁷ graft, I asked them (Smurf, 17).

This highlights numerous discrepancies between public understandings of County Lines generated by hyperbolic media clickbait, and the realities for the young people involved. Indeed, recent media headlines have included:

'Inside the 'county lines' drugs den where children are lured from their homes to become teenage dealers' (Crisp, 2019; The Telegraph);

'Beware the county lines: evil inner-city gangs targeting innocent children and teens to swamp small towns with drugs' (Jackson, 2018; The Sun);

'City crime gangs are forcing kids to sell drugs in Leicestershire towns and villages' (Fagan, 2018; Leicester Mercury).

²⁵ 'Mandem' is street term for family or a close group of friends

²⁶ 'Cunch' or 'going cunch' is a colloquial term for travelling the country and working the County Lines.

²⁷ 'George' is a colloquial term for Heroin

Whilst not disputing the fact that CCE in this form may exist in other areas, the findings from this study failed to support headlines that indicate that the young people were 'lured' or 'forced'. Indeed, such headlines serve little other purpose than to increase fear and moral panic (Cohen, 1972) of criminal gangs and divert blame away from the underlying reasons causing many young people to become involved in gangs and drug dealing. Changes to government policy could address factors such as deprivation, social exclusion and lack of opportunity and reduce the motivation for these young people to engage in drug supply as a way of overcoming these issues. Consequently, gangs would find little success in trying to recruit young people to courier drugs for them, if what the young people were trying to overcome was marginalisation, deprivation and poverty. This assertion is not aiming to generalise to all young people experiencing marginalisation as there are many young people that face extreme poverty and deprivation who do not participate in criminality and gangs. Indeed, recent research has focussed on the absence of gangs in some areas (Conway, 2019) and why some people refrain from gang-involvement. For example, Hesketh (2018) dedicated his Merseyside-based doctoral research into investigating 'why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in deviant street groups'. He found that peer influence and parental involvement had the greatest impact on membership or non-membership. Particularly, the ability to form friendships outside of the school environment and positive parental support steered young people away from joining deviant street groups.

Drug dealing was perceived as an easy way for the participants to make money and perceived as one of very few options available to them. One participant discussed having a choice of drug dealers to work for. Yet, further discussion undermined the level of 'choice' that this young person had, when the selecting of one drug dealer induced threats of violence from the rejected other drug dealer:

I've just seen my man (drug dealer) sitting there and ... he said 'I swear you said you was gonna go for me though?' and I was like 'oh nah that's long, that's long', so he's turned around and gone 'let me chat to you', these times I was about five foot six du know what I'm saying, I was only small ... just turned fourteen and this guy, he's like seven foot this big black yute²⁸ and I've thought nah, nah fuck that, like this guy he just said 'bruv either go for man or I dip you in your leg right now so you

²⁸ 'Yute' is a Jamaican slang term for youth

can't go for nobody else' ... what are you gonna do in that situation ... this seven foot black yute has just come for me ... so I've got in the car (Eazi, 16).

Only a small number of participants (N=4) had experience of working County Lines. Elliot and Dezy discussed how they first started working the County Lines:

One of the older kids just said 'ere ... do you wanna make some proper money?' And I was like 'yeah', just started sending me to all mad places all over the country ... Sometimes when you feel lonely or sittin, you know what I mean, you just think 'ahh might as well go and risk it for a bit' (Elliot, 16).

The [bosses] ... give us weed to sell and I put people our way as well 'cause they were interested in selling like ounces ... they weren't really arsed about twenty pound deals (Dezy, 20).

Others had participated primarily in street level drug supply in open drug markets²⁹ close to home (discussed further below). As discussed previously, trust was one of the main reasons why only certain young people were tasked with couriering illicit drugs out of the borough. Another significant reason was related to risk and the individual's apparent level of intelligence. Young people residing in areas of the country in which they have no affiliation arouses suspicion from the authorities. If picked up by the police, young people are required to think on their feet and act in a way that does not warrant further investigation – even when selling drugs. Smurf and Eazi discussed how they did this:

The person who I was doing it for picked me and me mates up from Liverpool and we just drove there at night with like five oz (ounces) of heroin plugged³⁰ (Smurf, 17).

There's a lot of nasty stuff you have to do if you're going that country ways ... one of the things you have to do is banking³¹, plugging, that's nasty business that ... bigger packs are easier to bank and de-bank, smaller ones are just difficult innit, they get lost and shit, one time I was in cunch I had to bank and shit and I had piles when I went innit ... I've clocked that I've got piles and I'm just like fuckkk I've gotta bank as

²⁹ Open drug markets have fixed points of distribution and open access for individuals wanting to purchase drugs. Drug dealers will often wait in public areas to be approached (Windle and Briggs, 2015a)

³⁰ 'Plugging' is a street term for the concealment of packages of drugs inside the anus

³¹ 'Banking' is a street term for the concealment of packages of drugs inside the anus

well ... I just keep the food³² cheeked's³³ off ... obviously if you're on road feds³⁴ can't search your bum cheeks ... but when you go OT³⁵ no matter how much you've got, keep it banked and then keep that pack up ... few layers of cling [film]³⁶ so that if you need to you can just bank it on the spot ... usually you have about four packs ... you do it in a certain way so it's in a cylinder shape innit ... then you leave a pack out and that's the pack you're shotting³⁷ ... I used to have a little pack of ten and ten, so ten browns [heroin] and ten whites [crack cocaine], I've got that out so I'm shotting from that every time ... that pack you have out you have it wrapped in cling in case you need to and when you're out you can plug it on the spot (Eazi, 16).

Internally storing drugs was a daily occurrence for those working the County Lines who spoke of it without any concern for their physical health. Throughout their criminal trajectory, both Eazi and Dezzy had guidance from their bosses, who taught the apprentices how to carry out their job in the most efficient way. In effect, participants were learning on the job how to become better criminals and how to overcome police practices to avoid detection (Friedman et al., 1989):

We've drove down there ... the [boss] went out to do something and he came back and then he just looked at me and thrown me this pack innit ... I was learning on the job ... I didn't know about crack or heroin ... I've gone in the toilet like, he was explaining what to do innit but I didn't have a clue ... we didn't have no Vaseline or nothing like that, it was just nasty ... I've just spat on the pack now and I'm just trying to push it up ... I'm putting stuff up my arse like that's not on ... I was there for two weeks but the Don I was there for innit he was sound ... he showed me what to do ... he actually taught me what I was doing, these lot sort of showed me what I was doing innit so that's where I proper learned ... (Eazi, 16).

The older lads eventually was like 'you're gonna get yourself in trouble, we could make well more money by selling weed or whatever and we'll give you the weed on tic'³⁸ ... they said 'stop robbing people and stop robbing shops and doing all mad stuff, you're bringing unwanted

32 'Food' is a street term for drugs

33 'Cheeked's' means to store/hold a package of drugs between the buttocks, rather than internally conceal it

34 'Fed' or 'feds' is a street term for the police

35 'OT' ('out there' or 'out the way') is a street term for working the County Lines

36 Those involved in drug supply commonly use cling film to wrap packages of drugs tightly, ensuring that they remain together without tearing open and presenting as a risk to health

37 'Shotting' is a street term for drug dealing

38 'Tic' is a term denoted to the 'buy now and pay later' scheme set up by drug dealers for drug users that do not have the funds to pay for their drugs immediately

attention here when you can just blend into the background and make money in ways that aren't suspicious' (Dezzy, 20).

Once Eazi had gained confidence and learned the ropes of working the lines, he began to implement tactics that would reduce risk of detection from police, which in turn saw the exploitation of females:

I bought two girls OT with me one time ... I was speaking to these girls 'cause I just said 'du wanna come up here', 'cause obviously it looks more legit du know what I mean, you're not gonna get stopped as well, obviously if the girls there you get them to plug the food ... you get them to hold the food (Eazi, 16).

As indicated by the National Crime Agency (2017; 2019), it is not uncommon for young males working the lines to begin exploiting and using vulnerable drug users or females for the purpose of mitigating risk (a form of deviant entrepreneurship that will be discussed in further detail below). However, only Eazi (16) made reference to the involvement of females and as such, the role of girls in County Lines activity was not an area that was explored in any great detail during the study. It is also important to note that any data relating to females' involvement was purely from a male perspective and so female involvement in County Lines drug supply is an area that requires further in-depth academic inquiry, particularly from the perspective of girls and young women involved.

There was a plethora of harms that young people were exposed to whilst working the lines. Often based in the home of a (vulnerable) drug user, young people experienced living and working conditions detrimental to their physical and emotional health and wellbeing (Windle and Briggs, 2015b). Young people were placed in unhygienic, barely furnished properties where they were surrounded by normalised heroin and crack use, and drug paraphernalia:

Every few days the [bosses] bring me more stuff like new socks, boxies and stuff like that, but the ken³⁹ I was in was proper dirty ... this one time they had plants growing inside the house n tha, it was horrible, I used to stand up all the time, it was horrible ... what made me stop was just being around all the crack smoke all the time, like I bought a bally⁴⁰

³⁹ A 'ken' is a colloquial term for house

⁴⁰ A 'bally' is a street term for a balaclava

one day yeah with like a gas mask and suttin and I used to sit there with it on (Elliot, 16).

[We stayed] in some punter's ken, rough innit, so skatty, it was horrible, we just lived like punters⁴¹ really, it's skatty, wake up at six AM, sit on your arse all day and wait for the phone to ring ... it was in the winter months as well so it was freezing, I had to go and put money on to pay the heating just so I could have a good night's kip (Snoop, 17).

Participants were in constant contact with adults who were consuming drugs with connected links to psychiatric problems and violence (Briggs, 2010; 2012; Windle and Briggs, 2015b). Rather than raising issues with their employers or refusing to work, participants found innovative ways to manage their hazardous environment. Often paid less than minimum wage per hour, participants were exposed to conditions that they would never find in any legitimate job market. Their acceptance to work in such conditions highlighted the lack of belief that they had in their ability to secure legitimate employment. Elliot even reported being repeatedly offered drugs by those he was living with:

I was offered [heroin] a few times yeah, I had to say to them 'what the fuck, do you wanna get stabbed? Stop asking me that', you have to be angry at them like, 'ask me again and I'll kill ya' (Elliot, 16).

Two of the young people working the lines were faced with particularly traumatic situations which made their experiences memorable and shocking:

I've seen a crackhead die before ... he's started rocking from side to side ... then he's gone asleep yeah ... I've been trying to wake him up yeah been slapping him n tha ... hitting him in the face, I've rang me bosses n said 'look lad he's not answering me' ... he's gone 'ahh lad we're gonna have to move base, so I've just put him nicely on his bed n covered him up ... and then we got a crackhead to go there n ring an ambulance and say he took an overdose, he went all blue ... I shit meself ... dealing ... is just stress, everything you have to do ... just sitting there, you have to count, you have to make sure everything's right, make sure people aren't trying to rob ya, like you've got twenty things on your mind at once just stressing ya, stress for a kid like ... you don't stress about police or nothing, like half the time you don't even see police there, it's mad, you don't think ahh I'm gonna get nabbed, you just think ahh just make sure all the dough's right, make sure

⁴¹ A 'punter' or 'punnie' is a street term for a customer (usually of heroin or crack cocaine)

everything's right, people aren't trying to rob ya, make sure the doors all locked n that, it's horrible though ... and then you experience shit like that overdosing ... stress! (Elliot, 16).

The first time I went [OT]... the guy overdosed in front of me yeah ... we just started getting water and pouring it over his face trying to wake him up like innit ... I was like thirteen du know what I mean, like I was thinking what like this guy's dead, I was thinking shit ... he's dead (Eazi, 16).

Working (and living) conditions varied greatly dependent upon the relationship between drug dealer and young person, and how sophisticated their supply network was. In some cases, young people were sent to work without any accommodation at all. In particularly manipulative cases, drug dealers were setting their workers up, organising robberies and leaving the young person with a drug debt - having to pay for the lost drugs and potential profit:

[Name] went up there, they left him there, the phone wasn't even done properly yeah, there was no house to chill in, there was no yard, there was no bando⁴² to chill in yeah and then literally he's been up there with like four hundred pound and food and that as well, he got robbed so they were after him for time ... like fuck that, they take the piss (Eazi, 16).

My mate ... he went OT for these kids yeah like after twenty minutes of dropping him off yeah they all came back with ballys ... he had a debt then, he basically worked for free ... ten grand is a big debt for a fifteen year old kid, a grand is a big debt for a fifteen year old kid you know what I mean (Elliot, 16).

These factors encouraged young people to remain alert and vigilant when working the lines:

You have a phone that they ring you on, you get told a spot where to go to get the shot (transaction), like two white, three Bs⁴³, he's gonna give you this much money, obviously if they don't give you the right change then you don't give it to them, always take the money first and if it's not the right amount of money then you don't give it to them (Eazi, 16).

⁴² A 'bando' is a street term for abandoned house, but more commonly referred to in this context as somewhere to sell drugs from

⁴³ On the streets, heroin and crack cocaine are referred to in terms of their colour. White signifies crack cocaine and brown signifies heroin.

The person [working the lines], they haven't got the phone, they've got a different phone, the person down in Liverpool gets the phone call to say what they want and then he sends a text to that phone and the kid has to go and meet them with it (Wade Pal, 14).

As Eazi and Wade Pal discussed, in most cases of County Lines drug dealing the criminal gang orchestrating the business manage the drug phone (also referred to as a 'graft'⁴⁴ phone) from their main city/hub. Drug users in the area place orders to the graft phone, the drug dealer will then ring the young person and inform them where to meet their customer and with which product:

In twenty-four hours [the phone rang] more than hundred times, 'cause the phone rings by a punter and then the boss rings as well, but I'd have my iPhone and I'd have a little Nokia with all the little crackheads' numbers on (Elliot, 16).

They said 'have this phone here, it's ten [AM] till eight [PM]', and then someone goes on from eight [PM] till four [AM] ... the person you do it for answers the phone and we were just going out to serve the smackheads (Smurf, 17).

Known as 'remote mothering' (Kelly, 2019), drug dealers will observe their workers by calling and checking up on them and their level of remaining stock. Recent media reports have suggested that organised criminals are using apps such as 'Find my iPhone' to track and monitor the movements of their workers (ITV News, 2018). Participants were heavily monitored through telephone conversations, however this study showed no evidence of the use of apps in enabling surveillance:

The [bosses would] ring four times a night, something like that, [to] see how I'm getting on, see how much I've got left (Elliot, 16).

Whilst findings have already indicated that the participants came from dysfunctional families, the study revealed that the parents of the young people used to courier and

⁴⁴ Grafting is a term that has come to be commonly known on the streets and housing estates of Liverpool as drug dealing. The dealer will have purchased an inexpensive phone named a 'graft phone' which their business will centre around (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019)

sell drugs either knew about the exploitation and turned a blind eye to it, or were directly gaining from their child's involvement:

'Me mum found out that I wasn't in me mate's [house] 'cause I ordered a Dominoes' this one night and they asked for an email address, well I didn't have an email address so I put me mum's on the order, then they emailed her saying 'Dominoes', Hull', she rang me and was like 'what are you doing in Hull?!' [laughs]' (Snoop, 17).

Some of the [parents] know, like me mate's mum, she knew obviously, she was a single mum 'n' that you know what I mean, like she was alright with it ... he was paying her rent ... I reckon that's why she was alright with it ... I used to say to me dad I was staying at me mate's like the first month ... I reckon he was on it though you know what I mean, I was staying away for a long time when I was OT, but obviously like he must have been on it ... I just said to him 'look dad I'm not gonna lie to ya, I'm dealing drugs innit ... I'd say 'ere look dad instead of asking for money off you, I can just go and make me own money dead fast like', and he just said 'look do whatever you're doing but if you get nicked, I'm not arsed, it's your own fault, don't come crying to me if you get nicked' (Elliot, 16).

Snoop's account highlighted a significant lack of parental boundaries in that he was often away from home for weeks at a time, with no reprisals or real concern for his whereabouts. It is factors such as this, in addition to environmental factors, social conditions and structural violence, that make it easy for drug dealers to exploit young people. Parents that were directly benefiting from their child's involvement in drug supply were usually those struggling financially, using the money that their child had made in order to pay their rent. Family exploitation was not something heavily reflected in the data, yet always seemed to be on the periphery. Some participants discussed having friends whose parents opted to home-school their children but instead sent them out for the day to sell drugs; however, this was only anecdotal and so further research is needed into the exploitation of children by their families. One participant, Dezzy (20), described how he had begun exploiting one of his younger family members. In discovering that his cousin was being used by others to mind weapons, he decided that if a family member was being exploited, then he wanted full control of it:

I exploited me little cousin to be perfectly honest ... I found out he was doing little things for people, hiding guns in trees and stuff so I was dead angry at these people and I was like 'stop using me cousin like that' and they were like 'he's a good kid, he's gonna be one of the boys'

... so I took him under me wing then he was like 'du know how much weed I can sell in school?' so we was like sort of little bits of partners, I could tell I was exploiting him 'cause I never used to pay him what he should've been paid really (Dezzy, 20).

How Child Criminal Exploitation works from the ground

Young people were drawn into exploitative relationships in one of two ways. The first was a reward-based system. As outlined in earlier chapters, rewards for criminal exploitation can be tangible such as money and drugs, or intangible such as affection and recognition. Participants tasked with drug supply through County Lines were mostly rewarded in financial terms. Elliot, Smurf and Eazi had all made agreements with their bosses prior to agreeing to leave their hometowns and work the County Lines. A set price had been agreed and upon return, the participants expected to be paid in full. For participants such as Eazi, other small rewards were provided by his boss on a daily basis to provide some extrinsic motivation to continue:

When you go OT you've gotta have expenses while you're there ... for like food, things like that, your cigarettes, your weed, you have expenses per day, usually it's about twenty pound a day ... so with that I can buy a few little things from the shop, a packet of cigs and I've got a little draw there, a ten bud to smoke innit, so you're nice for the day (Eazi, 16).

There was a split amongst the participants though when it came to rewards. Where larger financial rewards were given to those working out of borough, young people being exploited to sell drugs within markets on their estates were mostly provided with free cannabis. The participants tended not to see this as a problem and displayed no sign of unease at being paid with free drugs rather than cash:

I don't buy drugs me, I don't have to buy drugs, I get them given to me ... I don't pay for nothing, I haven't paid a thing in ages ... they'll give me a certain amount of a gram, I'll go and [sell] that bit and then I can smoke the rest (Not3s, 16).

The second way in which young people were recruited for the purpose of criminal exploitation was through debt bondage, demonstrated earlier by Elliot (16) and Eazi (16). Indeed, the majority of the participants supplying drugs in-borough tended to be paying off debts which they had been allowed to accrue by drug dealers for small amounts of cannabis that had built up over a few weeks. Young people had been

allowed to build drug debts through a process known as ‘strapping’ or ‘tic’ which allows customers to purchase drugs on the spot without having to find the payment immediately. This had become a normalised part of street culture and was used to the advantage of drug dealers, who were aware of the financial struggles and cannabis addictions of the young people engaged in street culture. Drug dealers thus used cannabis as an enticement to find new workers. Nines provides an example of his experience of accruing a drug debt:

I never really wanted to smoke weed but all me friends did so I felt pressured so started smoking ... I ended up owing this dealer about four hundred quid ... then I saw him in the park this one day and he asked for the money ... obviously I didn't have it and that's when he pulled out a knife and stabbed me ... me dad moved us from the area so I didn't see anyone for a while, but one of me mates knocked on for me and asked if I was going out this one day and we ended up going back to Kenny (Kensington) and then we saw the dealer again, he made me sell drugs to pay off me debt and he dropped me off at some gaff in Kenny and told me to stay there ... I was making about a grand a day for him and wasn't get no money for it ... I didn't get given no weed so I stopped smoking ... I was charged with attempted arson cause the guy who I was working for sprayed petrol over this crackhead's house 'cause they robbed me bike, he lit a match but the fire went out straight away ... the crackheads were scared of the guy so they give me name to the bizzies... I would've taken the blame for it if they'd have died 'cause I knew what he would do if I grassed him up (Nines, 17).

Nines' case was a particularly extreme example of Child Criminal Exploitation. Yet it demonstrates how easy it is for young people to become victims of criminal exploitation. From engaging in cannabis use with a group of friends he had grown up with, Nines ended up on an eight-year prison sentence for the separate charges of attempted arson and possession with intent to supply class A drugs. Interviews with Nines revealed the level of fear that was involved with CCE. In ensuring that lenders would receive their money, drug dealers had to prove that they were to be feared. Unable to rely on law enforcement as a means for resolving business disputes, drug dealers had to regulate markets themselves. This was often portrayed through systemic violence (May and Hough, 2004) and masculine ideals of aggression. Being under the threat of, or actual violence kept young drug runners from noncompliance. Nines' case demonstrates that criminal exploitation in the form of drug supply is not an issue restricted to out of borough drug dealing. This highlights possible implications for the young people that are being criminally exploited closer to home. Law enforcement

agencies have been keen to address CCE under the term County Lines Exploitation (National Crime Agency, 2015; 2016; 2017), thus focussing on the issue as one that transcends borders. By doing this they are neglecting vulnerable young people that remain in more urban neighbourhoods.

Out of the seventeen participants, only a handful recognised and accepted that they had been exploited, though whether they truly understood the extent and gravity of Child Criminal Exploitation is left contested:

I don't reckon I was exploited, I reckon I was used, I reckon I was proper badly used ... in two weeks I got like two thousand and one hundred pounds for two weeks, it's shit, that's bad wages, you get hundred and fifty quid a day ... I half knew I was getting used but like I liked doing it you know what I mean 'cause it was fun n tha ... I used to enjoy it, I used to think it was good (Elliot, 16).

I can begin to see how on reflection how that was sort of exploiting us, so sucked us in really into business and it was all going well but then this darker side began to emerge and again at the time you think ... me friends thought it was a good deal really because they said 'we'll pay you a thousand pound every time if you go and retaliate to them ... they wanted us to use firearms against these people ... most of me mates agreed to this ... five of them in a car so that means they only got two hundred pounds each which is nothing (Dezzy, 20).

Particularly low payment and wages, when compared to the vast profits that can be made from dealing in class A drugs and firearms, demonstrate the significant lack of respect that the drug dealers had for the young people working for them. According to the National Crime Agency (2017), a typical phone line on average can reap profits of up to three thousand pounds per day, with more experienced lines making up to five thousand pounds. Whilst the County Lines participants may have been happy with their wages, on average they were working for around six pounds per day:

They pay ya half and say 'I'll give you the other half when you get back and give you two hundred more', and I'm like yeah two hundred more ... and they say 'just make sure you're ready for next time n that' ... like they give ya weed or give ya ciggies n tha all the time ... it is nice being with them you know what I mean, being close like, being in a gang n tha (Elliot, 16).

It became apparent that young drug runners were only properly rewarded when they were deemed useful to the drug dealers. Elliot was given more money than he was originally expecting, however it came at a cost; that he had to be willing to work the lines again whenever required. In some instances, County Lines workers were not compensated at all and received no payment. In more unfortunate cases, the exploitation of certain participants resulted in contact with the criminal justice system and lengthy prison sentences:

I'm not gonna lie to you, most times I've gone it's just fucked up, there's either been a madness yeah in like OT or I've just ended up not getting paid (Eazi, 16).

The [police] pretended to be a smackhead, me mate went to serve him first and said something wasn't right so then I came out and they tackled me to the ground, I had some in my mouth that I was trying to swallow but they wouldn't let go until I spat it out (Smurf, 17).

I know lads that have been nicked with more heroin and crack than me and got ISS⁴⁵, plod⁴⁶ hated me in Hull though, when I was nicked one of em was shaking me cuffs saying 'you little scouse cunt, I'll make sure you're not out of them' (Snoop, 17).

Widespread acknowledgement of CCE in addition to County Lines remaining a national priority (Home Office, 2018b), has encouraged shifts in attitudes towards young people who offend from perpetrator/offender to complete – or part - victim status. Yet this account highlights that there is still some way to go for all police officers to recognise the exploitative nature that surrounds drug dealing and the dangers that some young people have endured before their first point of contact with the Criminal Justice System. Not only amongst members of the police do these attitudes require consideration, but also within the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Regardless of their victim status, Snoop (17) and Nines (17) were given lengthy prison sentences. According to the participants, there was no recognition during court

⁴⁵ ISS[P] is short for Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme and is a non-custodial intervention granted by the Courts to young offenders. Those on ISSPs are often monitored for 25 hours each week for a set period of time, allowing agencies to track and monitor the whereabouts of the individual in addition to trying to address their offending behaviour (Gray, 2013).

⁴⁶ 'Plod' is a colloquial term for the police

proceedings that the young people were acting under duress. Particularly for Nines' who received no payment for dealing drugs, was manipulated through a minor drug debt and ultimately governed by fear and intimidation.

According to Elliot, contact between employer and employee does not cease upon arrest and conviction. He asserted that certain young people are looked after in prison by drug dealers if they have been arrested whilst selling their drugs:

If it's one of their mates ... you'd be comfy, it'd be cosy, they'd box them n that, they'd give them an oz (ounce) of Spice n that you know what I mean so they could make money for themselves in jail, so it'd be alright yeah (Elliot, 16).

Whether drug dealers go to the effort to ensure that young people are 'looked after' in prison is left unknown. However, the likelihood of this is dependent upon the relationship between the drug dealer and their worker, and how valued the young person was. Aside from Snoop and Nines, Smurf and his acquaintances were also arrested and charged with possession with intent to supply. Due to his age, Smurf managed to evade a custodial sentence and was instead given an ISSP (Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme). Owing to a more realistic expectation of what happens once arrested, Smurf described constantly being under the threat of violence from drug dealers due to the confiscation of drugs and potential profit that these could have produced whilst working for one particular gang:

Now Linacre [gang] and Kirky (Kirkstone) [gang] have joined, that's massive, probably about sixty people in one gang, all after me ... because I got nicked on their George ... the bizzies took eighteen bits and about four hundred and fifty quid ... but I owed them more money before that ... all in all I owe them about twelve hundred quid, I was just strapping⁴⁷ it off them (Smurf, 17).

In support of the literature on exiting gangs, very few participants managed to successfully desist and leave the lifestyle behind them. It was extremely uncommon for young people to walk away without retaliations (Decker et al., 2014). Elliot (16), however, did manage to exit the gang and stop drug dealing for a short period of time, but it was due to the constant threat of violence and the strain that this was causing his

⁴⁷ 'Strapping' is another colloquial term used to refer to the 'buy now, pay later scheme' made available by drug dealers

family. Elliot, his brother and his dad were moved out of the area by the local authority due to safety concerns from other rival gangs in the area. This was after being attacked in his home by a group of males also residing in Kensington, Liverpool over drug territory:

I'll be on the step having a ciggie and they just came to me and I didn't have me knife or nothing so I said 'ere ya dad pass me a blade quick' and they just ran at me so they came in and grabbed the blade and started at me n all that ... I've been having it with the one with the big machete ... I had all machete cuts on me hand (Elliot, 16).

Rather than being indebted to his previous gang and facing hostile leaving conditions, Elliot recalled leaving on good terms with his exploiters, who occasionally called him to check on his welfare. He described his relationship as a 'graftership', claiming that he had been welcomed into his boss's family and on occasion asked to look after his children. This was not the case for all the participants. Relationships between exploiter/drug dealer and perpetrator/drug runner were varied, differing in value, respect, reciprocity and authenticity.

This theme has highlighted the nature of Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines drug dealing. Accounts from participants have identified some of the detrimental working conditions; the level of fear involved; the risks and consequences involved in working the lines; and personal experiences from those who have lived it. The final theme - deviant entrepreneurship - evaluates how young people deal with being criminally exploited and overcome the monotony, boredom and risk of working the County Lines, drawing upon interview data from the four participants who experienced it: Snoop (16), Smurf (17), Elliot (16) and Eazi (16).

Deviant Entrepreneurism and the Participants' Exploitation of Drug Users

Defined by Hesketh (2018) through his research on 'deviant street groups' (DSGs), 'deviant entrepreneurship' is a term coined to describe the ever-evolving processes of gang-involved young males developing 'dangerous and deviant entrepreneurial traits' (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019: 6), namely, involvement in 'grafting'. Grafting has become part of common parlance for those involved in drug distribution in (but not

limited to) Merseyside. Indeed, deviant entrepreneurship in the form of drug dealing has become so widespread in Merseyside that there is a blurred line between lawful employment and criminality for some disenfranchised young people. The accessibility of drugs and ease of becoming involved in the trade has provided youths with what they deem to be a legitimate substitute for licit work. Aspirations, status and the need to fit in - encouraged by excessive consumerism and reinforced by the media through images of celebrity culture - have increased to heights that far exceed the level of income that any legitimate work could meet, if ever it was available for the marginalised young people. The result has meant that involvement in drug supply has become one of the most accessible ways in which many young people can achieve and manage their expectations (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019). Gradually evolving from supply in open drug markets, is the process of overcoming market saturation through County Lines drug dealing - and the resulting criminal exploitation of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Participants in this study, whilst naïve in their willingness to sell drugs for other people, had particular knowledge and skills that made them valuable young entrepreneurs in the drug trade. Many participants were implicitly aware of their exploitative situation – although this was mostly denied - and had provided themselves with numerous justifications in order to temporarily mute their cognitive dissonance. Very rarely were aspects of their exploitation verbalised explicitly and if they were, they were addressed in a dissociated manner, where participants separated themselves from being a victim. Seemingly, participants did identify that they were either being played/used or not rewarded for the amount of effort/risk they were offering. In order to take back some control, some participants decided to take what they thought was owed to them, or fight back towards the drug dealer that was exploiting them, as Eazi provides an example of:

We was in this yard yeah just bunging this zute⁴⁸, like we was just chatting like ‘ahh shall we just take the pack’ like, ‘fuck these man just say we got robbed or suttin ... what they gonna do?’ ... We got battered, obviously I was there, I was involved ... that day when money went missing I was there ... I robbed these man already innit (Eazi, 16).

⁴⁸ ‘Zute’ is an urban street term for a cigarette containing only cannabis (and no tobacco)

In return for his rebellion, Eazi and his friend were violently attacked. Yet this did not stop him from working the County Lines again. The second time Eazi worked the lines, he was sent by a different drug dealer, who was trying to leave him with excessive quantities of drugs - a manipulative technique that aimed to overwhelm Eazi and leave him in a position of debt bondage:

I knew what kind of game they was playing innit, giving me enough food so that I lose something ... then if I lose something I've gotta stay out here longer innit ... I know what game these lot are playing so I thought fuck these fam, I took the money, it was about two and a half grand, took about three grands worth of food and just done a little madness in Bristol ... then feds came to my yard and put me in secure [accommodation] ... I've stopped the whole mentality, trying to make a change is one thing but the mentality has gotta be right as well, I'm changing how I'm dressing, I got this today from Matalan, Matalan! ... I think that's why I haven't been able to put my all into [County Lines] because there's another side of me where I'm not like that, I'm not even really aggressive like that, I don't like confrontation du know what I mean, I've had to do madness because I've had to, there's no other way to chill the situation innit (Eazi, 16).

Aware of how difficult he would find it to manage large quantities of drugs and how close he was to becoming a victim of debt bondage, Eazi once again decided to regain some control over his exploiter by taking his money, shortly followed by the local authority moving him out of the area for protection purposes. Eazi often dissociated himself from the person he was when selling drugs, claiming that there were two sides to him. It was these moral neutralization techniques that allowed him to continue in drug supply without causing contradictions with his moral compass.

Findings suggested that the participants involved in in-borough drug dealing mostly complied with their bosses. The opposite was sometimes found for the participants involved in County Lines drug supply, who strived for greater success, greater financial reward and more opportunity. At a young age, they were progressing through their apprenticeships, learning more skills and becoming more proficient in the drug market. Like any entrepreneur starting out his business, participants identified the need to get themselves known and overtake their competition. Elliot provided an example of this. Rather than selling drugs from the base in which he had been placed, he decided to go on foot in order to expand his customer-base:

I was the best in Stoke yeah I never just stayed in the house, I used to get out there, some of them just stay in the house and wait for a phone call but I'd get out there and like wanna get known round there and let everyone know that I was dealing, and make more money for the boss and more money for meself as well ... every two hours I'd send a text out saying, 'best of both blah blah blah' fucking 'six for fifty, twelve for a one-r (one hundred pounds),' just get it out there ... basically advertising like you see on billboards but we do that on texts, we make all jokes with it ... 'frosty white' ... 'best of both', they're all crazy ones like, 'snow white', all mad ones (Elliot, 16).

Not only did he become proficient in networking, but also in advertising, developing innovative offers that would make him - as a supplier - stand out. Snoop (17) was also amongst the more entrepreneurial participants in this study. He discussed his progress from low-risk, low-profit drugs to those that brought greater reward. Starting out distributing cannabis, he quickly saw the return he wanted and decided to get into riskier and more profitable drugs in the form of Ketamine (a horse tranquilizer):

I just got greedy, I made more money than sense, blitzing major dough, I had a Poly⁴⁹ phone and then swapped it for a Ket[amine] phone ... I had contacts for Ket and then Poly on two separate phones, I switched the Poly one for Ket and then just got proper greedy ... I enjoyed it a bit like, the money was next level ridiculous, we were making around two grand every two days, split between the two of us (Snoop, 17).

Snoop went from working for other drug dealers, to setting up his own line (or 'graft') in Hull, supplying class A drugs in the form of heroin and crack cocaine. Due to competition from other drug dealers whilst working the County Lines, participants had to use their initiative. Further, young drug runners were at greater risk of violence and robbery from opportunistic criminals who knew that the likelihood of calling the police was low (May and Hough, 2004). In consolidating his deviant entrepreneurial traits, Snoop saw opportunity through the use of vulnerable drug users. He was aware that the heroin and crack cocaine-using community was close-knit and by associating with one drug user, he could easily spread his phone number around to other drug users:

You just have to find one crackhead and then your number goes everywhere, they know all of them, you could pay a crackhead a tenner and they'll send your number to loads of other crackheads, it's too easy

⁴⁹ Poly is strain of cannabis widely consumed by young people in Merseyside

... just give em drugs, they'll do anything for drugs innit ... nah they're muppets, you can get them to do anything, anything, if you tell them to do five star jumps, they'll do five star jumps ... give them thirty quid a day, they get violated (Snoop, 17).

Highlighting the level of desperation that he witnessed amongst vulnerable drug users, Snoop found no problem in adding to their problems in the form of exploiting them. It soon became evident that those participants exploited into working the County Lines, quickly embraced the role of exploiter themselves. He had welcomed the opportunity for hierarchical power over a subordinate group of people. Indeed, County Lines workers saw drug users as opportunities and used them to: reduce risk of detection from police; increase their customer-base and profit margins; for entertainment; and for sexual gratification (explored in more detail below). Paradoxically, drug users were the participants' best – and only – customers. Without these, the participants would be without work and thus money. Once again incorporating techniques of moral neutralisation, participants had, and continued to, de-humanise this extremely vulnerable and marginalised group of people. The derogatory language used to describe drug users highlighted the participants' lack of respect and level of disgust, and was evident throughout the interview data – which will be presented in the remaining section.

Highlighted previously, the main way in which drug dealers avoid detection from the police whilst working the County Lines is by selling drugs in closed markets (May and Hough, 2004), away from public spaces. To secure the locations for closed drug markets, vulnerable drug users have their properties taken over by criminal groups (or individuals), a tactic known as 'cuckooing' (National Crime Agency, 2017; Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Spicer et al., 2019), as mentioned in the literature review. The way in which these groups then secure compliance from the drug users is through leveraging addictions (Robinson et al., 2018), as Elliot and B describe:

I give them [heroin users] three bits (heroin and crack) for twenty-four hours, you know what I mean, his house is mine ... sometimes they ask for more and you've gotta be straight and say nah you're not getting no more (Elliot, 16).

I used to have a graft on that street ... there's a woman that lives down there and you give her a go of crack and she lets you stay there all day ... it's less hot (B, 16).

When working on foot or having to travel to customers, participants quickly learned that the same drug users could be utilised to make transactions appear more like legitimate exchanges between drug users, rather than suspicious trades between dealer and user:

I'd say [to the customer] 'what's ya name?' you know what I mean and then I'd say to [the drug user] 'ere, du know [customer's name]?' and he'd be like 'yeah' so I'd say 'yeah man come to [address]' and he'd come, but if it was someone who was like half moody or like a random crackhead or something I'd go alone and carry a blade or something so if he tried doing something he'd get stabbed (Elliot, 16).

We never went out ourselves, we always sent the punter out and waited for them to return, [we] just stayed in and answered the phone ... it's dead obvious for plod if they'd seen a straight-head [non-drug user] giving stuff to a punter, but if it's a punter to a punter then it just looks like a friendship doesn't it (Snoop, 17).

Participants placed little value on the lives of the drug users, evidenced through Elliot's willingness for violence if deemed necessary and Snoop's apathy towards the risk he was placing on his victim. The young drug runners enjoyed their role and ability to manipulate others into doing what they wanted. Not only were drug users used to maximise profits, but, when bored, predominantly male drug users became a form of entertainment to pass the time and the monotony of waiting for the next customer:

I made this crackhead eat shit n tha for rocks ... I've made one do all challenges n tha ... I've been like 'what lad I'll pay ya anything to do it now ... I'll pay ya three bits to do it, thirty quid' and he fucking picked shit up with his hand and ate it ... it was funny ya know ... they'll do anything crackheads ... when they haven't got no [drugs] they start begging for it, they start all itching n that, it's horrible, like pure fiends, it's horrible (Elliot, 16).

I'm sitting by this canal in Hull, and this was the first day I got there, and this crackhead walks over to us and the lad I'm with just gets up and smacks him in the face and he fell backwards into the canal, and he's just swimming mad and everything trying to get out and then the lad shouts, 'nah you're not getting back onto this side', so the crackhead

just starts swimming further and further away, it was funny ya know (Snoop, 17).

Female drug users tended to be used by young drug runners for the purpose of sexual gratification. Their sexual exploitation was once again leveraged with the promise of free drugs, as Elliot recalls:

I've done it with girls n that, I've been bought ... I'd phone [the drug dealer] and say 'ere ya lad, you fucking paying for one of these [drug users] then?' And he's said 'go ed lad' ... when I was bored I just thought fuck it, might as well, I've done it loads of times (Elliot, 16).

Participants and their associates took turns in humiliating and degrading drug users. In some cases, participants deemed the drug users as too repulsive to use for sexual purposes and were explicit in their willingness to verbalise these opinions:

You can just tell when you see one, when you see one walking down the street you can just tell that they're a crackhead can't ya ... they're the skattiest people I've ever met in me life I swear, I've heard the [girls] asking for a tenner [in exchange] for a suck and the lad's agreed and then they've just been punched in the face (Snoop, 17).

The implication here, was that in some cases, County Lines drug dealing and sexual exploitation were linked (Robinson et al., 2018). Male perpetrated violence against women is a traditionally common way for men to ensure subordination over women. Indeed, violence against women tends to be proliferated in a gang context (Pitts, 2007), whereby the act of violence reasserts masculinity, power and domination (Deucher, 2018).

According to Robinson et al. (2018: 12), '[v]ulnerable drug users find themselves in an impossible situation'. Powerless to their inhumane treatment, humiliation, victimisation and exploitation, drug users would, on occasion, try to gain control by fighting back at their exploiters. With the social construction of drug use placing harder drugs such as heroin and crack cocaine at the centre of repugnance and cannabis as socially accepted, those that thus engage with hard drug use are associated with being problematic, manipulative and dirty (Room, 2005). There were occasions in the

research where young people would detail this powerless group of people trying to exert some power over others, as Elliot and Snoop provide examples of:

A few crackheads have tried to rob me yeah, terror them though, zero fucking tolerance, I had to threaten one with a screw driver, he just tried to grab me n tha, I said 'get off lad before I stab ya' ... and I've just gone bang with the screwdriver, I've never seen someone jump so high in my life, it was funny ya know ... like it's a crackhead you know what I mean, I'm not scared of a crackhead, I terrorise them, I've always terrorised them n stuff since I was a kid, 'cause they're weak aren't they, flopsy n tha, they scare easy, just whack them once and they'd be on the floor ... they're dead fragile aren't they, they're skinny as fuck and I'd just snap them ... I remember fighting with one once, but obviously, fucking, they'd try and get you with needles ... they go on as if ahh crackheads are gonna kill all the kids n tha, like they need to understand crackheads are weak n that, like (points to a baby) he could batter a crackhead, that little man there, I've seen girls batter crackheads you know what I mean, little thirteen year old girls, slap, crack and they just drop, I swear to god (Elliot, 16).

Some of those punters are slimy ya know, clever though, one punter robbed a peddler this one day, it was a proper beast, she came to me and I was like 'I'll give ya a few bits for it', so the next day I go round to her ken and I can see by the curtains behind the door there's someone else there and I knew her so I knew like suttin skatty was going on, the other woman that was there didn't look like a punter and I can usually tell, she looked like a proper straight-head ... the punter's gone 'this is the woman who's son's bike you stole, she wants it back', this is heavy, like she said she was gonna ring the police, and then I was looking at her skin and seen like some red marks on her neck so I said 'get to fuck you little slag', clever though ya know, it nearly worked (Snoop, 17).

According to those interviewed, physical weakness brought on by their drug addictions meant that the class A drug users regularly failed at any attempt to fight back. This only served to remind them of how little they could do about their situation. Drug users were controlled by both their addictions and by the gangs and young people that had taken over their homes. These findings have important connotations for vulnerable drug users and suggest that more interventions need to be implemented to help with their addictions. Encouraging drug users back into mainstream society with a focus on inclusion and support, might provide them with the opportunities that they need to be in a position to refrain from risky drug use. At the very least, with the help from services, drug users could be in a position to deny access to criminal gangs from entering their homes.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines from the lived experiences of those involved. Four themes were explored relating to gang-involvement, criminality, the elements that comprise CCE and County Lines (including how they both work in practice), and the development of deviant entrepreneurial traits by young people in making them competent actors in a variety of drug supply networks. Examination of the first theme, *norms and beliefs*, offered explanations of how gang-involved young people viewed the many factors that surround being gang-involved. Data highlighted that young people had normalised the consumption of cannabis, the daily occurrence of violence and the criminality that was attributed to the gang environment. Each participant had engaged in the prolonged use of cannabis for psychosocial reasons and stated that they saw no negative consequences of the costly habit. As well as this, the young people had all, at some point in their trajectory, committed criminal acts in the form of bike theft, assault, vandalism and the possession of weapons and drugs. Their views towards CCE ranged from stating that the criminal exploitation of young people is a myth, to claiming that whilst CCE is a natural part of gang-involvement, affecting most young people, it was not something that they had experienced. Indeed, with exception to two young people, the majority of the participants claimed that they had not been victims of CCE; however they may have been used at some point. Their understandings of CCE varied, but predominantly they failed to see the exploitative techniques used by the perpetrators that were coercing them into criminal activity.

The second theme, *Marginalisation*, gave rise to the many structural and existential problems that the young people had faced growing up. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the form of family breakdown, imprisoned family members, drug abuse and domestic violence, in addition to the numerous forms of deprivation and exclusion that the young people had experienced, were offered as explanations – at least in part – for their involvement in gangs and criminal behaviour. Every young person in the study had been excluded from mainstream school and had been moved to a number of Pupil Referral Units and Alternate Education Providers, facing stigmatisation and rejection along the way. The structural and symbolic violence that dominated most aspects of their lives had left the young people in search of likeminded individuals and led them

down a path of physical and emotional harm and exploitation. The search for acceptance and belonging was further compounded by celebrity images of wealth and success that were based largely on the ability to exercise agency as major consumers of expensive material objects. The result of this meant that the young people wanted fast money and were willing to acquire it through involvement in drug supply.

The third theme, *Child Criminal Exploitation*, analysed young people's understandings of CCE and how it works on the ground. Through exploration of CCE, the research demonstrated the link between criminal exploitation and County Lines drug supply, suggesting that many young people were used to both increase profit and minimise risk for those at the top of the supply chain. The theme highlighted the inherent dangers of CCE and working the County Lines and outlined the many physical and emotional harms that were attached to drug supply. Indeed, young people were subject to the daily threat of violence from both drug dealers and drug users; being around normalised heroin and crack cocaine consumption that often led to witnessing drug overdoses; working environments that reduced their accessibility to basic hygiene; and the constant worry of criminal sanctions. All of these factors contributed to a level of stress that far outweighed their emotional ability to deal with it.

The last theme, *Deviant Entrepreneurism*, highlighted the many deviant traits that young people had developed in order to overcome marginalisation and deal with the criminal exploitation that they had been subject to. One of the most significant findings pertaining to this theme was the exploitation of vulnerable drug users by the young people working the County Lines. Here, gang-involved young people celebrated the opportunity to exert control over their customers - and individuals that they classed as less than human. Using moral neutralisation techniques, young people justified the exploitation, humiliation and suffering that they inflicted on this extremely vulnerable and marginalised group of people by reducing their level of blame, reducing the level of harm caused and de-humanising their victims. This theme mainly highlighted the many nuances between the victim-perpetrator relationship and the ability for these statuses to remain fluid and interchanging.

Chapter Five

Findings: Practitioners

Introduction

Participants consisted of twenty-eight practitioners from a range of criminal justice agencies, local authorities, educational settings and third-sector organisations. Specifically, interviews were conducted with:

- five members of Merseyside Police;
- fourteen staff from Youth Offending Teams across Merseyside;
- two gang intervention/prevention workers;
- one Child Criminal Exploitation advocate;
- two members of a local Neighbourhood safety team;
- one key worker from Catch-22;
- one social worker; and
- two teachers.

Practitioners are identified in this chapter with regards to a number (denoting the order in which they participated), followed by their job role. More information on the participants and their organisations can be found in appendix 9. Thematic analysis of the data identified three themes from the practitioners who participated in the research:

1. **Child Criminal Exploitation**, which uncovers what front-line staff perceived Child Criminal Exploitation to be. That is, how young people become criminally exploited, the typical age at which they become exploited, where CCE takes place, the rewards and consequences of being a victim of CCE, risk factors and the signs to look out for; and lastly, their understanding of County Lines and young people's involvement in drug supply.

2. **The business of drug dealing** explores perspectives on drug dealing as a lucrative business, arguing that the exploitation of young people mirrors exploitative working conditions located in the legitimate economy, whereby extreme forms of capitalism have dominated most labour markets, encouraging profit over equality.

3. **Culture of austerity** is centred around how practitioners perceive how austere government policy has impacted upon the lives of the young people that they work with, and the quality of work that they are able to provide in the face of funding cuts. It gives rise to the many frustrations that practitioners experienced on a daily basis. That is, the evolution of gangs and how they do business, issues experienced with partner agencies such as Social Care and Child Services; and the encompassing socioeconomic disadvantage that limits the likelihood of young people desisting from gangs and criminality.

Child Criminal Exploitation

When asked about their understandings of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE), there were a number of key words that appeared consistently throughout dialogues with practitioners. These included ‘coercion’ or ‘coerced’, ‘manipulated’, ‘lured’, ‘grooming’ or ‘groomed’, and ‘vulnerable’. Overall, practitioners asserted that the criminal exploitation of children included an older perpetrator who, unwilling to ‘get their hands dirty’, used grooming techniques and coercion to exploit a vulnerable young person into committing criminal acts:

Criminal exploitation is the coercion of young people being lured into committing criminal activities by, for the benefit of other people really, usually older people, the reason they do it [is] to show them that they are more or less likely to be stopped by the police or to be targeted by them plus the fact they also believe that, to be honest, I get the impression that these people obviously aren’t willing to take the risk themselves so they’re putting children or a young person on the front line and they’re quite expendable really (2, CCE Advocate).

Another respondent said:

It’s about a child who’s vulnerable who is then targeted by an older peer in the main to do stuff ... there’s a whole system pathway in terms of the befriending part of it, building that relationship, all the grooming stuff which is a horrible word in any sort of language to be honest but I think that’s what it is, I think it’s about that child being groomed to do, to be for the benefit of others I think is the best way of putting it (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Some practitioners highlighted the complexities of CCE, where the young people, rather than being forced by drug dealers, went looking for exploitative relationships

due to experiencing significant material lack in their life. Practitioner 1 provided an example of this, highlighting that the young people were willing to comply with exploitative conditions because of the potential reward it would reap and the perceived glamorous aspect of being involved in gangs:

Some of them will go looking for it themselves, so they're not exploited they're going looking ... It involves aspirations, it involves significance 'cause they want to be someone, the aspirations side of it come from, you know, listening to the stories, seeing the older lads drive round in their nice cars and hearing the stories about people who have gone to jail and all this sort of notorious stuff where they think its respect to go to jail and not say nothing about it and to, you know, to sort of be that person who's cool and who's likeable in the gang, 'cause that's what it's all about, they just want to fit in ... they won't know they're being exploited, they might sit there and think 'oh yeah I've been a bit of a dickhead'... or 'I'll just have to do this' or 'I'll just have to keep my mouth shut', they might say 'oh I'm just getting the piss took out of me for now but one day, one day I'll be at the top of that tree because I'm going to make sure I get up through the ranks' and then they have aspirations then of becoming a criminal ... of then using a knife and using a gun and before you know it, they've got a reputation in the area (1, Gang intervention worker, Lewis Dunne Foundation).

Practitioners agreed that whilst exploitation could happen to anybody in any location, it was predominantly rooted in deprived communities where the experience of marginalisation was heightened:

In areas like this (Sefton) where it's entrenched social economic deprivation, there are no jobs for our young people, you can't guarantee it but I know if I could pick a sixteen year old straight out of school and put them into work, most of them would not offend because they would be earning their own money, they'd be occupied and also they'd be mixing with peers who send a better social message than what they're getting now. I'm working with young people who have got no opportunities, they've got no skill sets other than on the street which could be used usefully don't get me wrong, but there's no chance for them (22, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Indeed, young people most at risk of exploitation came from deprived communities (which suffered disproportionately from criminality and gangs), dysfunctional families experiencing generational unemployment (Wells and Rankin, 1991) and had educational difficulties:

I've been here for seventeen years and what we're seeing now is a much stronger gang culture emerging and you've got to realise that in areas like Netherton Park (Sefton) ... it was like the wild west ... they were like 'oh wait until you get on that estate' ... and I'm still working with kids off that estate, we're still seeing kids off that estate go to prison, getting involved in gangs, so it hasn't gone, it's always been there but now we're seeing more of it, 'cause the young people we're working with they're like second generation, third generation, families involved in drug dealing, it's a way of life, it's the norm (22, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

These findings are synonymous with risk factor research on gang membership. Indeed, Smithson et al (2009) stated that there was an increased likelihood that a young person would become involved with gangs if they experienced socioeconomic deprivation as well as issues within the family, community and school. It is suggested here that risk factors of gang membership are strongly akin to those for risk of criminal exploitation.

CCE and criminality

In terms of what CCE involved and the crimes that young people were being coerced into committing, practitioners stated that activities included petty criminality such as vandalising somebody's garden or taking hub caps from cars, to involvement in more serious and organised crime such as holding and transporting firearms, money and drugs; growing cannabis; and working the County Lines:

Could be moving items ... weapons, firearms, moving drugs, street dealing, some cases could be to provide an alibi for someone, perverting the course of justice, it's that stuff that someone more criminally sophisticated doesn't want to get their hands dirty will get them to do it, that type of thing 'oh I don't wanna touch that but they'll do it for a ten pound bag of weed, or a twenty-five pound bag of weed, a fifty pound bag of weed or a new pair of trainees' (5, Gang Prevention Programme Director).

Practitioners alluded to the fact that these perpetrators were exploiting young people into doing tasks that they themselves were reluctant to do - in order to refrain from getting too close to the activity and retain some distance away from the crime taking place. Before they were tasked with committing serious criminality, respondents stated that young people would be eased into criminality, having to initially prove their worth, before being given bigger tasks that carried greater risk:

Well obviously there's the trafficking of drugs, there's the county lines and all that but that's not the only thing you get, I know young people turning eleven years of age who have been exploited in the sense that it's been rumoured that Mrs so and so down the road has been talking to the police about activities in the area, 'ere lads, fiver each, go and put the windows through' (2, CCE Advocate).

Different gangs grow their own cannabis farms and if another gang hears about it, when that crop is ready they'll go and steal it but they'll use young kids to go in and steal it and they probably use young kids in the gang to look after it (19, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Some practitioners made links between Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation. Firstly, it was noted that the victims of CCE and the victims of CSE were from relatively similar backgrounds - that is, they were vulnerable in terms of socioeconomic deprivation, experience of family breakdown or in care (Beckett, 2013), and not in mainstream education or employment:

The kids who are in street gangs have nothing, they are sleeping in their North Face coat that they're sat in ... I've been to a house of ... a street gang member, he had a North Face coat on, a kind of Lowe Alpine hat, he had all the gear ... and there was a mattress on the floor with no duvet or no quilt on and that was what he was sleeping on (12, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

For these young people, risk of becoming a victim of either (or both) CCE and CSE was elevated:

You were starting to see similarities between the kids that were going through the Child Sexual Exploitation pathway and kids who were coming through the Youths At Risk pathway and it was near enough the same apart from there was no sexualised behaviour and that triggered my mind in terms of there's something here as well and is probably in greater numbers in Sefton than CSE (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Secondly, evidence from practitioners in the YOT suggested that there were growing practices of sexual exploitation amongst street gangs. Indeed, some young males had been victims of sexual assault which had been filmed on a mobile phone and used as leverage to secure compliance in criminality from the young person:

There is a kind of similarity between [criminal exploitation] and sexual exploitation, and it can involve sexual exploitation as well, this particular boy that I was working with told me that he was put in the back of a motor vehicle and strip searched (10, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

However, this was not a consistent finding across the sample and as such highlights the need for further research into the relationship between CCE and CSE.

Respondents claimed that young people had become involved in delinquent youth groups and exploitation primarily through the purchase and consumption of cannabis. Relaying stories young people had told them, practitioners detailed the intangible rewards that gangs relied upon to ensure that young people remained loyal workers:

You start off as a street kid who's doing bits and pieces but you become quite educated in the laws of the street and you don't get yourself lifted and you do what they want you to do, then that builds up I suppose but you know the more you end up dealing for the person, the more respect you gain, you know the more sort of kudos you may get potentially...the pathway really is more about making yourself useful to the gang rather than being a hindrance potentially (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Once young people had demonstrated their competence in committing crime, they were integrated into the group and given a sense of worth. Practitioners highlighted varying relationships between perpetrator/exploiter and young person/victim. Some relationships involved little interaction - only to exchange money and drugs - others comprised of subtle hints of coercion and manipulation. As practitioner 26 (a social worker) demonstrated, one particular young person became accustomed to the glamorous side of gang involvement. He was driven around in expensive cars, taken to restaurants, given free drugs and offered a sense of worth. During this time, he was coerced into dealing drugs to his friends and later forced to supply drugs out of area:

...he said '[you] know what it was with me ... I was smoking weed and I was buying it off the one lad all the time and then every now and then he'd give me a ten pound bag and he'd go 'no you're alright you don't have to pay for it', and he'd do it every now and again, every now and again', he says 'them bits of things, he'd say to me, 'you know what I'll pick you up, I'll drop you off'', he said 'he had big flash cars and they'd all pick me and we'd sit in the car, they'd drive me round so my mates would see me, other lads would see me sitting with them all and that,

then he'd give me a little bit and go 'why don't you just sell it to your mates 'cause you'll make enough to buy your own then, you'll have enough for your own'', so he started off selling it to his mates, he said, then it got a little bit bigger, his circle of who he was selling to got a little bit bigger, he said 'but they still carried on picking me up, they still carried on taking me for me tea, to nice restaurants, walking in with them, flash cars, you know things like that', he said and then one day just out of the blue they just come at him with a package and said 'you will go to Cornwall, you will meet such and such a person there and you will go' he said, 'and I was forced to go, never been to Cornwall in me life, and I was sent down to Cornwall and got arrested for it' (26, Social Worker).

In terms of reward, practitioners highlighted that rather than tangible gifts, the young people mostly valued the sense of belonging received from being involved in drug supply and delinquent youth groups. It was the elements that young people seldom found in the home environment that they desired the most, including security, belonging, protection, respect, friendship, love and recognition (Smithson et al., 2009). Respondents suggest that it was the lack of these factors that encouraged young people to seek out gangs, putting themselves at risk of exploitation.

A lot of the time it's the loyalty, it's the family element of it, it's the security of knowing that they have people to protect them because maybe they don't have that in their own life, money, nice things, girls, street credit, respect (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

I don't think it's about material possession, I think it's about belonging and that perception and it is a perception of security, friendship, love even, reward and recognition, those basic human needs in a sense, I think that's the biggest reward, I don't think they see that, genuinely don't see that, so when I ask ... 'why did you join a gang?', what they will say to you is 'it's the only way to make money' ... yeah the money [is] obviously attractive as well but what you were looking for was that association, that same feeling of membership, that same feeling of belonging' and ... money is a surrogate of 'I also feel a bit vulnerable here so I need some back up' (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Practitioners shared their concerns over the rise in substance use amongst young people and the normalisation of cannabis. They were in agreement that young people engaged in social smoking which over a longer period of time was followed by dependency and an expensive daily addiction, only affordable by dealing drugs for other people:

The kids do it for a reason, they do it because ... they're using the substances that they're selling so they've (the leaders) hooked them you

know... we've got kids who are selling and making about a fiver a day, because their use is about forty quid, so they don't make much money out of it and they don't see it as doing wrong, but a parent couldn't sustain that cash flow on a daily basis (3, Safeguarding Officer, Pupil Referral Unit).

As highlighted in the literature review, the strength and potency of street cannabis has increased over the past few years. Practitioner 12 (a YOT Delivery Worker) noted the ability of cannabis to mask unwanted emotions that young people were experiencing and struggled to deal with. She further noted the willingness of young people to try harder drugs such as amphetamine at an earlier age, however this was not a consistent finding across the sample:

The common theme is cannabis, the common theme is 'they're just my mates that I smoke weed with' ... It's socially acceptable ... it's a cultural thing where people sit round and smoke and ... that's when young people tend to talk to each other and I think it's probably glamourized as well like rap culture and music videos, they glamorise it, it's mentioned in quite a few songs, the other thing is now it's grown in a very different way, years ago it was synthetic cannabis and people were using it mixed with resin. Now it's all plant based, it's all bud and some suggest that that's sprayed with methadone which would make it physically addictive as opposed to just psychologically addictive and I do think mood alters so much, you've got teenagers who would ordinarily be dealing with emotions and they're masking those emotions by using cannabis, so when they're not on cannabis their real emotions are coming out and they think it's problematic, they think 'I can't cope' or 'I'm depressed', when actually they're normal emotions that are being masked by the use ... eighty per cent of my case load have smoked or continue to smoke cannabis and it's what keeps them there and it's like drug and drink culture is something that's changed so much because I think the notion of experimental drug use has completely changed in the last fifteen years, because we're dealing with fifteen year olds now who's first experience of drugs is taking a tablet, is an amphetamine, some young people will start at a starting point, they might have had a few whiffs of a joint the week before or whatever and then they'll jump straight in, and we're talking about your class A drugs (12, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Roles and rewards in CCE

Although the practitioners working in Youth Offending Teams were unlikely to come across children below the age of ten⁵⁰, those working for third sector organisations had - through partnership work - been made aware of the increasingly young age of children

⁵⁰ Criminal Justice agencies in England and Wales are unlikely to work with children under the age of ten years as they do not meet the age of criminal responsibility.

exploited into committing criminal acts. Whilst delivering presentations in primary and secondary schools across Merseyside, both practitioner 2 (a CCE Advocate) and practitioner 5 (a Prevention Programme Director) had each come into contact with young children at risk, or victims, of criminal exploitation. The youngest victim of CCE identified in this study was five years old:

Believe it or not we were made aware of a five-year-old who was keeping look out for a group of youths who were burgling the property, don't know what the five-year-old was doing with a group of older youths but obviously they were being used and if you think of a 'ere ya, here's a bag of sweets lad, get ya on board' (2, CCE Advocate).

I worked with a lad who was seven in December ... he's in a unit called [PRU] but in December he was seven and he was just turning eight and he'd been present at a stabbing and the information that the safeguarding team had was that he was storing weapons for older gang members in Bootle, that lad was in [PRU] but his main school was [school]. Last week I got a phone call from the head of [PRU] saying there's a year five (9-10 years) boy from [school] who's been given sausage butties for doing things (5, Gang Prevention Programme Director).

Rewards for victims of CCE varied greatly depending upon the child's age and general lack of understanding. Another respondent said:

There's areas that a lot of people won't move in, because when you go down there, I don't want to stereotype but it does look like Beirut, they've got nothing (3, Safeguarding Officer, Pupil Referral Unit).

These excerpts demonstrate the ability of perpetrators to identify the most appropriate and accessible means of exploiting a young person.

One of the biggest concerns regarding practitioners' effectiveness, in safeguarding and protecting children and young people, was surrounding the family and their role in criminal exploitation. Some practitioners discussed their experiences of working with parents that turned a blind eye to their child's exploitation because of the financial reward that was being brought into the home. The greatest barrier for practitioners, particularly third-sector organisations (who cannot rely on the use of court orders), was in gaining access to the young person. In working with young people, voluntary organisations needed parental consent, something which they often failed to secure

because of the perceived benefit that families were receiving from their child. Practitioner 13 demonstrated the barrier to engaging young people:

A lot of the time parents are exploiting their kids and so that's a big barrier for us because we need parents' permission to work with the young people if we're going in and saying 'we want to teach your son not to be in a gang', or you know 'how to avoid being involved in that sort of activity' then they're going to go 'well no 'cause they're making us money ... one [young person] was shot in the leg so he's recovering in hospital, he's having massive surgery on his legs, he nearly lost his leg because of it, I can't get near him because his dad is an OCG⁵¹ member and his girlfriend, so his girlfriend's dad is also an OCG and he won't talk about anything, he will not talk about anything, we can't obviously speak to him cause his dad won't let us' (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

Another respondent said:

...those crime families that we know about and we're all saying 'early intervention and prevention works', but how are we meant to get through the doors of them families to prevent the next child, because they are exploiting kids, how do we get through the door to prevent that next child becoming the next family member ... I don't know how we do that because legislation doesn't back us up to do that either (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

In some cases, families had been drawn into the exploitation and become victims as well:

We've had parents who have kept stuff in their houses for [drug dealers] so you know ... criminal exploitation is not just about kids it's about vulnerable adults as well so you know, or adults who have not got the capacity to be able to understand what they're doing (3, Safeguarding Officer, Pupil Referral Unit).

Other practitioners alluded to parents that were active in their child's exploitation, even using the guise of home schooling to exploit their own child into selling drugs in order to maximise profits, as practitioner 24 highlighted:

There's a guy in Anfield who's fifteen years of age and is being exploited by the gang to go and deal in Darwin in Lancashire ... he's called [name] they say 'get [name] to go to Darwin he's going to be

⁵¹ Organised Crime Gang

taking over 'cause the other guys just been taken out by the cops' ... basically he was being home schooled for a variety of reasons, his mum was a cocaine user, [she] didn't have a job, [she] couldn't be arsed taking him to school, but was still getting him up in the morning, not to home school him but to get him dealing drugs. When the guy above him got taken out the intelligence will suggest that she was jumping for joy because, happy days, more money is going to come in. So it's not just people that are involved in the gang, there is, on occasion, times when their parents or other family members are keen for them to do it because of the fact that they're going to get some money or free drugs out of it, so he was being home schooled which is an absolute joke because you've only got to produce one piece of work a year and that very rarely takes place, but she was still getting him out of bed in the morning to deal drugs and he was fifteen (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

The exploitation of females was not the focus of the study and is an area in need of further in-depth inquiry. However, findings from practitioners appear to support the literature on female involvement in gangs, whereby girls play an ancillary role to male gang members (Pitts, 2007; Beckett et al., 2013). Indeed, practitioners touched upon female exploitation and the way in which girls were used by gang members and organised individuals to mitigate risk of criminal sanction. Practitioners perceived girls to be used to mind objects such as weapons (see Deuchar, 2009), drugs and money. Their role was reactive rather than proactive, and the gender imbalance amongst police officers on the streets was used to the criminals' advantage. As of March 2018, females comprised thirty per cent of all police officers in Merseyside (Hargreaves et al., 2018) and according to a male member of Merseyside Police, male police officers are often reluctant to perform searches on young females:

We're seeing a growing picture of young girls getting involved [in gangs] and ... they're being criminally exploited, so they will carry drugs in certain parts of anatomy or they will look after the firearm in their handbag because very few male police officers will stop check you, very few, [they're] not comfortable, so they'll see you, attractive female, you could make any kind of allegation you wanted and you stand up there in court and say 'that police officer there touched me inappropriately' ... so when they're driving round in their Range Rover Evoque and you've got your Mulberry handbag, the firearm will be in the Mulberry handbag so you're being exploited (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Whilst more research is needed into female's experiences of criminal exploitation, according to practitioner 13, young girls were also subject to sexual exploitation (Pitts,

2007), being used by gang members as ‘trophy’, there to perform for males when they warranted a reward.

I think girls can be used in the same way that guys can but I think girls are used specifically to lure guys in, and I know that the links between Child Criminal Exploitation and Child Sexual Exploitation are more heavily laid with girls than it is guys because girls are used as trophies, so it might be that a gang member says to a young person ‘go and carry out this job and if you carry it out well you can have your pick of one of the girls’ and then the girls have to perform sexual acts with the young person and actually that young girl might feel like she has to do that because of the debt that she’s made up with the gang in order to stay involved (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

Fear and CCE

There were a number of reasons why young people were suggested to become involved in criminality, and why they struggled to remove themselves from the exploitative situation once they had become entrenched. According to the practitioners, fear was the most significant factor keeping young people in alliance with the people exploiting them. One respondent reported a young person being subject to constant threats and intense pressure from criminals to engage in drug supply:

I was working with a boy the last couple of months ... he was quite vulnerable and he was telling me how he was getting someone constantly calling round the house, people coming round the house and threatening and trying to get them involved in dealing drugs and stuff and these youngsters are very, very vulnerable (10, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Similarly, Pitts (2007) suggested that, behind victimisation, fear was the biggest factor for continued gang membership. Young people were fearful of saying no due to the violence that they would incur; fearful of rejection should they refuse to do as they are asked; fearful of being replaced by someone more willing or capable; and, fearful of reprisals carried out on their home, family and friends. Young people, however, were unable to show their fear and either had to ignore, or at least, compartmentalise it (Cohn, 1999), to avoid attacks to their masculinity.

It was thought that the – real or perceived - threat of violence was enough to leverage compliance from many young people. Practitioners were sympathetic to these young

people, stating that they have little option other than to comply with the criminals. Ruled by a strict no 'grassing' (Yates, 2006b) policy and monitored by gangs regularly, some practitioners believed that young people wanted their help but were bound by fear and secrecy and otherwise unable to provide them with any real detail that would allow for practitioner intervention:

The kids are obviously fearful of opening their mouths or grassing, if they grass someone up their family will be targeted, they'll have to move out of the area, they're fearful of other professionals knowing what they're actually doing and trying to obviously getting a grip on them, I think some of the kids cry out for it but I think they'd rather any kind of decision come from us as professionals as oppose to them saying 'look I need a bit of help to get out', and these gangs, I know from a colleague her young person had actually said to her that these gangs watch them twenty-four-seven and they know exactly what they're doing and where they are, who they're with and stuff to keep tabs on them so the kids are constantly under a watchful eye, and they're too fearful to say no (18, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Practitioners also thought young people were scared to refuse in case they lost the acceptance from the group and found themselves isolated. In addition, non-compliance could encourage drug dealers to demand payment for drugs which had once been provided for free:

They're scared to say no in case they get 'ok, we won't ask you to do anything again', or 'you owe us an ounce of weed, you thought it was for nothing but we give it you on tick so I want that money back for what we give you last week', 'but no you said I could have that', 'yeah I said you could have it but I didn't say you could have it for nothing, get me, so now I need you to do that, will you do it?', 'ok, I'm gonna have to because I've got no other way of paying you back' (17, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

According to the practitioners, young people had grown more fearful of the criminals exploiting them than of law enforcement or the prospect of lengthy prison sentences. Direct experience of the violence that encompassed street culture had thus been the driving force behind young people wanting to protect themselves. In support of the academic literature on youth violence and weapon carrying (Bannister et al., 2010; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Marshall et al., 2005), practitioners agreed that young people carried knives for personal protection:

We can all point to examples where there has been shots fired or stabbings or something, they all know someone who's got on the wrong side of someone ... they all think they're going to get shanked⁵², 'I have to carry this 'cause I'm going to get done in' ... they will all tell you an example of someone who has been and you can't knock that because we know they're real, they think it's going to happen so they've got to have that knife on them as they walk down the street (21, Youth Practitioner, Youth Offending Team).

After police raided a suspect's house, practitioner 24 recalled the overwhelming relief encountered by the suspect in realising that it was the police rather than rival gang members:

Years and years ago we went through someone's door, smashed the door in and he's lying on his bed, he's quite a decent drug dealer now albeit he's just been taken out on a Cheshire job and [we've] locked him up for drug dealing and we said 'police nobody move' and he said 'pfff thank god it's you', because he didn't know who was coming, he was clearly in dispute with other people, he saw the police and thought thank god I'm not going to get my hand cut off ... I don't think the police have the greatest threat to them ... gang culture mentality has gone away from inflicting injury and assault on you to inflicting injury and assault on family members and that's again something that's come from America where 'we're not going to do anything to you, what we're going to do is commit serious sexual offence[s] on your girlfriend and we may even make you watch while we do it', you know that is terrifying isn't it (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

This excerpt draws important conclusions about the adoption of American-style gang violence and retaliations (Miller, 1977; Sanders, 1994; Decker, 1996) across the UK, which has meant that Merseyside is seeing a number of revenge attacks on family members. It is this threat that ensures silence from its members and other complying members of the community. One long-standing member of Merseyside Police was more sceptical regarding fear and reprisals:

I wonder how much of the fear is perception, you know, you look at people who have left gangs and gone and worked on a building site or joined the army or whatever, how was their personal security impacted post leaving the gang? There will be a few cases where it was because they owe money, but if they don't owe money, they're meaningless, they're worthless, they're worthless individuals to these people (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

⁵² 'Shanked' is a street term for stabbed

Practitioner 6 argued that reprisals and threats to safety upon leaving the gang are only present if the individual is indebted to other gang members, identifying those without debts as worthless. This respondent was of the perception that retaliations are unnecessary and more effort than gangs are willing to take. This is in stark contrast to the academic literature on gangs which states that those leaving the gang often find themselves in the middle of having to deflect threats from rival gangs and their previous gang (Pitts, 2007).

Interestingly, there was another type of fear that young people had to bear; the fear of being replaced by another young person. The sense of worth and recognition acquired through drug supply, in addition to the financial reward and stability from what was probably the young people's only form of employment, meant that some young people were thought to be anxious about the security of that role, thus resulting in fear over job security and what they would do should they find themselves without work:

Another thing that's dead interesting is about replacements, so for example we had a young lad who was obsessed with another young lad's release from custody, he used to ask people all the time 'when's [name] getting out, when's [name] getting out?' now what we believe or what we think is that [name] was working for one of these street gangs, dealing cannabis or dealing whatever and then he went to custody and I think [young person] was his replacement and I think he was very worried about the prospect of [name] being released because he wouldn't have a purpose then ... there was no identified issues there, they said they got on fine but he was really concerned with him coming out (12, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Practitioners highlighted the abilities of some young people to manage and mitigate the risk to their safety when on the streets. Those in the Youth Offending Team commonly encountered young people who were wanted by other people over drug disputes. This meant that young people were often confined to their own estates, unable to leave due to fear of attack. It was especially difficult for practitioners trying to find legitimate work for these young people, knowing that travel would be an issue. Practitioner 22 provided an example of a dialogue between him and one of the young people he worked with:

They won't leave the estates, when someone says to me 'I can get him a training placement in Halewood' or somewhere, and I'm like, 'he won't go, they've never travelled that far by transport', I had one young

man I said to him 'I've got you a training placement here' 'where is it?' I said: 'it's at the bottom end of Stanley Road, it's in Kirkdale' (Liverpool), 'so how am I getting there?', I said: 'get the bus', he said 'are you joking?' I said, 'what's wrong with getting the bus?' he said 'you want me to get in a glass box?' I said 'well yeah buses do have windows' he said 'if I get on that bus at the end of Stanley Road, by the time I get to the other end they'll be waiting for me because they'll see me on that bus and they will call ahead and get me off that bus' he said 'I'll come on me bike', I said: 'it's about two miles to ride', 'I'll go on me bike' he said: 'cause I'm safer on me bike'... he was frightened for his own safety but he recognised that that was the safest way to travel and that was a kid with learning needs, so he had the nous, very street wise (22, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Young people in fear over their safety knew where they could and could not go and the consequences of what would happen if they found themselves in another gang's territory. They had put steps in place in order to minimise risk and knew the most appropriate way to travel, that included the best mode of transport for a quick getaway.

Risk and vulnerability

The most common theme during practitioner interviews with regards to those subject to CCE and County Lines was vulnerability. Practitioners listed numerous risk factors that the young people presented and used these as predictors for involvement in gangs and criminality. Case and Haines (2009) argue that risk assessments and their efficacy in predicting criminality are exaggerated and overused. Assessing risk however, is something that many of the practitioners interviewed are trained to do. In order to provide support for young people in desisting from crime, practitioners are bound by frameworks comprised of assessments that determine risk. For example, *AssetPlus* - designed to offer a 'more holistic, interactive, contextualised and dynamic assessment' (Haines and Case, 2015: 150) - is the framework adopted by Youth Offending Teams in order to provide the most appropriate and effective intervention. Here, practitioners assessed young people based on their risk and vulnerability. Problems within the home such as substance use, violence and neglect; negative role models and pro-criminal attitudes (Young et al., 2013); lack of education; low self-worth and self-esteem were the most common vulnerabilities in which exploited young people had experienced. All, or some, of these factors were present in every young person that they had come across:

If there's substance misuse in the family, harm, if there's neglect, if there's lack of a positive role model within that family to hold onto. When I look at the two lads involved in the Lewis Dunne murder, dad was a drug debt collector, he organised illegal dog fights which he took the children along to, there was no positive relationship ... there was a lack of love within that family situation, so when the boys obviously saw they could get something by being approved, I mean low self-esteem with those young people, very low self-esteem and most of that came from home ... and so the expectations in the family were the ones they lived up to ...and when they started getting approval from that negative association with the gang that's when they went towards it, and suddenly they've got money in their hands (2, CCE Advocate).

Practitioner 2, a Child Criminal Exploitation advocate once again touched upon the risk factors in predicting that the two men involved in the murder of Lewis Dunne⁵³ would end up involved in serious criminality:

Two of the young men who were convicted of the Lewis Dunne murder, the script could've been written from the age of nine or ten. When I think back it was the family environment that provided the push factors for those young people to go and join the local gang and get into the distribution of drugs, the dealing of drugs and then it developed into conflict between rival gangs and an innocent young man lost his life as a result (2, CCE Advocate).

Having worked with the men when they were young boys in an educational capacity (and consistent with the rest of the sample) the practitioner highlighted the lack of care and love that the boys had experienced from both parents; the daily substance use and resulting neglect; pro-criminal attitudes; and negative role models in terms of their father who had violent tendencies. The result was that these young people sought out gangs in order to fill the void that was missing at home. Practitioner 5 concluded:

Poor education, low support, low security ... mum and dad not around ... being brought up by grandparents, you can imagine grandparents maybe being in their seventies got a fourteen year-old grandson, can they control him? Do they really know where he's going of a night? Are they going to walk the streets looking for him? (5, Gang Prevention Programme Director).

⁵³ Lewis Dunne was 16 years old when he was shot and killed whilst walking along a canal in Vauxhall, Liverpool in 2015. The murder was a case of mistaken identity, by two men wanting to take revenge on rival gang members (Humphries, 2016).

Practitioners noted some characteristics and personality traits that they believed perpetrators, or gangs, were looking for in an ideal victim/drug dealer/gang member. Paradoxically, practitioners consistently identified these young people as outgoing, charismatic, (at times) charming, and generally having ‘something about them’. This is in contrast to the stereotypical perceptions of victims as quiet, shy and reserved (Christie, 1986). As identified in chapter four, criminally exploited young people were often trusted individuals, resilient and able to defend themselves and findings from practitioners were congruent with the characteristics of those participants in the young people sample:

I think they’ll be quite outgoing in a way because if you’ve got someone selling drugs for you, you want them to be able to front the person they’re selling drugs to so they’ve got to have a little bit of that character about ... ’cause if some kid was just standing there all shy they’re not going to want them to do anything are they so probably that (11, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Again, practitioners homed in on vulnerability as a key element in what makes an ideal victim. Whilst outgoing and charismatic on the surface, those seeking gangs often had deep-rooted issues where they were searching for acceptance and belonging:

Someone who’s lost, who’s looking to belong, eager for acceptance, quite often kids that are struggling with finances because it’s easy to give them things that they want, and it can be really little things but it gives them that same things as their peers, but equally I’ve met young people who don’t want for anything and have been pulled in - might be an emotional need that’s being met rather than a physical need. It’s easy to exploit kids for physical things, but I think long term it’s kids that are missing something in their life, whether that’s stability or a sense of belonging, they’re the easy kids, if you’ve got a strong sense of identity then... (21, Youth Practitioner, Youth Offending Team).

Financial deprivation and feelings of material lack were key factors in gang involvement and drug supply, but practitioners stated that these were often secondary to the need for belonging, significance and acceptance. It was thus easy for individuals to exploit a young person by offering friendship and a false sense of love and security. The longing for acceptance meant that young people’s physical and emotional immaturity was easily taken advantage of. Perhaps impeded by learning difficulties, young people could not identify when they were being used and what were, and were not, genuine, reciprocal friendships.

The tendency for practitioners to recall risk factors and place the causes of crime primarily in the hands of the individual, strongly resonates with neoliberal discourses which situate young people's involvement in gangs and crime as 'individual shortcomings rather than as a result of social processes' (France, 2000: 317). This diverts attention away from factors shaping the experiences of young people such as structural violence (Bakkali, 2019), 'inequality, poverty and social exclusion' (Yates, 2012: 433). Some practitioners did, however, give rise to the wider structural factors that were impacting upon the lived experiences of young people in Merseyside. Rather than attributing blame to faulty parenting or to individual inadequacies, these practitioners spoke sympathetically of a hopeless generation of young people impeded by extreme poverty and deprivation, as practitioner 2 demonstrates:

Community services have been put back and today's environment is a breeding ground which encourages the exploitation ... you don't even get out of it that's that the thing, you become part of it, and the majority of people in those areas are decent people but they're being dictated to by these people ... it really is a difficult situation (2, CCE Advocate).

Practitioner 16 further asserted:

What else is this society actually giving our young people to aspire to? If you are marginalised from education and marginalised from opportunity, marginalised to a certain extent from society even, you live in areas where there's huge social deprivation, what other ways can you make money? (16, Connexions Employment Advisor, Youth Offending Team).

Regardless of the reasoning, what these accounts demonstrate is that vulnerability plays a key role in the lives of both victims and perpetrators of CCE. These vulnerabilities were, according to practitioners, evident in all young people that they worked with. Accounts from practitioners concede that, if ignored, these vulnerabilities have the potential to turn young people from victims to perpetrators:

I think you've probably had to be a victim at some point to become a perpetrator, I don't think someone wakes up one day and thinks 'do you know what, today I think I'm going to criminally exploit someone', I don't think it works like that, I think it's part of the culture and the cycle and that whole societal way of accepting what's right and wrong, [the] line's probably blurred ... if you look at the hierarchy of it, the

perpetrators are the leaders of the group whoever it is, but it works all the way down that chain to the point that even the eight year old kid, he's going to be exploiting someone somewhere (7, Strategic Area Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Mirroring society's split view on youth as either in need of protection or sanction (Valentine, 1996; 2004), the rhetoric of practitioners was that their young people all categorically fit into the former group. They identified numerous faceless perpetrators, yet they seldom came across these people. This could imply that those exploiting young people were over the age of eighteen and unlikely to come to the YOT's attention. Alternatively, the contradiction of this implies that perhaps the practitioners were looking for a 'typical' exploiter-victim relationship, whereby force was used on an unknowing young person. This view is exacerbated by media stereotypes in which youth are commonly depicted as 'vulnerable and in desperate need of protection and at other times ... characterised as thugs and potential thugs whose actions infringe on the rest of the community' (Edwards and Hatch, 2003: 5). As demonstrated in the previous chapter, criminally exploited young people were seldom unknowing. Indeed, they had participated in drug supply and criminality for a period of time before becoming involved in more serious criminality such as County Lines drug supply, and so the relationships were less than straight-forward. The perpetrators of CCE often played a significant role in the victim's life and the victim was also capable of exploiting others, as with the discussion of the exploitation of 'crackheads'. They presented nuanced issues in stereotypes of victims and perpetrators as, more often than not, the perpetrators were characteristically similar, engaged in the same activities and shared a friendship group with their victim.

Indicators of CCE

As well as vulnerabilities, practitioners verbalised the clear signs that a young person was being exploited. On the surface, immediate clues to look out for included possession of money, new clothes, new friends, and a loss of interest in normal activities:

Having more money or unexplained money ... clothing or coming in late, new friends and you're thinking 'he never went to school with them, who are they?', or different people coming to the house ... as a parent you'd get that feeling wouldn't you? 'something's not right here' ... coming in late, loss of interest in school or lost interest in college ...

doing different activities, I think the changes would be quite obvious, you know, if one day they're in school and next minute they're not that interested in school or college and they've got these new mates straight away you'd be thinking, straight away you'd be thinking 'what's changed?' (5, Gang Prevention Programme Director).

A key indicator that a young person was being criminally exploited, particularly for County Lines activity, was if they were missing from home. Other reasons included running away from home in order to escape (drug) debts (Sturrock and Holmes, 2015). Similar to the literature on Child Sexual Exploitation (Hallett, 2015; Hickle and Hallett, 2015), being missing from home was a significant factor in predicting troublesome behaviour. The cause-effect relationship between gang involvement and going missing from home is left contested and requires further qualitative inquiry, however the Children's Society has reported that young people in trouble with the police were also more likely to have run away from home (Rees and Lee, 2005). What little literature there is demonstrates that the link between gangs and being missing from home is threefold. First, young people experiencing breakdown in relationships with their parents or carers are encouraged to leave home by the gang, and then provided with accommodation and emotional support (Smeaton, 2009), as practitioner 17 demonstrates:

It goes 'oh you've been living in mine for a couple of days so I want some rent money', 'you know quite well I've got no money', 'alright well you're going to have to do something for me', or basically you know 'you're no longer part of us, go and get in with someone else and if anything happens to you we're not going to help you out, got no food we don't care, you've said no now', it's a threat isn't it and because these kids have been exploited 'cause they're vulnerable basically, they feel that they've got no one else now, they're going to have to do this (17, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

As the literature notes, gangs offer something of an alternative family and provide the emotional and physical support otherwise unavailable to them (Centre for Social Justice, 2009). Further, being part of a gang secures protection from other individuals who may want to harm them (Pitts, 2007) and thus is a significant motivation (Hallsworth, 2005; Squires et al., 2008; Centre for Social Justice, 2009; Harris et al., 2011) for those on the streets:

If you live in Bootle or Netherton (Sefton) you're going to have to pick your battle, what side of the line you're on, what gang are you involved

in, 'cause you can't even go the paper shop without bumping into a rival (21, Youth Practitioner, Youth Offending Team).

Second, advances in drug supply such as County Lines, have prompted the migration of young people from their home towns to other areas where they often spend weeks at a time before returning home (Windle and Briggs, 2015b; Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Robinson et al., 2018), therefore they are missing from home for lengthy periods of time. Third, young people may run away from home in order to evade paying drug debts that they cannot afford and reduce the risk of attacks against them and their family. Whilst this link has been paid scant attention in the literature or by the media (Windle and Briggs, 2015b), certain authorities were beginning to flag up being missing from home as an indicator of Child Criminal Exploitation. One respondent said:

Missing from home ... is massive ... it was actually Manchester [Police] that said if someone goes missing more than three times in a certain time frame then they immediately flag it up for CCE, because if a child is going missing so frequently for a certain length of time within a time frame they have to be going missing to do something (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

Another indicator of criminal exploitation was body language and how young people composed themselves in front of practitioners:

One of the biggest indicators is how they are when they're on the phone so if their phone was to go off, how their body language receives that, the police would say or even YOT would say that if a young person is on his phone and suddenly has to go, that's when an OCG has gone 'you have to be here now', or 'you have to be there at this time'... they leave in certain amounts of time, certain time frame, more volatile behaviour because as you're around criminals and criminal activity you become more volatile, you kind of become more aggressive as well and things like that, so if aggression is more visible (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

Aggression, agitation and sudden changes in behaviour, practitioners believed, were behaviours commonly exhibited in young people who were under pressure from other people to act and behave in a certain way. YOT practitioners described exploited young people's behaviour as shifty when in meetings. Young people rarely divulged any information during these meetings and were curious to know what intelligence practitioners held about their daily activities. More often than not, those subject to YOT

orders had been advised by their exploiters to disengage from the service and not attend:

You can tell it's been drilled into them not to open their mouth. Some [young people] don't even get to the YOT, they've been told not to go to the YOT, 'they can't do nothing with you don't go', so they don't come (11, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Another key signifier of exploitation was weapon carrying. As outlined by Pitts (2007: 42), 'being in a gang means being part of the drugs business, and being part of the drug business means being involved in violence'. Whilst on the rise amongst young people generally (Office for National Statistics, 2018c), weapon carrying, particularly in the form of knives, strongly suggests that young people are involved in gangs, violence and County Lines drug supply (Bennett and Holloway, 2004; National Crime Agency, 2019). Less common was the possession of firearms; however practitioner 6, a member of Merseyside Police reported the rare case of a young person in Merseyside that had been found in possession of guns in the home, resulting in criminal charges:

We've got a case at the moment so I won't mention their name because it's open ... this young man has been exploited, sixteen year old lad with educational difficulties, mum and dad are still there, absolutely distraught. We've just found a naught point two calibre revolver under his bed, no way on earth that's his, no way on this planet, this is Liverpool, and he's now in a Young Offenders Institute and I've said to our people 'we need to get him out, we need to get him out of there quickly' because if we don't he'll just become a criminal, either a criminal or he's going to get hurt (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Consequences of CCE

Practitioners noted the consequences of being involved in CCE and County Lines drug supply and violence from their experiences of working with young people. These included, physical and emotional harm through injury, violence and threats; exposure to weapons such as firearms; difficulties in desisting from gangs (Pitts, 2007); breakdown in family relationships (Smeaton, 2009); and, the risk of being set-up by other drug dealers. Practitioner 22, provided an example of the physical harm endured by one of the young people he was working with in the YOT:

I've worked with a young person in the past who was shot in the buttock as a warning and they pick a fleshy part of the body where there's

supposed to be less damage but unfortunately with him it hit the hip bone, shattered the hip bone and caused him to have serious bowl implications, he was in a very, very poor position for quite some time but he still went back to hanging round with the same people and I know he was part of a ... so for me the guns are there to warn people but when we know that young people are asked to mind class A drugs for older individuals and they're also asked to mind firearms, and I don't think there are too many young people of the emotional capacity that I work with, who would not find that tempting to take that gun out into the street, to show off and then once they're out with their peers they're encouraged to fire it or use it or it's taken from them it's a recipe for disaster, and we've seen a lot of shootings recently, give people access to weapons and weapons are tools, tools will be used (22, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Another respondent said:

Some of them [are] quite afraid and quite reluctant [to talk]. This particular male he was seventeen, he was more open about it ... he said he'd been shot at in a car, someone had tried to stab him down an alleyway, he'd been attacked by a gang with baseball bats ... I was also working with a family that had their car windows put through and someone tried to break into the house because of gang related issues (10, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

According to the practitioners, life threatening injuries were commonly sustained by those involved in gangs and drug dealing. The volatile and unpredictable nature of gangs can mean that young people are living on the margins of life and death. Yet, what practitioner 22 highlights, is that even after a near fatal injury, the pull of the gang is stronger than any of its negative consequences. Not only are physical injuries common, but victims of CCE are often subject to emotional abuse through threats, pressure, control and intimidation:

Consequences for me, you know, mental health issues be it low level be it high level, vulnerability is massive. The perpetrator's still a vulnerable person in all of this as well you know, the exploiter's still a vulnerable person because they've been probably exploited ... it's that control environment as well. I can imagine sometimes it's quite controlling, quite fearful as well. I wouldn't like my mobile to ring and someone say 'right get round here, you're picking up a gun and you're going to go and shoot through someone's house' ... vulnerability is a massive one (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

The emotional turmoil endured by young people in these situations was, according to practitioners, something that remained constant for years after. Anecdotally,

practitioners provided examples of young people who they had worked with in YOTs that were now in psychiatric wards, experiencing PTSD, psychosis and paranoia due to violence witnessed, experienced (Pitts, 2008; Young et al., 2013; Pyrooz et al., 2014) and perpetrated (McNair, 2002) whilst involved in gangs. This was exacerbated by prolonged and heavy substance use which had served to self-medicate and block out unwanted emotions. Indeed, the link between gangs and trauma is slowly being explored amongst academics in the US (Harris et al., 2013; Kerig et al., 2013; Kerig et al., 2016; Dierkhising and Kerig, 2017) and in the UK (Beresford and Wood, 2016) and raises alarming concerns for the future mental states of gang-involved young people (see Chapter 2 for further debate).

A consistent finding across the practitioner sample was the use of young people as scapegoats for crimes and the consequence of lengthy prison sentences, as practitioner 22 demonstrates:

Even when young people think they've been caught and sentenced to prison it's done with, it's not done with, because they go back to the same situation. When they've come out they've been welcomed back by the older males and supplied with drugs and money as a 'nice to see you mate' gesture, and then two weeks later 'you owe me that money, I gave you six grams of coke, it wasn't a gift, you owe me' ... One of my young people was told to courier and take heroin and cannabis up to Carlisle where he was arrested on route by a police squad who were waiting for him ... He said 'we're driving up to Carlisle and we came to a traffic flow and they had the cones out so they're letting so many cars through one side and we're waiting' he said 'and as we got to the contra flow police came front and behind the car'. They knew the car, so [he was] set up by the dealers because 'while you're getting arrested for two kilos of heroin, there's twenty kilos going through in a van, so you're a convenient fall guy' and he's back in prison (22, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

There were numerous other ways in which young people were being set up. As already noted, these included providing those working the County Lines with an over-supply of drugs, knowing that the chance of the drugs being lost or unaccounted for was likely; or, paying other members of the group to carry out robberies on young people in possession of drugs, leaving them having to work for free to provide money for the lost drugs and potential profit, a process known as debt bondage (National Crime Agency, 2019):

Someone higher up will say ‘go and hide these drugs in such and such a place’ and then they will tell someone where the drugs are so they’ll go and do a pretend robbery so to speak on the drugs and the kid comes back for them the next day and they’re not there. They’re gone. So they tell the person higher up so then he’s making more money from him, so they’re being exploited in every way shape and form and they can’t trust anyone in gangs (18, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Believed to be ‘the most common form of slavery’ (Bales, 2004: 19), debt bondage has been paid considerable attention in scholarly debate around modern slavery, predominantly in the Global South (Bales, 2004; Bhukuth, 2005; Kara, 2008). Less is known with regards to the use of debt bondage by contemporary gangs in the UK; however practitioners concerningly noted the changing shape of gang repayment and the use of debt bondage to keep young people in the clutches of gangs:

One of the young lads ... he’d built up this big cannabis debt, at like five hundred pound, lost touch with the dealer, didn’t see him, wasn’t bothered, then he was out with his girlfriend going the pictures and the dealer had spotted him, grabbed him there and then put him in a taxi and he was sent to Warrington. Didn’t know the car or whatever and was placed in a house to bag it all up⁵⁴ and that happened on two occasions, once then and once in a local park, the lad spotted him again and got him (26, Social Worker).

Practitioner 26 further added that due to developments in gang structure, there were now fewer financial profits to be made with young people mostly being rewarded with free cannabis:

When I first started twelve years ago, you sort of had an idea of when a young person was getting involved in something which brings financial rewards ... so you’d see lads turn up and they’d have a new tracksuit on or trainers and then the next week they’d have another new tracksuit and trainers ... it doesn’t seem the case no more, you don’t see a lad turning up who previously didn’t have the new trainers and he’s turning up and kitted out in clothes ... the financial gain mustn’t be there anymore ... there’s no financial gain other than if you smoke [cannabis] yourself, that’s the only financial gain (26, Social Worker).

⁵⁴ Young people working the County Lines will often be involved in the packaging of small quantities of drugs ready to sell by measuring/weighing the product and wrapping it in either cling film or plastic and tying a knot at one end to secure the drugs in place. Sold alone, these drug packages are known (on the street) as ‘wraps’

In this way, drug dealers were able to effortlessly exploit young people using specific forms of domination that were tailored to the victim depending on the needs of the employer (LeBaron, 2014). The consequences of this meant that young people found it difficult, if not impossible, to desist from gangs and street culture. As highlighted in Chapter 4, young people working under debt bondage may have paid off their debts within a few days but were working without payment, because the perceived debt, in addition to threats and intimidation were still present. Participating in criminality themselves, turning to law enforcement for help was not an option, and young people found themselves trapped and unable to move away from the gang:

Talking to people who have been entrenched in gangs, they say that they never ever fully leave ... because it always follows you. A lot of people say that even after they try and leave there will always be something that [will] try and pull them back whether or not it's still a debt or somehow they will still keep a hold on that person (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

Another respondent stated:

Years ago you had your fella who had drugs and because he only had one or two below him who sold drugs if they got caught, providing they didn't grass or tell on them, they went to custody, they served their time, they came out and got a pat on the back because, 'alright you've lost the drugs but you didn't grass me up, thanks very much' ... but now it isn't because there's too many in the line now ... so everyone's accountable to someone else, so we're finding as well when these young lads lose drugs and then come out, the debt doesn't go ... now these lads are coming out faced with a debt 'cause it hasn't gone (26, Social Worker).

Not only could young people not seek help from the police, but breakdown in familial relationships meant that many young people had become disenfranchised from the family home. Such was the level of domination and manipulation cast by exploiters, many young people had been alienated and turned against their parents:

I took him home that day, I dropped him off and when we got to his flat his dad was there and it was so sad, his dad was crying when he came in and his dad was shouting to him in the flat, 'I love you, these people don't love you, they don't care about you, I love you' and I was just so overwhelmed and he was kind of laughing at his dad and he was so far gone ... it was dead sad you know (12, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

That the vast majority of parents were thought to be hard-working citizens, trying to provide for and protect their children. Yet this held no bearing on young people that had been, in a way, radicalised into being compliant workers without rights or viable alternatives:

We spoke to one young lad in Southport (Sefton) ... he was telling us how gangs operate in the city centre. He said there will be one kid on a [push] bike who will be a lookout and basically go round the area and feed back the location of the police to that gang. [The lookout] was ten years old and his dad was a policeman (2, CCE Advocate).

In addressing the research question of whether young people identified with being criminally exploited, practitioners stated that young people generally failed to understand the exploitative relationship between them and their employer:

The young person that is being exploited in my experience doesn't recognise that they're being exploited ... I mean one young man I worked with ... he was fifteen and he was running up drug debts which his carer was paying. I said to his carer 'you can't keep paying these drug debts, they'll cripple you', we're talking about one hundred and twenty pound a week, [I] sat him down and spoke to him about it ... he wouldn't recognise he was being exploited ... said he needed the cannabis to help him settle, calm himself down and when I told him that you know, the impact of what it was having on his family that it was unfair ... you could tell ... he didn't want to acknowledge that ... he couldn't recognise that he was being exploited (2, CCE Advocate).

There's a male I'm working with at the moment and he told me that he got kicked out of his parents and went to live with a friend and he thought his friend was putting him up and he realised then that this friend was wanting him to deal drugs to pay for his keep and I don't think he realised at all. He didn't have a clue and I explained to him that 'you've been exploited here, this is exploitation', he was in a very vulnerable situation, maybe potentially a bit naïve as well thinking that he was getting a roof over his head for nothing (10, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Whilst similar findings were presented in chapter four, it was also found that young people acknowledged that, to some extent, they were being taken advantage of and were compliant in the partisan relationship because they were receiving something from it. These young people may therefore be making rational decisions and have more agency than practitioners identify, albeit that their rational decision making is bounded by the circumstances that they are in. That is, affected by the consumption of drugs

(Exum, 2002), on the verge of homelessness and indebted to drug dealers. These factors open up the debate about how rational these young people are in such emotive situations (Hayward, 2007).

Consistent with findings in chapter four, practitioners claimed that young people rejected victim status, preferring to be perceived as a perpetrator - which reduced the risk of their masculinity being under attack (Harris, 2000). Involvement in street culture and violence encourages hegemonic masculinity through ideals of toughness, power and respect (Harding, 2014). It is here that these qualities can be gained or lost. Keeping up appearances is therefore paramount to maintaining their masculine status:

There's a stigma attached [to victimhood] so they think they've chosen to do those things and young guys don't want to be seen as victims. They'd rather be seen as perpetrators than victims, so I think they're not aware that actually they are being exploited or groomed for criminal exploitation because they think it's a cool thing to be involved, because there's the enticement there. Then actually it gets to that fearful point where they can't say no because of coercion and their debt (13, Key Worker, Catch-22).

CCE and County Lines

The final part of this theme identifies the process of County Lines, highlighting practitioners' understandings from their experiences of working with young people involved in drug supply. Practitioners were in agreement that County Lines included the transportation of drugs, money or weapons from one area to another. Practitioner 4, a Service Manager for the Neighbourhood safety team (and previous Community Safety Officer) stated that, rather than transporting illicit goods from one major city to another city - or rural town - it also involved transportation of drugs within the boundaries of one county:

People think it's big so it's like Scotland, it's Hull, it's London, it's the south-east. I say County Lines can be as close as [Sefton] to Liverpool or us into Knowsley or us into the Wirral or St. Helens. It's not just necessarily nationwide, it's about transportation, about whatever, it is drugs, guns, ammunition ... and the importation ... Merseyside is the capital of drugs everyone knows it, we've got the big port there and we get some busts but you know, I can imagine the quantities that come through that port that aren't picked up on is massive because there never seems to be a lack of demand does there or a lack of supply? ... So it's where, I suppose, our organised gangs have either identified a gap in a particular area and are going to develop their business in that area or

they're for some reason going to take on a local gang or something to get the territory or they're actually just supplying that gang in that area with what they need (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Organised criminal gangs in Merseyside had experienced market saturation and a decrease in profits (Windle and Briggs, 2015b; Robinson et al., 2018). County Lines allowed the same criminals to continue supplying drugs, often to an increased customer base that had less competition and more profit with the only difference being location. Practitioners noted that Merseyside gangs were predominantly infiltrating drug markets in Scotland, Wales, Lancashire, Devon and Cornwall. In order to be successful, criminals required a base to sell drugs from, which was usually the home of a vulnerable drug user – a technique known amongst practitioners as ‘cuckooing’ (Spicer et al., 2019), as explored in Chapter four:

County Lines is where organised criminals go and identify a vulnerable person outside of the area, they'll cuckoo them, so they'll give that person cannabis, cocaine whatever and say right you've got three hundred pound debt and you've got no means to pay that so the only way you're going to pay that is by offering them the opportunity to use your house, so they'll then move in, so you've got an organised criminal, runner, cuckoo, nest formation here, move in vulnerables and form your ... business network (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

As mentioned previously, compliance with County Lines activity was leveraged through drug addictions (Robinson et al., 2018), and young people were used as transporters and sellers once in the new drug-market area:

Coming from covert operations we saw more and more exploitation of thirteen, fourteen, fifteen-year-olds being sent from Merseyside to other parts of the country such as Devon and Cornwall, West Mercia, Shropshire, Lancashire, Scotland in some cases, to deliver drugs or collect cash (23, Police Detective Inspector).

The chaotic nature of drug users meant that young people were often residing in dirty houses with little other than a sofa to sleep on and no access to sanitation (Windle and Briggs, 2015b). Practitioner 18, a case manager from a Youth Offending Team described an otherwise ‘immaculate’ young person that, upon arrest, was dishevelled and unhygienic:

The young person ... said to me ... he said he could never be in the same place for more than twenty minutes cause they had to keep going

that much to stop any police getting hold of them ... He's like one of the cleanest kids, he looks immaculate, always showered, always washed his hair and looks dead fresh but he said ... over the space of three months he only had four or five showers during the whole time. He said when he got arrested by the police he was embarrassed because he knew he smelt bad. He said when you lie down in your bed you've got to lie down fully clothed with your clothes on ready to go (18, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

With an increase in County Lines networks and the migration of Merseyside-based drug dealers to other areas, members of Merseyside Police noted a rise in violence between gangs in otherwise quiet locations, particularly in Shrewsbury in Shropshire:

[We] ... had a murder in Shrewsbury which was a Sefton nominal ... murdered at seventeen years of age by Speke nominals, so it was getting played out in a council estate in Shrewsbury, two organised crime groups all fighting for the same patch, the reason why it's happening in those county locations is because there isn't a recognised criminal group, so organised crime groups come in and basically terrorise the local criminals, they've never seen the level of violence like they have previously, they're scared stiff so they comply 'cause they just think woaah ... and one of their own members, they got him, cut his finger off with a cigar cutter, shot his knees out with a cross bow then rolled him in sugar and boiling water, that was their own gang member, so if you imagine that you were brought up in Pembrokeshire where you look out and do a bit of drug dealing on the side 'cause it makes you a bit of money and then this lands on your doorstep with this level of violence, they're just going to comply, they've never seen anything like it (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

Practitioner 24 highlighted the level of violence involved in this form of drug supply, giving rise to the chaotic and unpredictable nature of Merseyside's organised crime gangs. These gangs were easily able to take over drug markets in small-town and rural locations, demonstrating their capabilities for violence should competition arise.

The Business of Drug Dealing

This theme identifies drug supply and exploitation as a business model and considers the lack of understanding that is the 'black box' of gang organisation (Decker et al., 2008):

The business is drugs ... the serious and organised crime, guns and gangs issues, a lot of that is about drugs turf, so there's organisation about your turf, there's chaos about your relationship ... on Merseyside

I think the organisation is the business, the relationship issue for the most part is chaotic ... criminality is a business, and if you consider it as a business they need employees, so where you're the business person ... you need people to do your running around ... it really is just level of criminality ... the organised crime group is the ... layer at the top, the urban street gangs often affiliate to your organised crime group, they're your workers, feral urchins at the bottom end ... they're the exploited group (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

There is a plethora of evidence demonstrating that different gang types exist in the UK (Densley, 2014; McLean, 2017); however the level of organisation of these gangs (Klein and Maxson, 2006) is left up for debate. As discussed in the previous chapter, models of gang typologies have been evidenced from research in Glasgow in Scotland with McLean (2017) providing evidence for 'recreational', 'criminal' and 'enterprise' gangs, and Densley's (2014) English gang model ranging from recreational gangs (involved in casual crime) to those at the top end of serious and organised crime with interests in regulating the production and distribution of illicit goods through governance. It is thus well established that gangs are involved in the distribution of illicit goods (McLean et al., 2018) and therefore have a role in organised crime, yet there is still little evidence to suggest that gangs are in fact organised. According to Decker et al., (2008: 154), 'gangs largely have been a 'black box'; that is, little is known about the nature of the gang with regard to its structure and organization'. This is further debated in chapter two in which scholars in the North and South of England debate the level of organisation of UK gangs (Pitts, 2008; Hobbs, 2013; Densley, 2014). It seems that, consistent with the literature, practitioners in this study were also confused about gang organisation and the resultant labels that were attached to gang members. Members of Merseyside Police provided the most information regarding hierarchy and structure, likely due to the way that police practices have come to rank offenders in order of threat, harm and risk:

There is a definite rank structure, and people, if they step outside of that are punished, so you'll have foot soldiers going up to sergeants, captains, lieutenants and above and then right at the top of the tree you will have a significant individual who is perceived by the police to be an organised crime group. The difficulty we've got in the police is we compartmentalise individuals and I don't think it's as clear cut as that. Clever OCG members will have affiliations to a number of gangs so they dip in and out, they're never at war with anyone 'cause everyone associates with them, the clever ones are the ones that don't use

violence, don't use firearms, don't bring attention from police and yet will still make lots of money (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

Described in terms of a military organisation, the idea that gangs share some similarities to that of para-military groups is not too far-fetched (Bunker, 1996; Manwaring, 2005; Sullivan, 2000; Sullivan, 2001). Indeed, Bunker (1996) argued that gangs across the US were involved in levels of violence that were causing terror to innocent victims. Similarly, the same could be argued of that of UK gangs. There are also overlaps between gangs and extremist groups (Pyrooz et al., 2018), particularly with regards to recruitment processes (Curry, 2011; Decker & Pyrooz, 2011) and the use of radicalisation techniques (Hesketh, 2017). The main distinction between gangs and military groups is in the level of planning. Rather than carrying out sophisticated and planned attacks, gangs portray more 'disorganized crime in action' (McBride, cited in Bunker, 1996: 54). Similar parallels can be drawn with street gangs in the UK who have been described as chaotic (Golding and McClory, 2008), highly territorial and highly violent.

Police participants acknowledged the tendency to categorise gang members into certain typologies in order to use resources more effectively. Where some practitioners branded members of organised crime groups as violent, volatile and regularly involved in disputes, those in charge of dismantling gangs acknowledged that the most serious and organised crime gang members hide in the shadows of the underground economy and remain under the radar by creating, or investing their profits into, legitimate businesses, as practitioner 24 demonstrates:

We had an organised crime group here [in Merseyside] ... that we didn't even know about ... there was a covert operation being carried out in the North East and they alerted us to it, they were making lots of money, all in jail now, but they had almost a loyalty scheme where if you were a good drug dealer for them, you went on holiday or got employee of the month. There was another lad whose Dad was ill and they said 'oh give him a week off', they had a drug dealing patch in Chorley [Lancashire] and a bad batch went out or it wasn't particularly strong so they went and recalled all the drugs and said 'listen we're sorry about that, we know they're crap drugs, here have some free on us'. It's interesting because they're thinking like businesses, they never used violence, if they got ripped off or someone stole their drugs, they didn't like it and they let that be known but they didn't go and shoot their door down, they thought it was bad for business. They weren't driving round

in fast motors, they weren't brandishing their wealth. What they were doing was renting property to mix the drugs and count the money. They were ideal neighbours, they weren't making loud noises in the middle of the night, they just went under the radar totally, so those are the clever ones (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

The long serving member of Merseyside Police described a fully functioning illegitimate drug supply business that mirrored other legitimate businesses in society. These drug dealers appeared concerned with quality assurance, workers' rights and incentive schemes - ensuring maximum productivity amongst their workers. These findings support recent research into the development of gangs which state that traditionally territorial, and thus violent, elements of gang membership are bad for business and only serve to arouse suspicion from law enforcement agencies (Whittaker et al., 2018). Police were unsure how to categorise these individuals. Unlike other Merseyside gangs, these individuals were not violent and appeared to be respectable members of society who happened to be drug dealers who took pride in their product. These factors add to an already hazy understanding of gang types and demonstrate the need for further inquiry into the involvement and organisation of drug supply at different levels.

As well as police, practitioners from YOTs also described the ambiguity surrounding gang types and level of organisation:

I would probably say that we don't have a young person here [in YOT] that's involved in [an] organised criminal gang or has got a significant position in an organised criminal gang 'cause in my opinion they don't get caught for the type of offences that our young people are being caught for. So the way I would describe it probably is, they are all from street gangs, the offences that they're getting caught for are violent offences, some of them street robberies, some of them could be car crime, some of them could be drugs offences ... but they're all being caught. For me, an organised criminal gang you're talking about your conspiracy to supply class A drugs ... importation, distribution, those type of offences or possibly your more serious and organised violent offenders where people are being kidnapped, going missing, and in these risk meetings all you hear about young people is OCG ... it isn't OCG in fact there's nothing organised about it, it's quite chaotic, it is street gangs but I think that's a lack of understanding from management which is kind of fed down ... and from the police as well (12, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

There was a tendency for practitioners working to address gang-involvement in Merseyside to label young people as members, or associates of organised crime groups. Highlighted by practitioner 12, the majority of these young people were engaged in low-level crime and supply of low quantities of drugs and lacked the intelligence and sophistication of organised crime groups. The misapplication of these labels may mean that these young people are wrongly linked to other members of OCGs and faced with more punitive criminal sanctions if officials in court settings are presented with evidence to suggest that they are a greater threat and risk to society.

Some practitioners identified the processes of drug supply and CCE at a more macro-level, drawing parallels with the exploitative nature of the neoliberal capitalist economy whereby profit takes precedence over all other factors:

It's a pure capitalist model, they exploit their labour for a maximum profit of which the worker sees very little ... you're immediately exploited by the one in the tier above you but overall the entire operation is one of capitalist exploitation for the maximum profit of the few that do fuck all and that's the way it is (8, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

It could be suggested that exploitation is part and parcel of a capitalist economy and that, because the gang's main aim is to maximise profits, it should be no surprise that there are people working at maximum capacity for minimum return.

Like in most businesses, there is a certain level of training that all employees must go through. Those involved in gangs and drug supply are subject to similar forms of guidance for their new role. Indeed, practitioners commonly described a form of street education, provided by older gang members, that would prepare them for confrontations with criminal justice agencies:

Anyone who's involved in a gang will give you the list of what the Youth Offending Team protocol is, so if you try and say to a young person you know 'you'll get into serious trouble if you do that' and they say 'nah I won't, I'll get this, this is what will happen, that's what will happen and this is what will happen' they'll give you the list of what will go on, who's telling these young people that? (3, Safeguarding Officer/teacher, Pupil Referral Unit).

Another respondent claimed:

...[the young person] certainly knew his rights and responsibilities about the law because he kept saying ‘well that was no further action, that was no further action, that was not guilty, that was no further action so you can’t use that against me because I was found not guilty and not guilty proves I’m innocent, you didn’t find me guilty’ ... ‘five hundred odd intelligence logs that says you’re involved in this, that, and the other, doesn’t say to me that you’re not involved, I think you’ve just been god damn lucky’ ... they probably do know the law and they know their rights, a lot of it is ‘no comment, no comment’ (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Gang members were, according to practitioners, advising young people on what to say if they were caught and questioned by police. They further stated that, these individuals were providing false predictions on the level of sanction that young people would receive, greatly underestimating this due to their supposed lack of previous convictions. The aim of this was to manipulate young people into criminal activity that they themselves would receive lengthy sentences for if caught. In this sense, young people were putting themselves at risk on the pretence that nothing would happen to them if caught. All the while, their innocence and physical and emotional immaturity were being taken advantage of by other criminals. One of the most commonly asserted statements amongst the practitioner sample was that the perpetrators of CCE were easily able to spot vulnerability and use that to exploit other people. The excerpt below demonstrates these abilities, where gang members widened their target audience to single mums:

Gangs are nothing but resourceful you know and they use what they know to get what they need, so for example when the welfare benefit cap came in in 2012, there was a few stories that we heard about them targeting single mums ... who had a bedroom tax to pay, so they were targeting them and saying ‘I tell you what we’re going to put twenty-five cannabis plants in your bedroom, we’ll give you the dosh that’ll make up for the short fall in your bedroom tax, you get to keep your house as long as you keep your mouth shut’ (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Here, gangs were able to exploit economic disadvantage and used this opportunity to further enhance the production of cannabis.

Culture of Austerity

In response to the global economic crisis and under the coalition government of 2010, an intense neoliberal strategy was implemented to shrink the budget deficit (Yates, 2012) in the form of austerity measures (Millie, 2014). Public spending cuts, privatization (Yates, 2012) and restrictions on welfare and benefits disproportionately affecting those already on the margins of society, have left many people living in extreme poverty. The National Health Service, housing, education, social care and transport are some of the public services most affected by the cuts (Butler, 2018). Arguably, however, nowhere have austerity measures been felt more amongst public services than by the police. Previously seeing rises in police numbers (Millie, 2013), police funding in England and Wales was cut by twenty per cent and Scotland's eight police forces were merged to a single Police Service of Scotland in 2013 (Fyfe et al., 2018). Merseyside has witnessed similar cuts to funding impeding upon police numbers and resources. Some of its police officers highlighted how they were affected by these cuts, demonstrating their current inability to remove the vast majority weapons off the streets:

We've seen an increase in firearms and the supply of firearms, and we've seen an influx into Merseyside of a certain type of weapon which seems to have fed into the street gangs. I think austerity, Merseyside police and the way we target firearms because of resources, resources have diminished and so we're not out there targeting them and I think they realise that, so ... if they discharge a firearm we don't have the police resources and they realise that we're stretched (23, Police Detective Inspector).

Whilst hindering many other aspects of their lives, austerity measures in the form of cuts to police worked in favour of gang-involved young people and organised criminals, apparently lowering their chances of detection and criminal sanction. Coherent with an increase in firearms related offences - reportedly at their highest for five years (Blackburn, 2019) - it could be the case that criminals in Merseyside are somewhat unconcerned with the prospect of a lengthy prison sentence because the perceived benefit outweighs the risk of detection.

Connexions, the organisation responsible for providing 'careers advice and guidance to young people' (Yates, 2012: 438) lost significant funding over the past decade, the

result of which has seen a reduced number of staff, restricted hours and in some areas, the closure of centres (Hooley and Watts, 2011). Practitioner 16 discussed the dwindling number of employment opportunities that she was able to provide to young people accessing the YOT. She further attributed involvement in drug supply to these lack of opportunities, claiming that young people have no other option but to partake in illegal activity as a way of making money:

We don't give them the opportunities legitimately to remove themselves from that money making opportunity, and when we have had legitimate opportunities, these kids have grabbed them with both hands. ILM (Intermediate Labour Market) vacancies, I can't get enough of them but they've stopped now, every one of our young people that went for those vacancies ... they got them and they kept them and they turned into a legitimate way of making decent money without having to have the qualifications that a brain surgeon requires (16, Connexions Employment Advisor, Youth Offending Team).

With UK unemployment figures estimated at 3.8 per cent, unemployment is at its lowest since 1974 (Office for National Statistics, 2019). However the unemployment rate for young people in Merseyside rose from 16.1 per cent in 2008 to 25.7 per cent in 2016 (Shaw, 2016). Young people aged between sixteen and twenty-four therefore continue to be the group at most risk of unemployment. Without sufficient legitimate opportunities and the means to access careers advice from organisations such as Connexions, the problem is exacerbated to the point where involvement in crime as a way of making money is deemed an alternative. Practitioner 4 was sceptical about the employment figures and the types of work that are contributing to the supposed fall in unemployment rates:

I look at all the stats and stuff that say 'oh we've got so many people in work', I don't see it if I'm being honest or I don't see the quality work rather than maybe people are in work but it's the type of work they're doing (4, Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team).

Changes to the labour market in the UK have seen a fall in full-time, secure work to a more diverse workforce of people in precarious part-time jobs and zero-hour contracts where the focus is on flexibility. Deindustrialization has meant that many unskilled workers who had previously been in manufacturing jobs found themselves in long-term unemployment, struggling to adapt their knowledge and experience to the ever-

increasing financial sector. The long-term impact of this has meant that many young people have, and continue to grow up in, workless homes reliant on welfare. Over one million children in England lived in long-term workless households in 2017 (Office for National Statistics, 2018d). For them, the risk of growing up in poverty and having low aspiration transitioned from generation to generation, is elevated (Platt, 2010).

Practitioners in both Youth Offending Teams and educational settings were mostly frustrated with the amount of targets that they were required to achieve and the resultant lack of quality time they were able to spend working with young people. Since 1979, neoliberal Governments have placed emphasis on services such as Youth Offending Teams to run like businesses, demonstrating at every stage that they are as closely akin to the market as possible (Rogowski, 2011) and able to compete like the private sector. Successive Government have thus continued with these trends, with the coalition Government of 2010 developing a *payment by results* model, given the term the 'Rehabilitation Revolution'. The goal of which was to provide:

...greater use of competition to drive value, ... a far greater role for the private and voluntary sector to draw out the best of all sectors ... [and] an essential role for the public sector so they bring their expertise and knowledge to managing [the] most serious and dangerous offenders ... (Ministry of Justice, 2012: 1).

Whilst some scholars have argued that the model would see greater efficiency within the Criminal Justice System (Fox and Albertson, 2011), others recognise that withdrawal of state intervention provides the government with the opportunity to blame any failures onto local authorities (Miller and Rose, 1990; Byrne and Brooks, 2015).

Particularly within the public services, demonstrating efficiency has brought with it an influx in managers and managerialism to enforce strict targets, measurements and bureaucratic procedures. As such, neoliberal policies have come to dominate all aspects of work. Accordingly, practitioner discretion and creativity have become stifled and the focus on young people as individuals has eroded. Practitioner 2 gives rise to this issue:

You've got young people who are disengaged from education and what I'd say about education is that because the government has a results

driven agenda, not every child is able to meet that level of attainment at that particular time, that is one of the reasons I left teaching, is it moved away from the education of the whole child, too many targets, and yet when I had a child who came from a background where parents were substance misusers or there was family conflict, when that child walked through the door on a Monday morning and the house had been raided by the police or the house had been bricked or fire bombed, that child at that moment wasn't in the mood to sit down and do maths, English, they needed time to talk (2, CCE Advocate).

Another respondent supported these claims and said:

The only thing that has ever made any impact on any of the work we do is ... the nature of the relationship you can develop with the young people ... and the way that we work and have been forced into working ... all these measures and things ... impedes the development of any relationship ... the compounding focus on feeding a computer with the system and the way that we work so that it suits computer programmes and how things can be measured but actually prevents you doing the work ... the more we get squeezed into that machine, the less we can do ... sitting off and chatting shit with the kid for an hour or two can't be quantified, the fact that they phone you up when they're thirty-five and say 'remember what you said when I was fourteen?', that can't be quantified ... did I do a worksheet with that kid? Did I fuck do a worksheet with them (8, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

That is not to say that practitioners did not have young people's best interests at heart, only that they had become so stretched and lacked the proper means to have the desired impact on the lives of gang-involved young people. So too have the services which provide support to marginalised young people (Yates, 2012). One practitioner highlighted the negativity of the environment of the YOT:

The [young people] come and sit on that seat and the depression sets in, I don't even bother tormenting them any more 'cause there's not a lot I can do, but you take them into a depressing little room and you sit across a school type desk and get out a work sheet and go through it and somebody's obsessed with taking their hat off or putting their phone off as if that kind of control implies anything at all other than you're just replicating school (8, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

Practitioners pointed to the diminishing furnishings in the YOT and blamed these on eroding local council budgets. Pool tables and areas where young people could once sit and socialise were now non-existent. Work outside YOT where staff could provide educational support to their young people was – due to understaffing – impossible.

Even the accompanying of young people undertaking community payback whilst on Youth Rehabilitation Orders (YRO) (a compulsory part of their contract) was limited and often left until the end of the contract, only being completed because young people otherwise could not be signed off.

Partnership work with other public sector agencies (to provide a holistic service for young people) had also become fragmented. Indeed, under the Rehabilitation Revolution, there was an increased focus on multi-agency work (Yates, 2012) where the onus was on criminal justice organisations, social services, education and health to collaborate (Ministry of Justice, 2013) and liaise with one another over the most appropriate provision for the young person. Practitioners in the YOT were dissatisfied with the service provided by other agencies and their attitudes towards young people. Practitioner 9 mentioned her irritation with the lack of resources available for Child Services and social care - to effectively help exploited young people - as a result of spending cuts that have been witnessed on Merseyside:

Because Child Services have so many cases to deal with and some that are so extreme, their attitude towards children over fifteen is 'well, they're fifteen, they can look after themselves', or, 'they can protect themselves from exploitation'. It's so frustrating to hear those comments because you wouldn't expect a fifteen-year-old to protect themselves from sexual exploitation ... social care deal with families and so if the family environment is ok, regardless of people in the community, they would close the case (9, Case Manager, Youth Offending Team).

The justifications apparently provided by Child Services that children of a certain age can protect themselves echoes of systemic moral disengagement techniques whereby professionals minimise responsibility by shifting blame onto young people (or other agencies) for supposedly not looking after themselves. CCE most often takes place outside the family home, making it difficult for Child Services (who prioritise safety in the home environment) to intervene. Even with combined work from the local authority to move a gang-involved young person from one area to another for their own safety, this lacked the effectiveness needed to prevent the family from becoming victims. Families were often moved from one gang affected area to another:

Another issue ... [young people] tend to be [moved] where there's another gang issue. I know kids get moved to Anfield (Liverpool) and

they have their own problems. We had a really well known family that lived very local to here (Sefton), windows were getting put through, they were being targeted and possibly involved with stuff, they were perpetrators as well but also victims, they got put in Huyton (Knowsley) and because they'd gone into somebody else's gang they were then being victimised and they actually came back to Sefton because they felt safer because they actually knew who they were fighting against as opposed to randomers. So, although we're trying to help them we're probably putting them in more danger (21, Youth Practitioner, Youth Offending Team).

The problem was not one of an unwillingness to help, but of a lack of viable alternatives and appropriate housing in non-gang affected areas where families could fully integrate into the community without fear of victimisation. Indeed, depending on the location of social housing (often situated in deprived neighbourhoods), those residing there experience elevated levels of crime when compared to other tenure types (Osborn and Tseloni, 1998; Hunter and Tseloni, 2016).

Further issues with Child Services presented themselves in the form of stigma placed on young people by practitioners. As well as YOT practitioners, members of Merseyside Police highlighted frustrations with traditional attitudes towards young people and victims of exploitation. Indeed, frontline professionals were still concerned with appearance - particularly of young males. If a young person did not appear vulnerable, then they were unlikely to be treated as such (Christie, 1986). The fact that the vast majority of these young people go to extremes to avoid looking vulnerable and thus evade victim status (Baker, 2010) was not considered by these professionals:

It's a case of saying 'every time we see this child he needs to be locked up', because that's the only way children's service will acknowledge that he's at risk. He was a big lad, a stocky lad and they said 'he's not vulnerable', and we asked why and they said 'because he's got a beard'. He did have a beard but that's the mentality, this is what we're against (24, Police Detective Superintendent).

The above extract demonstrates the need for a shift in attitudes towards victims of exploitation, particularly for young males who can be incorrectly labelled due to their appearance and behaviour. Some practitioners tended to be more theoretical in their analysis of stigma and certain criminal justice practices when working with gang-

involved young people. For instance, practitioner 12 demonstrated the labels and assumptions attached to young people from those in authority:

You could also apply labelling theory to some of these kids, 'you'll never have nothing', 'you'll never amount to nothing', 'you're never going to get anything unless you do it this way', 'this is the easiest way, the quickest way to make a few quid and money' ... In youth offending, personally, labelling theory, every single day I see it in my job ... The times that I've directly asked young people, I've never yet had ... an outright admission, 'I belong to that gang', 'cause like I say they genuinely just see it as 'well yeah I live in this area, I hang around with these people and they're my mates' ... an organised criminal gang for me, they're living in the best neighbourhoods, they're operating on a totally different level, they are organised criminals ... to apply the same guidelines or the same practice to deal with street gangs, I think we're missing a trick ... A lot of the management [in the YOT] they've got a huge misconception about street gangs and they get it mixed up with organised criminal gangs ... we're going in with kids and we're accusatory that they're part of a gang and they're like 'they're just me mates' whereas if we were like 'tell me about your mates, tell me what do you like to do, where do you hang round? where don't you go? why don't you go in that area? What's going on there?' (12, Delivery Worker, Youth Offending Team).

Drawing upon Howard Becker's labelling theory (1963), practitioner 12 highlights the damage that the application of labels can have on young people in search of an identity. Indeed, labelling theory contends that perceptions of self-identity, and subsequent behaviour, can be influenced by labels that external forces apply to individuals. Closely akin to the self-fulfilling prophecy (Merton, 1948), labelling theory implies that negative labels attached by the majority, have the potential to induce deviant behaviour on the minority. In his pioneering essay *Whose Side Are We On?* Becker (1963) contends:

In any system of ranked groups, participants take it as given that members of the highest group have the right to define the way things really are. In any organization ... the arrows indicating the flow of information point up, thus demonstrating (at least formally) that those at the top have access to a more complete picture of what is going on than anyone else (Becker, 1963: 241).

Practitioner 12, supported by accounts from members of Merseyside Police, demonstrated the willingness of those in authority to falsely apply the gang label to young people who may only be associated to gangs rather than having an instrumental role. Though the credibility of labelling theory has been questioned by left-realist

criminologists (Pitts, 2012) for being overly deterministic, the extract above urges the need for a more ‘children first’ approach to offending (Haines and Case, 2015) and the importance of listening to the voices of young people (Creaney, 2018). The labels given by practitioners should not be taken as fact, but should also be analysed in combination with accounts from those under scrutiny with the aims of eradicating harmful labels that produce stigma. Indeed, the level of stigma attached to young people who may or may not be involved in gangs appears to be systemic throughout the criminal justice system. Recent controversy surrounding the Metropolitan Police’s use of the gang matrix⁵⁵ has added to the evidence to suggest that these labels are often discriminatory and unfairly applied. Similar to the Metropolitan Police gang matrix, Merseyside Police followed an almost identical model of ranking gang members in terms of seriousness and risk:

The National Intelligence Model (NIM) is if you were NIM three you’re the top of the tree ... you were top criminal so the Curtis Warren’s of this world ... then you had NIM two which are your [name], [name], just trying to think of someone in Sefton that you would know [name], [name], [name], those kinds of people, and then your little runners ... people like that, they’re your NIM ones. So what organised crime group mapping has tried to do is just tried to change the language a little bit, so the affiliation is, is the level of criminality that you’re involved in and engaged at and the people who you’re associating with ... so your NIM three target is your importer ... your NIM twos are your distributors, your NIM ones are just the ones who are picking up an ounce and trying to deal it themselves, you know running round selling ten pound deals sort of things, we don’t use that [model] anymore because we use organised crime gang, urban street gang (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Practitioner 6 provided a possible justification for why young people were being disproportionately ranked as members of organised crime groups. The three possible levels of seriousness (i.e. level of criminality and association) had been collapsed into just two levels and became Merseyside Police’s model for identifying and pursuing gangs.

⁵⁵ The gang matrix is a London-wide database of suspected gang members developed and implemented by the Metropolitan Police in 2012 (Amnesty International, 2018). Those on the list are termed gang nominals and are ranked from green to red in terms of seriousness and risk.

Practitioner 27, a teacher in alternate provision provided an example of his perception of the young people accessing alternate provision:

These are the worst kids, nobody wants them ... we have to turn a blind eye to them bringing knives in and smoking weed because its normalised. We pat them down and have the scanner but they tuck the [weapons] in their trousers or in their shoes and we can't feel them, or they stash them outside before they come in and just go and get them again after (27, Teacher, AEP).

Whilst highlighting further the social exclusion that many young people faced, this extract and many others from professionals working in educational settings raised issues of hopelessness and a sense of apathy. Teachers were failing to protect their students with regards to weapon carrying and the progressive steps that young people were taking in order to conceal weapons and avoid detection from practitioners. Indeed, weapon-carrying and cannabis use had become accepted amongst many of those working in alternate provision. Heavily affected by cuts to funding and working at maximum capacity with children displaying behavioural difficulties, teachers were limited in what they could do for young people. Since the coalition government introduced austerity measures in 2010, the UK education budget has been reduced from 95.5 billion pounds in 2011 to 87.8 billion pounds in 2018 (Buchan, 2019). The fall in spending has resulted in staff redundancies, greater workloads and less teaching resources, reportedly at the same time that classroom sizes have increased. The impact of this means that the quality of education that children and young people are receiving in schools may be reduced, especially for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Weale and Adams, 2019). According to practitioner 3, it is these children that are at greater risk of criminal exploitation:

There's young kids holding guns, there's kids who will hide knives, you know they just don't understand, and some have not got the capacity through the SEN (Special Educational Needs) or ADHD (3, Safeguarding Officer, Pupil Referral Unit).

Increasing pressure from targets created by neoliberal policies, coupled with an increase in cannabis consumption and weapon carrying amongst young people left many teachers trying to make the best out of a bad situation. Similarly, those working for the police highlighted the ineffectiveness that police practices were having on rehabilitating young people:

We lock people up and we've been locking people up for one hundred and eighty years and we're still in the same position as we were then, you know different criminality, different levels of technology, different levels of accessibility ... the enforcement side of it is not going to solve the problem so I think what we've got to look at is when we look at that urban street gang pool of people that's where we really need to focus some of our efforts (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Police explicitly demonstrated their difficulty in knowing how to deal with criminally exploited young people. Whilst traditionally police have served to protect the public by taking offenders away from society, they acknowledged the seemingly necessary shift in focus in providing a more holistic child-first approach to policing. It was a difficult position for the police who had been trained to pursue and arrest – adult and young - offenders and see them as just that. Now they were left trying to investigate the extent to which young people were involved in crime (particularly drug supply) and their potential for being victims of criminal exploitation. Police officers also felt that the current legislation in dealing with CCE was missing the necessary elements to properly understand criminal exploitation and convict those found guilty of exploiting children:

I think the government think modern slavery legislation covers it, I'm not convinced it does and I'm not sure the Crown Prosecution Service think it does either ... the Modern Slavery legislation relies on coercion, now there's coercion in criminal exploitation of children every day of the week, the difficulty is, it's hidden... trainers and your North Face jacket, that in my eyes is coercion but to the book, to the victim it's not, that's a gift ... whereas you know with Modern Slavery you're working in them fields or else you'll get beaten, hands chopped off, that's coercion and that's how they see coercion. So I think what we need to do, if we're going to use Modern Slavery which I don't think I agree with but I'll go with it 'cause it's the best we've got, we need to have a look at the definition of coercion, 'cause ninety per cent of your victims of exploitation and child exploitation don't know they've been coerced, they don't think they're victims many of them (6, Police Chief Superintendent).

Used to criminalise individuals that were orchestrating County Lines drug networks, the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) 2015 was implemented for the first time in 2018 (Davies, 2018). It was the first time that the MSA had been used for crimes of this nature and to date the only legislation available to deal with the perpetrators of CCE. Section 2 of the Act, which covers human trafficking, states that a person commits an

offence if he or she arranges the travel of another person with a view to that person being exploited. The section further states that this can include travel in the same country (Legislation.gov.uk, 2019b). This therefore applies to any young person that has been criminally exploited into working the County Lines. Where practitioner 6 found difficulty, was in the covert nature of CCE and the coercion that often remains hidden from the victim; and the explicit coercion of those subject to Modern Slavery in other settings. Because many victims of CCE fail to see that they have been exploited and thus coerced, identifying the exploitation may be more difficult for front line staff and those working in the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS).

Conclusion

This chapter has presented three prominent themes identified from interviews with practitioners surrounding Child Criminal Exploitation. Indeed, CCE and its methods and processes have been explored, along with the process of County Lines drug supply and how practitioners' understandings of the two issues have developed from their experiences of working with gang-involved young people and those involved in drug supply. In the absence of other data, accounts from practitioners enable the development of a basic understanding of CCE; who the victims are; what their involvement means; and the consequences of being involved in gangs. Whilst exploitative in nature, and causing harm and destruction to those involved, it was suggested in this chapter that (County Lines) drug supply features as a lucrative business, which shares many similarities to that of mainstream economic activity. Young people are exploited as a by-product of the aims of maximising profit and minimising risk to those at the top of the chain. Practitioners lastly shared their difficulties in working with gang-involved young people due to the austerity programme enforced by the Coalition Government in 2010 and continued under the Conservative Government. There was a desperate hopelessness identified right throughout interviews with practitioners where they constantly doubted their abilities to help young people. Indeed, the issue was, according to them, systemic, spreading right through the Criminal Justice System. They felt punished by current government policy and the resulting austerity measures that were affecting their work and they were often restricted in what they could do with young people involved in gangs. This chapter therefore highlights the need for reform to social policy, particularly with

regards to socioeconomic deprivation, exclusion and marginalisation. It also demonstrates a need for changes in attitudes towards the victims of CCE and further qualitative inquiry into the relationships between victims and perpetrators of CCE.

Chapter six

Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

Through qualitative research with gang-involved young people and the practitioners that work closely with them, this thesis has explored in detail the deeply problematic and complex sociological and criminological issue of Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). With a significant lack of academic literature - and understanding by the practitioners concerned with helping gang-involved young people - there was an urgent need for research into this topic. Indeed, CCE has manifested itself in most aspects of criminality and gang activity with young people being coerced, manipulated and forced into an array of criminal offences (Robinson et al., 2018). Drug supply, the transportation of money and drugs and the possession of weapons are just some of the criminal acts that young people have been exploited into facilitating. In addition to being exploited into drug supply in local neighbourhoods, this research has also found that young people are commonly being transported to different locations, some over 250 miles from their home town (Spicer et al., 2019), to participate in the supply of heroin and crack cocaine in those areas, a process that the police have identified as County Lines (Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Robinson et al., 2018). Indeed, owing to the saturation of drug markets in major urban cities (Windle and Briggs, 2015b), the development of drug networks in smaller towns have been increasing over the past few years (Andell and Pitts, 2018; Spicer, 2018), as has the use of children and vulnerable populations.

Conducted over an eighteen-month period from February 2017 to August 2018, the research involved a total of seventeen gang-involved (or gang-associated) young people (accessed via Alternate Education Providers, Youth Offending Teams and Young Offender Institutes) and twenty-eight practitioners (from a variety of criminal justice agencies, third sector organisations and educational institutes). Using a case study approach, participants were selected from four out of the five boroughs that comprise Merseyside. Thematic analysis of the two data sets, that comprised of semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and focus groups, identified four themes

for the gang-involved young people sample and three themes for the practitioner sample. These themes, which aimed to answer the four questions pertaining to the research, have combined to provide a thorough examination of Child Criminal Exploitation and County Lines - and the role that gangs play - from the lived experiences of those involved. In doing so, the research has given a voice to marginalised young people who are seldom provided with the opportunity to discuss their experiences without persecution from authoritative figures.

Understandings of Child Criminal Exploitation

Due to a lack of understanding surrounding the topic, evaluating understandings of CCE was of paramount importance throughout the study. With the first two research questions framed to assess (1) gang-involved young people's understandings and (2) practitioners' understandings, the aims were to identify what gang-involved young people thought criminal exploitation involved, who they thought it affected and whether they perceived themselves to have been victims of CCE. It was then important to ascertain the similarities and differences between gang-involved young people's understandings and practitioners' understandings in order to gather a more in-depth and rounded picture of what CCE involves. Comparative analysis and triangulation of the two data samples allowed the researcher to judge whether practitioners were accurate in their interpretations of CCE and identify how criminally exploited young people could be supported by practitioners to desist from gangs or be diverted away from the Criminal Justice System.

Question three of the research aimed to evaluate to what extent CCE occurs within street gangs. The answer, as has been established throughout the two findings chapters, is that criminal exploitation has encroached upon every aspect of gang-involvement and most aspects of gang related criminality. For the young people, CCE was deemed a natural part of gang-life and life on the streets, at least in its most basic form. What the research demonstrated was that CCE manifests itself at different levels, ranging from subtle hints of coercion, to outright force made possible through the use of violence and intimidation. The coercive and manipulative aspects of CCE, where already criminally active young people (or those on the periphery) are persuaded into becoming more involved in drug supply, were found to be normal and accepted

amongst gang-involved young people. What was reported less, or thought to be fabricated amongst the young people sample was gang members (or drug dealers) forcing young people into criminality. However, the young person serving an eight-year prison sentence at the time of interview confirmed this to be true. This will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

In addressing question four of the research project ('do gang-involved young people identify with when they are being criminally exploited?'), it became particularly clear that the young people seldom acknowledged – or verbally identified - themselves as victims of CCE. The reasons for this are threefold.

First, in an environment that celebrates violence and toxic masculinity (Baird, 2012; McLean and Holligan, 2018), the gang and those involved strive to appear strong – at least on the exterior. Verbally identifying oneself as a victim of CCE would do little other than provoke feelings of failure and weakness and diminish any masculine values that they (and others) perceived themselves to hold. Even if their involvement in gangs resulted in harm through criminal exploitation, it was a worthwhile cost and a way of 'doing masculinity' (Messerschmidt, 1993), allowing them to form an identity. For this reason, it is possible that some of the young people internally recognised their exploitation yet expressed that criminal activity was their choice during interviews in a bid to maintain strong masculine values and appear in control.

Second, CCE appeared to have been normalised as a natural part of growing up involved with gangs and criminality. Some young people acknowledged that they were being used, but identified this as a necessary evil to the drugs business. Identifying themselves as 'youngsters', they viewed their position in the gang on a continuum where exploitative processes were to be expected for their age and relative lack of experience (in comparison to their 'elders'). At some point they visualised themselves working their way up the supply chain with greater responsibility and financial reward. What they sadly failed to realise was that progression up the chain was a (perceived) privilege only granted to a limited number of young people. More often than not, young people would remain at the bottom of the supply chain - identified by practitioners as foot soldiers - selling small quantities of drugs and making little money to branch out of

their own neighbourhoods. Indeed, their worlds seemed to revolve around sourcing enough money to buy cannabis and little else.

Third, many of the young people involved in the research had never heard of the term CCE and failed to see any such exploitative processes in their relationships with drug dealers and other gang members. For these young people, the perpetrators of CCE were the individuals who provided them with money, protection, safety and belonging, and these rewards – whether tangible or intangible – were what kept them from questioning whether they were being exploited or used. Young people were seeking a sense of belonging and a form of ‘street love’ (Payne and Hamdi, 2008) that was often provided through subtle undertones of coercion and manipulation and thus remained away from their vision. Regardless of the uneven profit that decreased as it made its way down the supply chain, young people were receiving something rather than nothing and - for their age – there was a general agreement that the money was good. Upon deeper reflection, it could be argued (and was briefly verbalised in chapter four by Dezy, the eldest participant in the young people sample) that drug dealers were providing for young people from similar backgrounds to themselves in the only way that they knew how. Of course, there were elements of coercion and manipulation, but drug dealers were providing marginalised young people with economic, cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986) through illegitimate businesses that they had succeeded in.

Whilst all seventeen young people had been criminally exploited in some form, only a handful of these had experience of working the County Lines. It was these young people that appeared to have a greater understanding of the concept of CCE than those exploited into criminality in their own neighbourhoods. It was an observation throughout the research, that those exploited into working the County Lines were both more physically and emotionally mature than young people engaging in in-borough drug dealing. Prior to their involvement in County Lines, the young people had participated in drug supply for numerous months (or years) and had developed a reputation as being a competent drug dealer. They were therefore trusted by those exploiting them and offered the opportunity to work the County Lines. The County Lines workers that participated in the research acknowledged to some extent that they had been used for somebody else’s gain and that they were being significantly underpaid for the level of risk that they were engaged in. Despite this, they were

generally still unwilling to accept complete victim status. In doing so, they provided justifications for their exploitation by stating that they were being rewarded, that they chose to work the County Lines as there was nothing else to do and that, on occasion, they enjoyed their experiences.

Only two young people accepted and verbalised their role as a complete victim of CCE. These young people were in Young Offender Institutes (for significant periods of time) at the time of interview. It is argued here that the time and space away from the gang and its environment had allowed reflection on their experiences. Not only this, but the young people had been subject to increased practitioner intervention where the professionals had the opportunity to educate them on Child Criminal Exploitation and the possibility that they had been a victim. Due to the small number of young people interviewed in YOIs it would be naïve to make grand generalisations, however for these young people, prison was where they identified with being a victim of CCE. They were more willing to engage with practitioners because it made little difference to their circumstances whilst there. Prison provided distance and time away from the gang and its chaotic nature and encouraged a form of desistance. Whether the young people would return to the gang and criminality post-release and after identifying with being a victim of CCE is left unknown. The credibility of this argument would therefore be made stronger with a follow-up study that aimed to conduct second interviews with the criminally exploited young people after their release from the YOIs, in addition to other criminally exploited young people.

The research has provided a thorough understanding of CCE for gang-involved young males. Due to a lack of female participants, however, the picture of CCE for girls and women is severely lacking in depth. Whilst this has also been the case for academic literature on the involvement of girls in gangs (Batchelor, 2011), the reported rise of girl gang members (Centre for Social Justice, 2014) urges the need for research which produces theoretically sound findings and develops strategies for helping criminally exploited young girls. According to (mainly male, police) practitioners, criminal exploitation differed for males and females. Where gang-involved young males were exploited into drug supply and transporting cash and drugs, gang-associated girls were used to mind weapons and drugs and provide alibies for gang-involved males, again identifying their role as ancillary to that of males (Pitts, 2007). Practitioners –

supported by the National Crime Agency (2017; 2019) - identified girls at higher risk of sexual exploitation, being used as ‘trophies’ for males that had successfully carried out a criminal task. The gang-involved young males in this study rarely mentioned (the use of) females, however. Only one County Lines worker discussed taking females with him while working away, with motivations of reducing suspicion from authority. The use of females for sexual purposes was briefly mentioned by another County Lines worker who discussed female drug users offering sex in exchange for drugs, again indicative of an exploitative situation. In short, the extent of CCE for females is unknown. Indeed, what little academic research there is on CCE and County Lines (Windle and Briggs, 2015b; Andell and Pitts, 2018; Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Robinson et al., 2018; Spicer et al., 2019) has largely excluded accounts from females. Academic research that investigates CCE from a female point of view is therefore necessary to further understand how criminal exploitation is experienced by women and identify any differences between CCE for males and females.

Victim-Perpetrator Relationship

One of the most significant findings of the research concerned the relationships between victim and perpetrator. There were stark differences in the relationships between County Lines workers and their exploiters, and other criminally exploited young people and their exploiters. Where those exploited into in-borough drug dealing experienced more use of force and violence, those exploited into working the County Lines rarely reported such factors. These did not appear to be clear cut victim-perpetrator relationships portraying signs of abuse, violence or force, but rather embodied subtle hints of coercion and manipulation. Two of the County Lines workers in the study reported the relationships with their exploiter as genuine friendships. Of course, exploitation was present in all relationships between victim and perpetrator, but no two relationships appeared to be the same. Where some were forceful, incorporating violence and intimidation, others were more reciprocal with elements of mutual respect. In some cases it could be argued that the perpetrator failed to even recognise that they were exploiting somebody. Throughout interviews, some young people failed to see the overtly harmful nature of criminal exploitation but rather reported it as a natural part of gang culture; where working for somebody else was necessary for gaining respect and progression up the supply chain. Gang-involved

young people harbouring these beliefs are thus unlikely to recognise the exploitation and are more likely to see it as just another part of the drug business.

With County Lines drug supply crossing borders and entering unknown territory (Robinson et al., 2018), exploiters require resilient young people that know the code of the street (Anderson, 1999; Harding, 2014) - that is, effectively supplying drugs whilst keeping a low profile and not 'grassing' (Yates, 2006b) if caught by the authorities. In order to ensure that these young people conformed to the code of the street whilst working the County Lines, there needed to be an element of respect (Bourgois, 2003) between the exploiter and the young person. Without respect, young people were more likely to steal from their exploiters or refuse to work for them again – if such an option existed (see page 130 for an example). It is for this reason that only a select number of young people in the study had experience of working the County Lines. Those exploited into in-borough drug dealing also conformed to the code of the street but often experienced violence, control and manipulation. They were not respected but were ruled through fear and intimidation which is what secured their compliance and silence. Exploiters here took advantage of socioeconomic disadvantage and promised financial reward, belonging and protection. According to practitioners, drug dealers had a plethora of young people that they could choose to carry out their criminal activity. What made this more possible, according to them, was that many of the young people they worked with (in the YOT, for example) had learning difficulties and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and were thus more easily influenced, albeit this information was anecdotal and not verbalised by the young people. They too were in search of respect and belonging and looking for a way out of poverty. Drug dealers exploited vulnerability and gave little in return. It is these experiences and relationships that are commonly reported in the media that contribute to a misunderstanding of the extent and nature of CCE and County Lines. County Lines and the exploitation it comprises is not black and white and current discourses only stand to create fear and moral panic (Cohen, 1972) without understanding the multitude of reasons why young people become involved. Those that fail to see the intangible rewards (such as belonging, identity, excitement (Katz, 1988) and street love (Payne and Hamdi, 2008)) that some young people have accumulated from being gang-involved and criminally exploited risk excluding young people further from the realms of mainstream society.

Overall, practitioners' accounts of CCE were congruent with those of the young people exploited into in-borough drug dealing. However, findings highlighted numerous discrepancies between their understandings of County Lines and the realities for those that have experienced it. Practitioners identified all young people involved as vulnerable and lacking agency, working through force and intimidation. Practitioners failed to acknowledge that some young people actively sought out the exploitative relationships and to some extent enjoyed their involvement in drug supply. Experiencing severe deprivation and poverty, it is argued that many of the young people were exercising their ability to make rational choices given their circumstances. However one must air on the side of caution of reducing the young people's motives and actions to rational decision making. There are a plethora of factors that limit their ability to make rational decisions which were highlighted throughout the research. For example, many young people were under the influence of cannabis (Exum, 2002) and others were working under duress – indebted to drug dealers and threatened by violence.

These findings suggest that CCE is a nuanced issue that cannot be understood in a vacuum. The relationships between young people and their exploiters challenge typical stereotypes of victims and perpetrators (Christie, 1986). The positive relationships that many young people had developed with their exploiter could be identified as a form of street love (Payne and Hamdi, 2008), where the exploiter is providing for the young person to the best of their ability, yet at the same time exploiting them and employing them under threats of violence to them or their families. These relationships thus require further exploration through in-depth academic inquiry.

Victims Becoming Perpetrators

The impact of marginalisation, inequality and exclusionary experiences, in addition to historic deindustrialisation, has meant that criminality (mainly drug supply) has become an option for some young people in order to take part in mainstream society and achieve 'consumerist goals' (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019: 7). As highlighted in chapter four, the gang-involved young people in this research, and many other criminal gangs on Merseyside, have evolved and developed certain entrepreneurial traits that increase their competence and success as players in the criminal world. These traits

include developments in drug supply (such as County Lines), the branding of criminal franchises as business and mitigating risk through the exploitation of vulnerable populations. Indeed, one of the most interesting findings with the young people sample in particular was how exploited young people (namely those working the County Lines) had developed their own entrepreneurial characteristics through the exploitation of vulnerable drug users (Robinson et al., 2018). These findings demonstrated further the blurred line between victim and perpetrator and suggest that the roles – rather than being fixed - are fluid and interchangeable depending on access to power.

Additionally, it was possible for young people to be both victim and perpetrator synonymously: exploited by drug dealers into working the County Lines and exploiting vulnerable drug users whilst there. The exploitation of others was permissible due to the moral disengagement tactics used to reduce their victims to less than human and thus lacking value or worth. These findings contradicted practitioners' accounts of criminally exploited young people as lacking agency. Indeed, they gained agency by taking it away from subordinate groups of people. Practitioners had not identified any of the 'naïve' (see page 166) gang-involved young people that they worked with as able to gain power over their situation, at least not to the extent where they were taking control and exploiting other people. The findings further blur the line between victim and perpetrator and provide practitioners with difficulty in knowing how to deal with these young people. Police practitioners in particular, were commonly faced with the predicament of having to decide whether to arrest a young person, or provide alternative support in order to divert them away from the criminal justice system. Data from the practitioner sample in this research has witnessed softening attitudes within the police towards criminally exploited young people (who they had previously referred to as 'feral urchins' (see page 170)). If criminally exploited young people develop deviant entrepreneurial traits and begin to exploit other vulnerable people, police attitudes are likely to harden, with punitive measures being taken once again.

The ability of the young people to exploit others whilst remaining a victim of exploitation, meant that the research uncovered another, more hidden, victim of CCE: the traditionally overlooked and disenfranchised group that are vulnerable drug users. Men and women consumed by heroin and crack cocaine addictions found themselves in powerless situations, exploited originally by the drug dealers who take over their

homes as storage spaces for drugs and then the young people who move in to supply the drugs in their neighbourhood. The process known as ‘cuckooing’ (Coomber and Moyle, 2017) is becoming more debated in the academic literature (Spicer et al., 2019), with reports of drug users being criminally and sexually exploited (Robinson et al., 2018). However, more research is needed into the dealer-user-young person nexus and the link between CCE and CSE.

School Exclusion and Child Criminal Exploitation

Whilst cautious not to infer a causal link between the two and reduce the issue of gangs and CCE to education and the possible failings of teachers (Hodgson and Webb, 2005), the research highlighted a concerning link between school exclusion and being a victim of CCE. All fourteen of the young people accessed via AEPs in the study had been excluded from mainstream school. Indeed, such a relationship requires examination and needs to be addressed in order to reduce the risk of young people becoming involved in gangs and consequently being at risk of CCE.

The relationship between school exclusion and criminality is well documented in the literature where dominant discourses claim that exclusion increases the propensity for crime (Graham and Bowling, 1995; Gilbertson, 1998; Berridge et al., 2001). So much so, that those excluded from school account for 58 per cent of young adults in prison (The Centre for Social Justice, 2018). Yet, due to its recent inception, there has been little academic inquiry into the link between school exclusion and risk of CCE. While school exclusion increases the likelihood that a young person will engage in both criminality and gang-involvement, and both of these factors increase the risk and likelihood of criminal exploitation, it is surmised here that school exclusion increases the risk of being a victim of CCE and participating in County Lines drug supply. This hypothesis of course, requires further exploration as there are many excluded young people that find alternative pathways to employment and do not engage in criminality.

School exclusion provides young people with more free time and opportunity to engage in criminality, in addition to limiting aspiration and inducing feelings of lower self-worth. Indeed, the young people in this research had few ambitions in terms of their ability to achieve – and willingness to find – a legitimate job. They had a sense

of hopelessness about their future and remarked that their current and future income depended on criminality. This belief made the young people vulnerable to exploitation by criminals who predominantly exploit socioeconomic disadvantage.

Jones, Martin and Kelly (2018) have highlighted another demographic that requires attention regarding exclusion and criminality; that is young people who are Not in Employment, Education or Training (also known as NEETs) (see Deuchar, 2009). Many of this group remain hidden as, according to Jones et al. (2018), they refuse to seek benefit support in a bid to reduce feelings of shame and embarrassment - an issue again attributed to a crisis in masculinity (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019). Findings from this study and similar research by Hesketh (2018) have found that young people are sourcing other forms of income, predominantly through involvement in drug supply, and as such, academic success is given little credence by gang-involved young people.

Adding to the debate surrounding school exclusion and gang-involvement, there has been recent controversy over whether schools are unnecessarily excluding poorly performing children in order to keep their exam rankings high (Savage, 2017). Driven by neoliberal ideologies and policies, educational institutions have had to prove their credibility through scoring highly on ranking systems. Academic achievement is encouraged through meritocracy and individualism and those unable to conform to mainstream goals often find themselves falling behind and socially excluded (Amsler and Bolsmann, 2012). Further debate has sparked concern that schools are removing children from their registers without formally excluding them, a process known as 'off-rolling' (Savage, 2019), the result of which means that young people are not in education and remain unidentified by the local authority as in need of support. Whether this is a tactic that schools in Merseyside were employing is out of the realms of discussion for this research. What was however obvious was that school exclusion was not uncommon for young people living in gang-affected areas (Ralphs et al., 2009).

The typical route for excluded young people is to attend Pupil Referral Units and alternative provision; however with less structured time spent in these institutions and increasing pressures on the limited number of staff available, the quality of education provided could be hindered. As demonstrated by both samples of data, staff in the AEPs were turning a blind eye to the young people consuming cannabis on break times

(see page 107) (which, according to the young people, were already more frequent than those experienced in mainstream schools). Additionally, teachers here were also finding it difficult to effectively monitor the possession of weapons. The quality of work that was being undertaken at the time of research appeared to be poor and scarce, with few young people attending on a regular basis and arriving late when they did. Staff found it difficult to exercise authority over the young males in the AEP and commonly allowed them to come and go as they please.

Gang-involved young people had been failed by the education system from an early age. Observations concluded that many young people had been too easily labelled by practitioners as ‘bad’ which had negatively impacted upon their desire to conform to institutional values and in turn resulted in ‘fractious relationships with the education system’ (Ralphs et al., 2009: 494). Exclusion from school increased experiences of rejection and marginalisation in young people that had been exposed to the same traumas throughout their early childhood. According to the practitioners, these experiences became internalised and left young people trying to compensate by engaging in behaviours that they deemed necessary for doing masculinity (Messerschmidt, 1993) – consequently curtailing their transition into legitimate employment (Ralphs et al., 2009) and increasing their desire for success through drug supply (Hesketh and Robinson, 2019).

The Role of Cannabis

From the very beginning of the research it became clear that cannabis played a major role in the lives of gang-involved young people. Each young person in the research engaged in the consumption of cannabis and almost every practitioner shared their concerns over the normalised culture of smoking cannabis and the harm it was causing to young people on Merseyside. Cannabis was at the root of CCE, where young people were becoming criminally exploited through drug debts and having to work for drug dealers in order to pay them off. It was how their criminal trajectories began and how they became familiarised with the drug dealers in their neighbourhoods.

Unlike the cannabis gateway hypothesis which suggests that cannabis acts as a gateway to further illicit drug taking (Fergusson et al., 2006; Kandel et al., 2006), findings

presented in this study suggest that cannabis is a gateway to criminality and participation in drug supply in order to fund the costly habit. Whilst not totally disputing the gateway hypothesis, the young people reported that, other than cannabis, they rarely engaged in any other form of drug taking, including alcohol. Collectively, they had attached a stigma (Goffman, 1967) to harder drug users (such as those that use heroin and crack cocaine) and placed less human value on users, associating them with desperation, dirtiness (Room, 2005) and humiliation. Doing this allowed them to neutralise their own drug taking and separate themselves from the harm caused by smoking cannabis. Recent findings from the Home Office (2019) has reported a rise in crack cocaine use and a decline in the stigma attached to it. Additionally, the report concluded that the number of young people engaging in crack cocaine use was increasing, particularly for young males who were using crack as their chosen drug. The accuracy of these findings is unknown; however findings from this study significantly undermine the contention. Indeed, the stigma and social construction of harder drug use in Merseyside is evidenced through the day-to-day dialogue with young people, specifically those that engage in drug supply. The stigma is illustrated by the language used by young people. Words such as ‘scatty’, ‘smackhead’, ‘crackhead’ and ‘fiend’ ensures that drug users become defined by their labels and that the young people can detach themselves from the chaotic world of drug dependence.

There were a number of initial driving forces behind the use of cannabis for young people and the reasons provided varied. Young people largely attributed their desire to smoke cannabis to the social aspect of sharing it with their friends and the relaxing effect they reported. More interestingly, some young people suggested that they smoked cannabis to help them sleep (see page 112). Smoking cannabis as a way to self-medicate was not an isolated occurrence. Young people regularly reported using cannabis as a way to manage stress and cure boredom. Without it they struggled to manage their emotions. Practitioners’ accounts supported these findings and gave rise to the structural processes that caused young people to experience pain and suffering (Bakkali, 2019). Social exclusion, deprivation and poverty (Deuchar, 2009), barriers to education and employment and stereotyping from authority, meant that young people were living on the margins of society. In order to form an identity and develop a sense of value, marginalised young people commonly participate in street life (Deuchar, 2009). What this participation involves is intense levels of structural

(Galtung, 1969) and individual violence and experiences that leave them emotionally scarred. Young people were experiencing the ‘munpain’ (Bakkali, 2019) and managing their daily struggles through using cannabis. Concerningly, their vulnerabilities were seldom addressed in either the YOTs or AEPs and young people had a lack of trust in services to be able to help them improve their situation.

What young people could not control, was the strength of the cannabis in which they were consuming. Discussed in chapter four (see page 111) was the link between prolonged cannabis consumption and mental health issues. Strains of cannabis with increased levels of THC and lower levels of CBD (which are found to be common in Merseyside), have stronger potential to induce mental health issues and feelings of paranoia. These findings highlight important ramifications for the future mental health of those engaged in daily cannabis use and encourage the need to revisit current drug legislation surrounding cannabis. Additionally, the root causes of their consumption require addressing by the practitioners tasked with helping young people desist from crime. A reduction in cannabis consumption amongst young people would reduce their contact with drug dealers and the likeliness that they will become criminally exploited in order to pay off debts.

Recommendations

This chapter has provided numerous discussion points and highlighted the most significant findings from the two samples of data. There are several factors that need to be addressed in order to reduce the issue of gangs and risk of young people becoming criminally exploited. Child Criminal Exploitation is a problem that has become evidenced throughout (but not limited to) gang culture in the UK, only increasing in public consciousness over the past eighteen months. Findings here suggest that the street gangs in Merseyside comprise of exploitative features and almost all of those involved in gangs experience being subject to exploitation in varying forms. Findings throughout the study have demonstrated a misunderstanding of CCE (at least in part) amongst practitioners working with children and young people – highlighting the misinterpretation of victim-perpetrator relationships and failing to provide young people with what they need to live prosocial lives. This is particularly concerning given

that almost all of the young people in the study had been open to practitioner intervention at some point during their lives.

With building demands from target-driven governing bodies in criminal justice and educational environments, young people are not receiving the amount of time needed with professionals to have the desired effect. Practitioners main concerns were centred around lack of both time and resources and how neoliberal policies were inhibiting their effectiveness. More funding needs to be injected into the youth justice system where practitioners can provide meaningful activities for their young people, which offer purpose, achievement and a sense of self-worth. Emphasis need also be placed on the education system (which has been significantly affected by budget cuts) and its potential to raise awareness of the harms associated with gang-involvement and CCE. Schools should be safe spaces for children. Rather, many young people in this study felt the need to arm themselves before entering the school gates for fear of being attacked by other young people.

The Children's Commissioner for England (The Children's Society, 2019) has reported her concerns that CCE will be the next major grooming scandal. The evidence is based on Office for National Statistics figures which suggest that there are 27,000 children identifying as gang members in England. The Children's Society add to these figures, reporting that there are upwards of 313,000 children who know a gang member. Of those, 33,000 children have siblings involved in gangs and 34,000 children have either been the victims of violence in the last twelve months, are themselves a gang member, or know a gang member (The Children's Society, 2019). Of most concern, most of the young people that fall within these figures are unknown to services and so risk remaining hidden without intervention or support. Such figures demonstrates a worryingly high number of young people at risk of criminal exploitation. In addition to this, the National Health Service (NHS) has reported a 60 per cent increase in admissions to hospitals for young people with stab wounds (NHS, 2019). The rise in youth violence, as demonstrated in this study, could be attributed to gang rivalries and assaults over unpaid drug debts.

There are numerous overlaps between CCE and CSE according to accounts provided in this study and those in the CSE literature (Hallett, 2015; Hickie and Hallett, 2015).

Coercion, manipulation and grooming (Hallett, 2015), not to mention the overwhelmingly similar vulnerabilities experienced by the victims of both crimes - including adverse childhood experiences, chaotic homelives and a lack of self-worth - are features heavily present in both forms of exploitation. The exchange of love, belonging and recognition for the (criminal and sexual) services of young people remains a prominent feature of exploitation, where those involved are provided for by, sometimes dangerous individuals. Though the academic literature is not yet sufficient in explaining CCE, a lot can be learned from the CSE literature based upon high profile cases whereby children and young people are 'groomed' by gangs of males (Hallett, 2015). Indeed, best practices from professionals working with sexually exploited young people should be implemented when working with the victims of criminal exploitation.

With many gang-involved young people and their families experiencing marginalisation, social exclusion and extreme deprivation, experiences of structural violence need to be addressed through government policy. Families require help through welfare and community cohesion, rather than internalising neoliberal notions of individualism and competition that incite feelings of blame and low self-worth when they experience employment and financial struggles. Through the closure of many youth clubs, young people are lacking in spaces where they can positively socialise with other young people. Street violence and involvement in gangs and drug supply mean that young people have to mature at a faster pace, exceeding prosocial activities that are associated with youth. Providing those struggling the most with support and inclusionary measures that aim to provide positive activities on a community-wide level, will reduce the opportunity for crime by restricting the amount of time available for young people to spend on the streets.

The rise in (normalised) cannabis use and its potency should be of paramount concern to professionals that work with children and young people, and those in drug reform organisations. Cannabis was one of the most prominent features in the study, arising in discourses with both young people and worried practitioners. The cultivation of cannabis in the UK and the harmfully high levels of THC found, have the potential to cause irreversible damage to the mental health of those engaged in consuming it. In an already struggling NHS, increases in cannabis-related health problems will inhibit its

ability to effectively help young people requiring mental health support. Thus, addressing the underlying factors driving many young people on Merseyside to engage in cannabis use will likely ease this strain. Not only is cannabis harmful to mental health, but it was the daily habits of young people in Merseyside that were enabling contact with drug dealers. In allowing young people to build up drug debts for cannabis, drug dealers could offer an alternative payment in the form of criminal exploitation. Indeed, their drug debts were what landed most of the young people in the exploitative environments that they found themselves, indebted to drug dealers and having to sell drugs in order to pay off their debts.

The research was not able to provide an in-depth understanding of certain factors significant to CCE and County Lines. That is, the extent and nature of criminal exploitation for females; the varying relationships between criminally exploited young people and their perpetrators; and accounts of CCE from vulnerable class A drug users - those that may be abused by young people working the County Lines. Further academic inquiry into these three areas will provide a more holistic understanding of CCE rather than being limited to accounts from a small number of gang-involved young males. Moreover, the study provided an understanding into gangs, County Lines and CCE from a Merseyside perspective; the findings – whilst useful - are therefore specific to this location only. Comparative academic research between areas in the UK most heavily affected by CCE and County Lines drug supply would produce valuable findings and identify if any of the findings from this case study are unique to Merseyside. Indeed, with most research into County Lines stemming from studies in the South of England (Hallworth, 2016; Coomber and Moyle, 2017; Spicer et al., 2019), and government reports published in London (Home Office, 2017), there is a tendency to generalise these findings to the rest of the UK and risk missing evolving features of CCE and County Lines in different locations.

The main findings and conclusions presented within this chapter demand concerted efforts from all sectors of society if gang-involvement and CCE is to be reduced. On the verge of presenting itself as another major ‘grooming scandal’, the alarming normalisation of weapon carrying, rise in hospital admissions for stabbings (NHS, 2019) and increase in school exclusions has serious ramifications for the Criminal Justice System, education system, the NHS and every community in the UK. As such,

Child Criminal Exploitation should be addressed as a public health issue and made a national priority.

Reference List

- Abram, K. M., Teplin, L. A., Charles, D. R., Longworth, S. L., McClellan, G. M., and Dulcan, M. K. (2004). Posttraumatic stress disorder in youth in juvenile detention. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 61, pp. 403-410.
- Adler, A. (1939). *Social interest, a challenge to mankind*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.
- Adler, P. A., and Adler, P. (1994). Observational techniques. In N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 377–392). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Aldridge, J., Measham, F. and Williams, L. (2011) *Illegal Leisure Revisited: Changing Patterns of Alcohol and Drug Use in Adolescents and Young Adults*. London: Routledge.
- Aldridge, J. and Medina, J. (2007). *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence*: Full Research Report ESRC End of Award Report, RES-000-23-0615. Swindon: ESRC.
- Aldridge, J., Medina, J. and Ralphs, R. (2008). Dangers and problems of doing 'gang' research in the UK. In: van Germert, F., Peterson, D. and Lein, I. L (Eds). *Street Gangs, Migration and Ethnicity*. Collumpton, Devon: Willan publishers.
- Aldridge J., Medina, J. and Ralphs, R. (2012). 'Counting Gangs: Conceptual and Validity Problems with the Eurogang Definition'. In: Esbensen FA., Maxson C. (eds) *Youth Gangs in International Perspective*. Springer, New York, NY
- Aldridge, J., Shute, J., Ralphs, R. and Medina, J. (2009). Blame the parents? Challenges for parent-focused programmes for families of gang-involved young people. *Children and Society*. National Children's Bureau: Manchester.
- Amnesty International. (2018). *Trapped in the Matrix: Secrecy, stigma, and bias in the Met's Gangs Database*. Amnesty International: London.
- Amsler, S. & Bolsmann, C. (2012). University ranking as social exclusion. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 33(2), pp. 283-301, DOI: 10.1080/01425692.2011.649835
- Andell, J. and Pitts, J. (2018). *The end of the line? The impact of county lines drug distribution on youth crime in a target destination*. Youth & Policy [online]. Available from: <http://www.youthandpolicy.org/articles/the-end-of-the-line/> [Accessed 27th June 2019].
- Anderson, E. (1999). *Code of the Street: Decency, Violence and the Moral Life of the Inner City*. New York: W. W. Norton.
- Andrew, A. (2018). *Decline and the City: the Urban Crisis in Liverpool, c. 1968-1986*. Unpublished thesis. University of Leicester.

- APPG. (2017). *APPG on Runaway and Missing Children and Adults*. APPG Missing, Gangs and Exploitation Roundtable Report. London.
- Baird, A. (2012). The violent gang and the construction of masculinity amongst socially excluded young men. *Safer Communities*, 11(4), pp. 179-190.
- Baker, J. (2010). Claiming Volition and Evading Victimhood: Post-Feminist Obligations for Young Women. *Feminism & Psychology*, 20(2), pp. 186-204.
- Bakkali, Y. (2019). Dying to Live: Youth violence and the munpain. *The Sociological Review*, DOI: 10.1177/0038026119842012, pp. 1-16.
- Bales, K. (2004). *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Bandura, A., Claudio B., Gian V. C, and Concetta P. (1996). Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 71 (2): 364–74.
- Bannister, J. and Fraser, A. (2008). Youth gang identification; learning and social development in restricted geographies. *Scottish Journal of Criminal Justice Studies*, 14, pp. 96-114.
- Bannister, J., Pickering, J., Batchelor, S., Burman, M., Kintrea, K. and McVie, S. (2010). *Troublesome Youth Groups, Gangs and Knife Carrying in Scotland*. Project Report. Scottish Government.
- Barnard, M., Drey, N. and Bryson, C. (2012). *NSPCC Research Ethics Committee: Guidance for applicants*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/evaluation-of-services/research-ethics-committee-guidance-applicants.pdf> [Accessed 18th December. 2016].
- Barnado's. (2011). *Puppet on a String: The Urgent Need to Cut Children Free from Sexual Exploitation*. Barnado's, Essex.
- Barnardo's. (2018). *Children in trouble with the law*. [Online]. Available at: http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/youth_justice.htm [Accessed 29th July 2018].
- Batchelor, S. A. (2009). Girls, Gangs and Violence: Assessing the evidence. *Probation Journal*, 56(4), pp. 399-414.
- Batchelor, S. A. (2011). 'Beyond dichotomy: towards an explanation of young women's involvement in violent street gangs'. In, Goldson, B. (Eds) *Youths in Crisis? Gangs, territoriality and violence*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Bayliss, C. (2017). *Middle class kids as young as EIGHT groomed by gangs to sell*

drugs and trafficked for sex. Express [online]. Available at: <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/828499/middle-class-kids-young-eight-groomed-gangs-sell-drugs-trafficked-sex-criminal> [Accessed 30th November 2017].

BBC. (2007). *London's teenage victims of violence* [online]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7117749.stm> [Accessed 8th January 2018].

BBC. (2016). *Knife crime: Why are more youths carrying knives?* [online] Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38237496> [Accessed 26th February. 2018].

BBC. (2017). *County Lines: The children forced to sell drugs* [online]. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-41720980> [Accessed 29th November 2017].

Becker, H. (1963). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. New York: The Free Press.

Becker, H. (1967). Whose Side Are We On? *Social Problems*, 14(3), pp. 239-247.

Beckett, H. (2013). 'Looked After Young People and CSE: A View from Northern Ireland'. In: Melrose M., Pearce J. (eds) *Critical Perspectives on Child Sexual Exploitation and Related Trafficking*. Palgrave Macmillan, London

Beckett, H., Brodie, I., Factor, F., Melrose, M., Pearce, J., Pitts, J., Shuker, L. and Warrington, C. (2013). *"It's wrong... but you get used to it". A qualitative study of gang-associated sexual violence towards, and exploitation of, young people in England*. Children's Commissioner: University of Bedfordshire.

Belchem, J. (2006). *Liverpool 800; Culture character and history*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press.

Bennett, T. and Holloway, K. (2004). Gang membership, drugs and crime in the UK. *British Journal of Criminology*, 44, pp. 305-323.

Bennett, D. C., Kerig, P. K., Chaplo, S., McGee, A. B. and Baucom, B. R. (2014). Validation of the five-factor model of PTSD symptom structure among delinquent youth. *Psychological Trauma*, 6, pp. 438-447.

Berelowitz, S., Clifton, J., Firimin, C., Gulyurtlu, S. and Edwards, G. (2013). *"If only someone had listened": Office of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Gangs and Groups, Final Report*. London: Office of the Children's Commissioner.

Beresford, H. and Wood, J. L. (2016). Patients or perpetrators? The effects of trauma exposure on gang members' mental health: a review of the literature. *Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice*, 2(2), pp. 148-159.

Berlant, L. (2008). *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

- Bernard, H. R. (2006). *Research Methods in Anthropology: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, 4th Ed. AltaMira Press. Walnut Creek, CA.
- Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteous, D. and Tarling, R. (2001). *The Independent Effects of Permanent Exclusion from School on the Offending Careers of Young People*. RDS Occasional Paper No.71. London: Home Office
- Bhukuth, A. (2005) Child labour and debt bondage: A case study of brick kiln workers in southern India. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 40(4), 287–302.
- Blackburn , R. (2019). *Gun crime in Merseyside at highest level for five years, figures show*. St Helens Reporter [online]. Available at: <https://www.sthelensreporter.co.uk/news/crime/gun-crime-in-merseyside-at-highest-level-for-five-years-figures-show-1-9598069> [Accessed 27th April 2019].
- Boden, R., Epstein, D. and Latimer, J. (2009) ‘Accounting for Ethos or Programmes for Conduct? The Brave New World of Research Ethics Committees’, *The Sociological Review*, 57, (4), 728-49.
- Bosworth, M., Campbell, D., Demby, B., Ferranti, S. M. and Santos, M. (2005). 'Doing prison research: Views from inside'. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 2(2), pp 249-264.
- Bourdieu, P. (1985). The genesis of the concepts of habitus and field. *Sociocriticism*, 2(2), pp. 11-24.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). ‘The forms of capital’, in Richardson, J. G. (ed). *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. New York, NY: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *The Logic of Practice*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourgois, P. (2003). *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Second Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Braga, A. A., Kennedy, D. M. and Piehl, A. M. (1999). *Problem-Orientate Policing and Youth Violence: An Evaluation of the Boston Gun Project*, unpublished report to the National Institute of Justice, Washington DC.
- Braga, A. A., Kennedy, D. M., Piehl, A. M. and Waring, E. J. (2000). *The Boston Gun Project: Impact Evaluation Findings*. U.S. National Institute of Justice [online]. Available at: <https://sites.hks.harvard.edu/urbanpoverty/Urban%20Seminars/May2000/BragaBGP%20Report.pdf> [Accessed 17th January 2018].
- Braithwaite, J. (1989). *Crime, Shame and Reintegration*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77-101.
- Briggs, D. (2010). Crack Houses in the UK: Some Observations on their Operations. *Drugs and Alcohol Today*, 10(4), pp. 33-42.
- Briggs, D. (2012). *Crack Cocaine Users: High Society and Low Life in South London*. London: Routledge.
- Broidy, L. and Agnew, R. (1997). Gender and Crime: A General Strain Theory Perspective. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 34, 275.
- Brookman, F., Bennett, T., Hochstetler, A. and Cope, H. (2011). The 'code of the street' and the generation of street violence in the UK. *European Journal of Criminology*, 8(1), pp. 17-31.
- Broom, A., Hand, K. and Tovey, P. (2009). The role of gender, environment and individual biography in shaping qualitative interview data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 12(1), pp. 51-65.
- Brown, K. (2020). Punitive reform and the cultural life of punishment: Moving from the ASBO to its successors. *Punishment & Society*, 22(1), pp. 90-107.
- Bryman, A. (2008). *Social Research Methods*, 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buchan, L. (2019). *Education spending slashed by £7bn since 2011 with children 'paying price for austerity', says labour*. The Independent [online]. Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/labour-angela-rayner-funding-cuts-department-for-education-damian-hinds-a8726151.html> [Accessed 29th April 2019].
- Bullock, K. and Tilley, N. (2002) *Shooting, Gangs and Violent Incidents in Manchester: Developing a Crime Reduction Strategy*. Crime Reduction Research Series Paper 13. London: Home Office.
- Bullock, K. and Tilley, N. (2008). Understanding and Tackling Gang Violence. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 10, pp. 36-47.
- Bunker, R. (1996). Street Gangs – Future Paramilitary Groups? *The Police Chief*, 63(6), pp. 54-59.
- Butler, P. (2018). *Spending cuts breach UK's human rights obligations, says report*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/28/spending-cuts-uk-human-rights-obligations-report> [Accessed 26th April 2019].
- Byrne, B. and Brooks, K. (2015). *Post-YOT Youth Justice*. The Howard League for Penal Reform, Surrey: UK.
- Campbell, A. (1984). *The Girls in the Gang*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Campbell, A. (1987). Self-Definition by Rejection: The Case of Gang Girls. *Social Problems*, 34(5), pp. 451-466.
- Canham, S. L. (2009). The Interaction of Masculinity and Control and its impact on the Experience of Suffering for an Older man. *Journal of Aging Studies*, 23(2), pp. 90-96.
- Carey, M. and Smith, M. (1994). Capturing the Group Effect in Focus Groups: A Special Concern in Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 4(1), pp. 123-127.
- Case, S. and Haines, K. (2009). *Understanding Youth Offending: Risk Factor Research, Policy and Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Census (1981). *1981 English census data* [online]. Available at: casweb.mimas.ac.uk [Accessed 18 November 2016].
- Chapman, D. P., Whitfield, C. L., Felitti, V. J., Dube, S. R., Edwards, V. J. and Anda, R. F. (2004). Adverse childhood experiences and the risk of depressive disorders in adulthood. *Journal of Affective Disorders*, 82(2), pp. 217-225.
- Checkland, S. G. (1981) *The Upas Tree: Glasgow 1875-1975...And After*, Glasgow: University of Glasgow Press.
- Chesney-Lind, M. and Eliason, M. (2006). From invisible to incorrigible: The demonization of marginalized women and girls. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 2(29), pp. 29-47.
- Christie, N. (1986). 'The Ideal Victim', in Fattah, E. (eds). *From Crime Policy to Victim Policy*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Cloward, R. A. and Ohlin, L. E. (1960). *Delinquency and Opportunity: A Theory of Delinquent Gangs*. Glencoe, IL: The Free Press.
- Clutton, S. and Coles, J. (2007). *Sexual Exploitation Risk Assessment Framework. A Pilot Study*. Barnardo's: Cymru.
- Cohen, A. K. (1955). *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. New York: Free Press.
- Cohen, S. (1972). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. Oxford: Martin Robertson.
- Cohen, S. (1985). *Visions of Social Control*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Cohen, S. (2004). *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (3rd Edition). London: Routledge.
- Cohn, C. (1999). Missions, Men and Masculinities. *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 1(3), pp. 460-475.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Conway, S. (2019). *Understanding the factors contributing to the absence of street gangs in Milton Keynes: a negative aetiology*. Unpublished thesis: The Open University.
- Community Safety Glasgow. (2016). *Community Safety Glasgow: Nine Years On*. [online] Available at: <http://www.communitysafetyglasgow.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/CSG-9-Years-On.pdf> [Accessed 5th March. 2018].
- Connell, R.W. (2000). *The Men and the Boys*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W. and Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender and Society*, 19, pp. 829-859.
- Coomber, R. and Moyle, L. (2017). The Changing Shape of Street-Level Heroin and Crack Supply in England: Commuting, Holidaying and Cuckooing Drug Dealers Across ‘County Lines’. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 58(6), pp. 1323-1342. DOI: 10.1093/bjc/azx068.
- Corbin, J. M., and Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (3rd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cornford, A. (2012). Criminalising Anti-Social Behaviour. *Criminal Law and Philosophy*, 6(1), pp. 1-19.
- Cox. (2011). Youth Gangs in the UK: Myth or Reality? *Internet Journal of Criminology*, ISSN 2045-6743.
- Crandall, J. (1981). *Theory and measurement of social interest*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Creaney, S. (2018). Children’s Voices – are we Listening? Progressing Peer Mentoring in the Youth Justice System. *Child Care in Practice*. DOI <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2018.1521381>.
- Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (4th Ed). Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.
- Crisp, W. (2019). *Inside the ‘county lines’ drugs den where children are lured from their homes to become teenage dealers*. The Telegraph [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/0/inside-county-line-drugs-den-children-lured-homes-become-teenage/> [Accessed 14th February 2019].
- Curran, H. V., Freeman, T. P., Mokrysz, C., Lewis, D. A., Morgan, C. J. A. and Parsons, L. H. (2016). Keep off the grass? Cannabis, cognition and addiction. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience*, 17, pp. 293-306.

Curry, G. D. (2011). Gangs, crime, and terrorism. In B. Forst, J. Greene, and J. Lynch (Eds.), *Criminologists on terrorism and homeland security* (pp. 97–112). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Daly, M. (2017). *What it's Really Like 'Going Country'*. Vice [online]. Available at: https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/gyjzbx/what-its-really-like-going-country [Accessed 29th November 2017].

Darrow, W. W., Jaffe, H. W., Thomas, P. A., Haverkos, H. W., Rogers, M. F., Guinan, M. E., Auerback, D. M., Spira, T. J. and Curran, J. W. (1986). Sex of interviewer, place of interview, and responses of homosexual men to sensitive questions. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 15(1), pp. 79-88.

Davenport, J. (2017). Children 'as young as 11 exploited by gangs to traffic drugs from London,' warns charity worker. Evening Standard [online]. Available at: <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/children-as-young-as-11-exploited-by-gangs-to-traffic-drugs-from-london-a3616106.html> [Accessed 30th November 2017].

Davies, A. (1998). Street gangs, crime and policing in Glasgow during the 1930s: The case of the beehive boys. *Social History*, 23(3), pp. 251-267.

Davies, A. (2007). 'Glasgow's Reign of Terror': Street Gangs, Racketeering and Intimidation in the 1920s and 1930s. *Contemporary British History*, 21(4), pp. 405-427.

Davies, A. (2013). *City of Gangs: Glasgow and the Rise of the British Gangster*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.

Davies, G. (2018). *Britain's first county lines prosecution as drug dealer convicted for using children to sell crack and heroin*. Telegraph [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/10/04/britains-first-county-lines-prosecution-drug-dealer-convicted/> [Accessed 23rd April 2019].

Davies, J. and Peters, E. (2014). 'Relationships Between Gatekeepers and Researchers: The Experience of Conducting Evaluations into Parenting Programmes in Community and Penal Settings'. In Lumsden, K., Winter, A. (eds). *Reflexivity in Criminological Research*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

Dawson, P. (2008). *Monitoring Data from the Tackling Gangs Action Programme*. Home Office [online]. Available at: http://safecolleges.org.uk/sites/default/files/Home_Office_2008_TGAP_data.pdf [Accessed 6th November. 2017].

Daymon, C. and Holloway, I. (2002). *Qualitative Research Methods in Public Relations and Marketing Communication*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Dearden, L. (2017). *Thousands of children used as drug mules by 'county lines' gangs expanding into rural parts of the UK*. The Independent [online]. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/children-drug-mules-uk-thousands->

county-lines-gangs-vulnerable-expanding-rural-britain-seaside-a8080001.html
[Accessed 29th November 2017].

Dearden, L. (2018). *London stabbings: 80 people stabbed to death in capital in 2017 after four killed in 'senseless' New Year knife attacks*. The Independent [Online]. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/london-stabbings-new-years-eve-killed-murder-number-2017-knife-attacks-met-police-enfield-tulse-hill-a8137836.html> [Accessed 27th February. 2018].

Decker, S. (1996). Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence. *Justice Quarterly*, 13(2), pp. 243-264.

Decker, S. and Curry, G. (2000). Addressing key features of gang membership: Measuring the involvement of young members. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 28(6), pp. 473-482.

Decker, S. Katz, C. and Webb, V. (2008). Understanding the Black Box of Gang Organization. Implications for Involvement in Violent Crime, Drug Sales, and Violent Victimization. *Crime and Delinquency*, 54(1), pp. 153-172.

Decker, S. H., and Pyrooz, D. C. (2011). Gangs, terrorism, and radicalization. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4(4), 151–166.
<https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.5038/1944-0472.4.4.7>

Decker, S., Pyrooz, D. C. and Moule, R. K. (2014). Disengagement From Gangs as Role Transitions. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 24(2), pp. 268-283.

Decker, S. and Van Winkle, B. (1996). *Life in the Gang: Family, Friends, and Violence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Densley, J. (2012). The organisation of London's street gangs. *Global Crime*, 13(1), pp. 42-64.

Densley, J. (2013). *How Gangs Work: An Ethnography of Youth Violence*. Palgrave MacMillan, New York.

Densley, J. (2014). It's gang life, but not as we know it: the evolution of gang business. *Crime & Delinquency*, 60, pp. 517-546.

Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). *Handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., and Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, and Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed., pp. 1-32). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Department for Education. (2015). *Guide to the Children's Homes Regulations including the quality standards*. Government report [online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/463220/Guid

e_to_Children_s_Home_Standards_inc_quality_standards_Version__1.17_FINAL.pdf [Accessed 18th January 2018].

Deuchar, R. (2009). *Gangs, Marginalised Youth and Social Capital*. Stoke on Trent: Trentham.

Deuchar, R. (2013). *Policing youth violence: transatlantic connections*. London: Institute of Education Press.

Deuchar, R. (2018). *Gangs and Spirituality: Global Perspectives*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Deuchar, R., Harding, S., McLean, R. and Densley, J. (2018). Deficit or Credit? A Comparative, Qualitative Study of Gender Agency and Female Gang Membership in Los Angeles and Glasgow. *Crime & Delinquency*, DOI: 10.1177/0011128718794192

Deuchar, R. and Holligan, C. (2010), 'Gangs, Sectarianism and Social Capital: A Qualitative Study of Young People in Scotland', *Sociology*, 44: 13–30.

Deykin, E. Y. and Buka, S. L. (1997). Prevalence and Risk Factors for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Among Chemically Dependent Adolescents. *Psychiatry*, 154(6), pp. 752-757.

Dierkhising, C. B. and Kerig, P. K. (2017). Pilot Evaluation of a University-Based Training in Trauma-Informed Services for Gang Intervention Workers. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 27(3), pp. 291-308.

Downes, D. (1966). *The Delinquent Solution: A Study in Subcultural Theory*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Dorset Safeguarding Children's Board (2018). Children Affected by Gang Activity or Serious Youth Violence. [online] Available at: http://pandorsetscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_affected_gang_act.html [Accessed 26th February. 2018].

Dube, S. R., Felitti, V. J., Dong, M., Chapman, D. P., Giles, W. H. and Anda, R. F. (2003). Childhood Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction and the Risk of Illicit Drug Use: The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. *Paediatrics*, 111(3), pp. 564-572.

Dunn, K. (2000). Interviewing. In *Qualitative Research Methods in Human Geography*. 2nd ed. (ed.) Hay, I. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dyer, F. and Gregory, L. (2014). *Mental Health Difficulties in the Youth Justice Population: Learning from the first six months of the IVY project*. Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice, briefing paper No. 5.

Edge Hill University. (2016a). *Ethical Guidance for Undertaking Research with Children and Young People*. Edge Hill University [online]. Available at:

<https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/research/files/2012/05/Ethics-Output-Guidance-Children-and-Young-People-RO-GOV-10.pdf> [Accessed 27th July 2018].

Edge Hill University. (2016b). *Code of Practice for the Conduct of Research (RO-GOV-01)*. Edge Hill University [online]. Available at: <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/documents/code-of-practice-for-the-conduct-of-research/> [Accessed 27th July 2018].

Edge Hill University. (2016c). *Framework for Research Ethics*. Edge Hill University [online]. Available at: <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/eprc/files/2014/01/Ethics-Output-Background-Framework-for-Research-Ethics-RO-GOV-03.pdf> [Accessed 27th July 2018].

Edwards, L. and Hatch, B. (2003) *Passing Time: A Report about Young People and Communities*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research.

EHRC. (2012). *Race Disproportionality in Stops and Searches under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994* (Manchester: Equality and Human Rights Commission).

Emmerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I. and Shaw, L. L. (2011). *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd Edition. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ellis, A. (2015). *Men, Masculinities and Violence: An ethnographic study*. London: Routledge.

ElSohly, M. A., Mehmedic, Z., Foster, S., Gon, C., Chandra, S. and Church, J. C. (2016). Changes in Cannabis Potency Over the Last 2 Decades (1995-2014): Analysis of Current Data in the United States. *Biological Psychiatry*, 79(7), pp. 613-619.

Esbensen, F., Peterson, D., Taylor, T. and Freng, A. (2009). Similarities and Differences in Risk Factors for Violent Offending and Gang Membership. *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 42(3), pp. 310-335.

Exum, M. L. (2002). The application and robustness of the rational choice perspective in the study of intoxicated and angry intentions to aggress. *Criminology*, 40(4), pp. 933-966.

Fagan, C. (2018). *City crime gangs are forcing kids to sell drugs in Leicestershire towns and villages*. Leicester Mercury [online]. Available at: <https://www.leicestermercury.co.uk/news/leicester-news/city-crime-gangs-forcing-kids-2111923> [Accessed 14th February 2019].

Farrington, D. P. (1996). *Understanding and Preventing Youth Crime*. Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York Publishing Services.

Felliti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P. and Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14(4), pp. 245-258.

- Fergusson, D., Boden, J. and Horwood, L. (2006). Cannabis use and other illicit drug use: testing the gateway hypothesis. *Addiction*, 101(4), pp. 556-569.
- Fetterman, D. M. (2010). *Ethnography: Step-by-step*. Third Edition. CA: Thousand Oaks. Sage Publications.
- Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S. and Kracke, K. (2009). *Children's Exposure to Violence: A Comprehensive National Survey*. Juvenile Justice Bulletin, U.S. Department of Justice.
- Finlay, L. (2002). "Outing" the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, 12, 531-545.
- Firmin, C., Turner, R. and Gavrielides, T. (2007), *Empowering Young People Through Human Rights Values: Fighting the Knife Culture*, London Esmee Fairburn Foundation.
- Fishman, L. (1995). 'Vice Queens: An Ethnographic Study of Black Female Gang Behavior. In Klein, M., Maxson, C. and Miller, J. *The Modern Gang Reader*, pp. 83-92. Los Angeles: Roxbury Press.
- Fitzsimmons, F. (2016). *Litherland house 'fire-bombed after 13-year-old boy kidnapped and beaten up'*. Liverpool Echo [online]. Available at: <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/litherland-house-fire-bombed-after-11877820> [Accessed 21st July 2017].
- Fossey, E., Harvey, C., McDermott, F., and Davidson, L. (2002). Understanding and evaluating qualitative research. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 36, pp. 717-732.
- Fox, B. H., Perez, N., Cass, E., Baglivio, M. T. and Epps, N. (2015). Trauma changes everything: Examining the relationship between adverse childhood experiences and serious, violent and chronic juvenile offenders. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 46, pp. 163-173.
- Fox, C. and Albertson, K. (2011). Payment by results and Social Impact Bonds in the Criminal Justice sector: New Challenges for Evidence-based Policy. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 11(5), pp.395-415.
- France, A. (2000), Towards a Sociological Understanding of Youth and their Risk Taking, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 3(3), pp. 317-331.
- Fraser, A. (2010). *Growing through Gangs: Young People, Identity and Social Change in Glasgow*. Unpublished PhD. University of Glasgow.
- Fraser, A. (2015). *Urban Legends: Gang identity in the Post-Industrial City*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Fraser, A. (2017). *Gangs & Crime: Critical Alternatives*. Sage: London.
- Fraser, A. and Atkinson, C. (2014). Making Up Gangs: Looping, Labelling and the New Politics of Intelligence-led Policing. *Youth Justice*, 14 (2), pp. 154-170.
- Freeman, T. P., van der Pol, P., Kuijpers, W., Wisselink, J., Das, R. K., Rigter, S., van Laar, M., Griffiths, P., Swift, W., Niesink, R. and Lynskey, M. T. (2018). Changes in cannabis potency and first-time admissions to drug treatment: a 16-year study in the Netherlands. *Psychological Medicine*, 48, pp. 2346-2352.
- Friedman, J., Hakim, S. and Spiegel, U. (1989). The Difference between Short and Long Run Effects of Police Outlays on Crime: Policing Deters Criminals Initially, but Later 'They May Learn By Doing'. *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Inc*, 48(2), pp. 177-191.
- Fyfe, N. Anderson, S. Bland, N., Goulding, A., Mitchell, J. and Reid, S. (2018). Experiencing Organizational Change During an Era of Reform: Police Scotland, Narratives of Localism, and Perceptions from the 'Frontline'. *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice*. DOI: <https://doi-org.edgell.idm.oclc.org/10.1093/police/pay052>
- Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, 6, 167-191.
- Gilbert, N. and Stoneman, P. (2015). *Researching Social Life*, (4th Ed). London: Sage Publications.
- Gilbertson, D. (1998) 'Exclusion and Crime', in Donovan, N. and Hodge, M. (Eds.) *Second Chances: Exclusion from School and Equality of Opportunity*. London: New Policy Institute.
- Glasser, M., Kolvin, I., Campbell, D., Glasser, A., Leitch, I. and Farrelly, S. (2001). Cycle of child sexual abuse: links between being a victim and becoming a perpetrator. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 179, pp. 482-494.
- Goffman, E. (1968). *Stigma. Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. London: Pelican Books.
- Goldsmith, A. and Halsey, M. (2013). Cousins in Crime: Mobility, Place and Belonging in Indigenous Youth Co-Offending. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 53(6), pp. 1157-1177.
- Goldson, B. (2011). Youths in Crisis? In, Goldson, B. (eds) *Youths in Crisis? 'Gangs', territoriality and violence*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Golding, B. and McClory, J. (2008). *Going Ballistic: dealing with guns, gangs and knives*. Policy Exchange.
- Gov.uk. (2018). *Data protection* [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection> [Accessed 25th July 2018].

Graham, J. and Bowling, B. (1995) *Young People and Crime*. London: Home Office Research Study 145. London: HMSO.

Gray, E. (2013). *What Happens to Persistent and Serious Young Offenders When They Grow Up. A Follow-Up Study of the First Recipients of Intensive Supervision and Surveillance*. Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales, UK.

Greater Manchester Safeguarding Children's Board (2017). Safeguarding Children and Young People Who May be Affected by Gang Activity. [online] Available at: http://greatermanchesterscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_sg_ch_yp_gang_act.html [Accessed 26th February. 2018].

Greene, J. and Pranis, K. (2007). *Gang Wars: The Failure of Enforcement Tactics and the Need for Effective Public Safety Strategies*. Washington D.C.: Justice Policy Institute. Available at: www.justicestrategies.org/sites/default/files/publications/Gang_Wars_Full_Report_2007.pdf.

Grenz, S. (2005). Intersections of Sex and Power in Research on Prostitution: A Female Re- searcher Interviewing Male Heterosexual Clients. *Signs*, 30(4), pp.2091-1215.

Grierson, J. (2018). *New year's attacks take stabbing death toll in London in 2017 to 80*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jan/01/four-young-men-killed-in-london-new-year-stabbings> [Accessed 27th February. 2018].

Guba, E. G., and Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). *Fourth generation evaluation*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gunter, A. (2017). *Race, Gangs and Youth Violence: Policy, prevention and policing*. University of Bristol: Policy Press.

Gutmann, M. C. (2003). *Changing men and masculinities in Latin America*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hagedorn, J., 1990. 'Back in the field again: gang research in the nineties'. In: C.R. Huff, ed. *Gangs in America*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, pp. 240-262.

Haines, K. and Case, S. (2015). *Positive Youth Justice. Children First, Offenders Second*. University of Bristol: Policy Press.

Hales, G. and Hobbs, D. (2010). Drug markets in the community: a London borough case study. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 13, pp. 13-30.

Hales, G., Lewis, C. and Silverstone, D. (2006). Gun Crime: the market in and use of illegal firearms, Home Office Research Study No. 189.

Hall, S. (2002). Daubing the drudges of fury: Men, violence and the piety of the 'hegemonic masculinity' thesis. *Theoretical Criminology*, 6(1), 35-61.

- Hallett, S. (2015). 'An Uncomfortable Comfortableness': 'Care', Child Protection and Child Sexual Exploitation. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 46(7), pp. 2137-2152.
- Hallworth, J. (2016). '*County Lines*': *An exploratory analysis of migrating drug gang offenders in North Essex*. Unpublished Masters dissertation: Selwyn College.
- Hallsworth, S. (2005), *Street Crime*, Cullompton: Willan Publishing.
- Hallsworth, S. (2013). *The Gang and Beyond: Interpreting Violent Street Worlds*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hallsworth, S. and Silverstone, D. (2009). 'That's life innit': A British perspective on guns, crime and social order. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 9(3), pp.359-377.
- Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2004). Getting real about gangs. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 55 (1), pp. 12-13.
- Hallsworth, S. and Young, T. (2008). Gang talk and gang talkers: A critique. *Crime, Media, Culture*, 4 (2), pp. 175-195.
- Hammersley, M. (1987). Some notes on the terms "validity" and "reliability." *British Educational Research Journal*, 13, 73-81.
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Harding, S. (2014). *The Street Casino. Survival in violent street games*. Bristol, UK: Policy Press.
- Harding, S. and Palasinski, M. (2016). *Global Perspectives on Youth Gang Behavior, Violence, and Weapon Use*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global USA.
- Hargreaves, J. Husband, H. and Linehan, C. (2018). *Police Workforce, England and Wales, 31 March 2018*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin. London, UK.
- Harris, A. (2000). Gender, Violence, Race, and Criminal Justice. *Stanford Law Review*, 52(4), pp. 777-807
- Harris, M. G. (1988). *Cholas: Latino Girls and Gangs*. New York: AMS Press, Inc.
- Harris, T. B., Elkins, S., Butler, A., Shelton, M., Robles, B., Kwok, S., Simpson, S., Young, D. W., Mayhew, A., Brown, A. and Sargent, A. J. (2013). Youth Gang Members: Psychiatric Disorders and Substance Use. *Laws*, 2, pp. 392-400.
- Harris, D., Turner, R., Garrett, I. and Atkinson, S. (2011). *Understanding the psychology of gang violence: implications for designing effective violence interventions*. London: Ministry of Justice Research Series 2/11.

- Hayward, K. (2007). Situational Crime Prevention and its Discontents: Rational Choice Theory versus the ‘Culture of Now’. *Social Policy & Administration*, 41(3), pp. 232-250.
- Heale, J. (2012). *One Blood: Inside Britain’s Gang Culture*. London: Simon and Schuster UK Ltd.
- Heath, S., Brooks, R., Cleaver, E. and Ireland, E. (2009). *Researching Young People’s Lives*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hertz, R. (1997). Introduction: Reflexivity and voice. In R. Hertz (Ed.), *Reflexivity and voice* (pp. vii-xviii). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Hesketh, R. F. (2017). *Radicalisation is not just a terrorist tactic – street gangs do it every day*. The Conversation [online]. Available at: <https://theconversation.com/radicalisation-is-not-just-a-terrorist-tactic-street-gangs-do-it-every-day-86714> [Accessed 18th April. 2019].
- Hesketh, R. F. (2018). *A critical exploration of why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in street gangs and potential implications for their future lifestyles*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Chester.
- Hesketh, R. F. and Robinson, G. (2019). Grafting: “the boyz” just doing business? Deviant entrepreneurship in street gangs. *Safer Communities*. DOI: 10.1108/SC-05-2019-0016.
- Hickle, K. and Hallett, S. (2015). Mitigating Harm: Considering Harm Reduction Principles in Work with Sexually Exploited Young People. *Children & Society*, 30(4), pp. 302-313.
- Hill, K., Howell, J., Hawkins, J. and Pearson, S. (1999). Childhood Risk Factors for Adolescent Gang Membership: Results from the Seattle Social Development Project. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 36(3), pp. 300-322.
- Hilton, M. R. and Mezey, G. C. (1996). Victims and perpetrators of child sexual abuse. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 169, pp. 408-415.
- Hirschi, T. (1969). *Causes of Delinquency*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- HM Government. (2008). *Saving Lives. Reducing Harm. Protecting the Public. An Action Plan for Tackling Violence 2008-2011 One Year On* [online]. Available at: <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20100408132733/http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/violent-crime-action-plan-08/> [Accessed 21st June 2018].
- HM Government. (2011). *Ending Gangs and Youth Violence: A Cross-Government Report* [online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97861/gang-violence-summary.pdf [Accessed 25 June 2018].

- Hobbs, D. (2013). *Lush Life: Constructing Organised Crime in the UK*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hodgson, P. and Webb, D. (2005). Young People, Crime and Social Exclusion: A Case of Some Surprises. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 44(1), pp. 12-28.
- Hoffmann, J. (2006). Family structure, community context, and adolescent problem behaviors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 35, pp. 867-880.
- Holligan, C. and Deuchar, R. (2009). Territorialities in Scotland: perceptions of young people in Glasgow. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(6), pp. 731-746.
- Home Office. (2004). *Delinquent Youth Groups and Offending Behaviour: findings from the 2004 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*. London: HMSO.
- Home Office. (2008). *Tackling Gangs: A Practical Guide for Local Authorities, CDRPs and other local partners*. London: HMSO.
- Home Office. (2016). *Children Looked After in England (Including Adoption and Care Leavers), year ending 31 March 2015: additional tables*. Government report. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/children-looked-after-in-england-including-adoption-2014-to-2015> [Accessed 3 November. 2016].
- Home Office. (2017). *Criminal Exploitation of children and vulnerable adults: County Lines guidance*. Government report [online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/626770/6_3505_HO_Child_exploitation_FINAL_web__2_.pdf [Accessed 8th November. 2017].
- Home Office. (2018a). *Government launches Trusted Relationships Fund*. Gov.uk [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-launches-trusted-relationships-fund> [Accessed 25th February 2018].
- Home Office. (2018b). *National County Lines Coordination Centre to crack down on drug gangs*. Gov.uk [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-county-lines-coordination-centre-to-crack-down-on-drug-gangs> [Accessed 15th February 2019].
- Home Office. (2019). *Increase in crack cocaine use inquiry: summary of findings*. Gov.uk [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crack-cocaine-increase-inquiry-findings/increase-in-crack-cocaine-use-inquiry-summary-of-findings> [Accessed 4th July. 2019].
- Hooley, T. and Watts, A. (2011). *Careers Work with Young People: Collapse or Transition?* Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.
- Hopkins Burke, R. (2009). *An Introduction to Criminological Theory*, 3rd ed. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.

Hounslea, D. (2011). *Youth Gang Membership: An Investigation of Young People Joining and Leaving Gangs*. Unpublished Dissertation. Sheffield Hallam University

House of Commons. (2017). Youth Unemployment Statistics. Government report. Briefing Paper number 5871. London: UK.

House of Commons Home Affairs Committee. (2007). *Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System: Second Report of Session 2006-07* (London: HM Stationary Office).

Howes, N. (2014). *Using the trauma model to understand the impact of sexual exploitation on children*. Bradford Safeguarding Children Board [online]. Available at: <http://bradfordscb.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Using-the-trauma-model.pdf> [Accessed 13th February 2019].

Huff, R. (1993). *Gangs in the United States*, in *the Gang Intervention Handbook* (eds) A. P. Goldstein and C. R. Huff. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Hughes, M. (2009). Guilty: the men who turned Manchester into Gunchester. The Independent [online]. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/guilty-the-men-who-turned-manchester-into-gunchester-1664444.html> [Accessed 22nd October. 2017].

Hughes, K., Hardcastle, K. and Perkins, C. (2015). *The mental health needs of gang-affiliated young people*. Public Health England Report. The Centre for Public Health, Liverpool John Moores University.

Humphries, J. (2016). 'No remorse' – Lewis Dunne's killers face minimum of 88 years behind bars. Liverpool Echo [online]. Available at: <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/no-remorse-lewis-dunnes-killers-12186387> [Accessed 17th April 2019].

Hunter, J. and Tseloni, A. (2016). Equity, justice and the crime drop: The case of burglary in England and Wales. *Crime Science*. 5(3). DOI: 10.1186/s40163-016-0051-z.

ITV News. (2017). *National Crime Agency reveals hundreds of 'county lines' used by drug dealers to move supply around the UK* [online]. Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/2017-11-28/county-lines-drug-dealers-uk/> [Accessed 29th November 2017].

ITV News. (2018). *What is 'remote mothering' and how are apps being used to control child drug runners?* [online]. Available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-09-21/what-is-remote-mothering-and-how-are-apps-being-used-to-control-child-drug-runners/> [Accessed 23 January 2019].

Jackson, K. (2018). *Beware the county lines: evil inner-city gangs targeting innocent children and teens to swamp small towns with drugs*. The Sun [online]. Available at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/6442607/city-gangs-target-children-sell-small-towns-drugs/> [Accessed 14th February 2019].

- Jarvinen, M. and Demant, J. (2011). The normalisation of cannabis use among young people: Symbolic boundary work in focus groups. *Health, Risk and Society*, 13(2), pp. 165-182.
- Jenkins, S. (2017). *Is violent crime on the rise – or do the latest figures mask a different story?* The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/oct/20/violent-crime-rise-police-figures-different-story-office-national-statistics> [Accessed 27th February. 2018].
- Johnson, G. (2013) *Young Blood: The Inside Story of How Street Gangs Hijacked Britain's Biggest Drugs Cartel*. UK: Mainstream Publishing.
- Jones, K. E., Martin, P. B., & Kelly, A. (2018). *Hidden young people in Salford: exploring the experiences of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) and not claiming benefits*. Project Report, University of Salford, Salford: United Kingdom.
- Juel, C. (1988). Learning to Read and Write: A Longitudinal Study of 54 Children from First Through Fourth Grades. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(4), pp. 437-447.
- Kallus, L. (2004). Because no one ever asked: Understanding youth gangs as a primary step in violence prevention. In Gerler, E. (Eds). *Handbook of school violence*. New York, NY: Haworth Press. pp. 215-236.
- Kandal, D., Yamaguchi, K. and Klein, L. (2006). Testing the gateway hypothesis. *Addiction*, 101(4), pp. 470-472.
- Kara, S. (2008). *Sex Trafficking: Inside the Business of Modern Slavery*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.
- Katz, J. (1988). *Seductions of Crime: Moral and Sensual Attractions in Doing Evil*. New York: Basic Books.
- Katz, C. M., Webb, V. J., Fox, K. and Shaffer, J. N. (2011). Understanding the relationship between violent victimization and gang membership. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 39, pp. 48-59.
- Keeling, N. (2015). *Three separate turf wars are behind spate of shootings in Manchester - but Chief Constable insists 'there is no crisis'*. MEN [online]. Available at: <http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/three-separate-turf-wars-behind-9776867> [Accessed 6 December. 2017].
- Kelly, A. (2019). *'County lines' drug gangs tracking children via social media*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/feb/05/county-lines-drug-gangs-blackmailing-tracking-children-social-media> [Accessed 31st July. 2019].

- Kennedy, D., Piehl, A. and Braga, A. (1996). Youth Violence in Boston: Gun Markets, Serious Youth Violence, and a Use-reduction strategy. *Law and Contemporary Problems*, 59(1), pp. 147-196.
- Kerig, P. K., Chaplo, S. D., Bennett, D. C. and Modrowski, C. A. (2016). 'Harm as Harm' Gang Membership, Perpetration Trauma, and Posttraumatic Stress Symptoms Among Youth in the Juvenile Justice System. *Criminal Justice and Behaviour*, 43(5), pp. 635-652.
- Kerig, P. K., Wainryb, C., Sinayobye Twali, M. and Chaplo, S. D. (2013). America's Child Soldiers: Toward a Research Agenda for Studying Gang-Involved Youth in the United States. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 22(7), pp. 773-795.
- Kilpatrick, D., Ruggiero, K., Acieno, R. Saunders, B., Resnick, H. and Best, C. (2003). Violence and Risk of PTSD, Major Depression, Substance Abuse/Dependence, and Comorbidity: Results From the National Survey of Adolescents. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 71(4), pp. 692-700.
- Kintrea, K., Bannister, J., Pickering, J., Reid, M. and Suzuki, N. (2008). *Young People and Territoriality in British Cities*. Project Report Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York, UK.
- Kinner, S., Lennox, N., Williams, G., Carroll, M., Quinn, B., Boyle, F. and Alati, R. (2013). Randomised controlled trial of a service brokerage intervention for ex-prisoners in Australia. *Contemporary Clinical Trials*, 36, pp. 198-206.
- Kitchin, R. and Tate, N. J. (2000). *Conducting Research in Human Geography: Theory, Methodology and Practice*. Harlow: Prentice Hall.
- Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 16(1), pp. 103-121.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative Research: Introducing focus groups. *BMJ*, 311, pp. 299-301.
- Khomami, N. (2016). *Most London knife crime no longer gang-related*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/oct/13/most-london-knife-no-longer-gang-related-police-say> [Accessed 16th January 2018].
- Khoury, L., Tang, Y. L., Bradley, B., Cubells, J. F. and Ressler, K. J. (2010). Substance Use, Childhood Traumatic Experience and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in an Urban Civilian Population. *Depression and Anxiety*, 27, pp. 1077-1086.
- Kirklees Safeguarding Children's Board (2018). *Safeguarding Factsheet 8: Gangs*. [online] Available at: <https://www.kirklees.gov.uk/beta/adult-social-care-providers/pdf/ksab-8-gangs.pdf> [Accessed 26th February. 2018].
- Klein, M. W. (1971). *Street gangs and street workers*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Klein, M. W. and Maxson, C. L. (2006). *Street Gang Patterns and Policies*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.

Klein, M. W., Maxson, C. L. and Cunningham, L. C. (1991). 'Crack', Street Gangs, and Violence. *Criminology*, 29(4), pp. 623-650.

Klein, M. W., Kerner, H. J., Maxson, C. L. and Weitekamp, E. G. M. (2001). *The Eurogang Paradox* (Eds). *Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic.

Klein, M. W., Weerman, F. M. and Thornberry, T. P. (2006). Street Gang Violence in Europe. *European Journal of Criminology*, 3(4), pp. 1477-3708.

Knapton, S. (2018). Almost all cannabis on Britain's streets 'super strength' and could be driving mental health problems. The Telegraph [online]. Available at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/science/2018/02/27/britain-flooded-super-strength-cannabis-could-driving-mental/> [Accessed 17th January 2019].

Knowsley Safeguarding Children's Board. (2017). *Preventing and Tackling the Criminal Exploitation of Children*. [online]. Available at: http://knowsleyscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_prev_tack_crim_exploit.html#def_ch_crim [Accessed 8th November. 2017].

Kobrin, S. (1964). Legal and Ethical Problems of Street Gang Work. *Crime & Delinquency*, 10(2), pp. 152-156.

LeBaron, G. (2014). Reconceptualizing Debt Bondage: Debt as a Class-Based Form of Labour Discipline. *Critical Sociology*, 40(5), pp. 763-780.

Legislation.gov.uk. (1999). *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*. [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/section/1/1999-04-01> [Accessed 6th March 2020].

Legislation.gov.uk. (2018). *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1994/33/section/60> [Accessed 6th March 2018].

Legislation.gov.uk. (2019a). *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*. [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/37/contents> [Accessed 25th August. 2019].

Legislation.gov.uk. (2019b). *Modern Slavery Act 2015*. [online]. Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/section/2/enacted> [Accessed 23rd April 2019].

Legislation.gov.uk. (2019c). *Children Act 1989*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/contents> [Accessed 25th August 2019].

Li, H. (2016). *What is Child Sexual Exploitation?* NWG Network. <http://www.nwgnetwork.org/who-we-are/what-is-child-sexual-exploitation> [Accessed 20 October 2017].

Lincoln, Y. S., and Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Liverpool City Council (2011). The city of Liverpool key statistics bulletin. Liverpool City Council [online]. Available at: <http://liverpool.gov.uk/Images/Issue%2011%20June%202011.pdf> [Accessed 12 December 2016].

Macilwee, M. (2006). *The Gangs of Liverpool*. Lancashire, UK: Milo Books.

Manderson, L., Bennett, E. and Andajani-Sutjahjo, S. (2006). The Social Dynamics of the Interview: Age, Class, and Gender. *Qualitative Health Research*, 16(10), pp. 1317-1334.

Manwaring, M. (2005). *Street Gangs: The New Urban Insurgency*. Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College.

Mares, D. (2001) 'Gangstas or lager louts? Working class street gangs in Manchester', in M. Klein, C. Malcolm, H-J. Kerner, C. Maxson, and E. Weitekamp (eds), *The Eurogang Paradox. Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic, 153–164.

Marshall, B., Webb, B. and Tilley, N. (2005). *Rationalisation of current research on guns, gangs and other weapons: Phase 1*. London: University College London Jill Dando Institute of Crime Science.

Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50(4), 370-396.

Maslow, A. H. (1971). *The farther reaches of human nature*. New York, NY, US: Arkana/Penguin Books.

Mason, J. (2002) *Qualitative Researching*, 2nd edition. London: Sage Publications.

May, T. (2010). Moving Beyond the ASBO [online]. Available at: <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/media-centre/speeches/beyond-the-asbo>. [Accessed 6th March 2020].

May, T. and Hough, M. (2004). Drug markets and distribution systems. *Addiction Research and Theory*, 12(6), pp. 549-563.

McAra, L. and McVie, S. (2005). The usual suspects? Street-life, young people and the police. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 5(1), pp. 5-36.

McCarthy, N. (2015). *West Midlands overtakes London as the nation's gun crime capital*. Birmingham Mail [online]. Available at: <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/west-midlands-overtakes-london-nations-8651802> [Accessed 16th May 2017].

- McLaren, J., Swift, W., Dillon, P. and Allsop, S. (2008). Cannabis potency and contamination: a review of the literature. *Addiction*, 103, pp. 1100-1109.
- McLean, R. (2017). An Evolving Gang Model in Contemporary Scotland. *Deviant Behaviour*, 39(3), pp. 309-321.
- McLean, R., Densley, J. and Deuchar, R. (2018). Situating gangs within Scotland's illegal drug market(s). *Trends in Organized Crime*, 21(2), pp. 147-171.
- McLean, R. and Holligan, C. (2018). The Semiotics of the Evolving Gang Masculinity and Glasgow. *Social Sciences*, 7(8). DOI: 10.3390/socsci7080125.
- McNair, R. (2002). *Perpetration-induced traumatic stress*. New York, NY: Praeger.
- Medina, J., Aldridge, J. and Ralphs, R. (2016). *Youth gangs in the UK: context, evolution and violence*. Conference paper, Global Gangs: A Cross-National Comparison, Geneva, Switzerland. pp. 1-11.
- Meier, M. H., Caspi, A., Ambler, A., Harrington, H., Houts, R., Keefe, R., McDonald, K., Ward, A., Poulton, R. and Moffitt, T. (2012). Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife. *PNAS*, 109(40), pp. 2657-2664.
- Mental Health Foundation. (2002). The Mental Health Needs of Young Offenders. *The Mental Health Foundation Updates*, 3(18), pp. 1-4.
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Merton, R. K. (1938). Social Structure and Anomie. *American Sociological Review*, 3, pp. 672-682.
- Merton, R. K. (1948). The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy. *The Antioch Review*, 8(2), pp. 193-210.
- Messerschmidt, J. W. (1993). *Masculinities and Crime*. Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Metropolitan Police. (2016). *Freedom of Information Request: Count of offence outcomes when the prosecution is prevented due to age of named suspect*. [online]. Available at: https://www.met.police.uk/globalassets/foi-media/disclosure_2016/july_2016/information-rights-unit---crimes-committed-by-children-aged-under-10-for-the-last-12-months [Accessed 6th March. 2018].
- Metropolitan Police Authority. (2017). *MPS Response to Guns, Gangs and Knives in London*. [online]. Available at: <http://policeauthority.org/metropolitan/committees/x-cop/2007/070503/05/index.html> [Accessed 6th December. 2017].
- Miller, J. (2001). 'Young Women's Involvement in Gangs in the United States: An Overview'. In, Klein, M. W., Kerner, H. J., Maxson, C. L. and Weitekamp, E. G. M.

(eds). *The Eurogang Paradox. Street Gangs and Youth Groups in the US and Europe*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic. 115-132.

Miller, W. (1977). *Violence by Youth Gangs and Youth Gangs as a Crime Problem in Major American Cities*. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice.

Miller, P. and Rose, N. (1990). Governing Economic Life, *Economy and Society*, 19, pp. 1–31.

Millie, A. (2013). ‘The policing task and the expansion (and contradiction) of British Policing. *Criminology and Criminal Justice*, 13(2), pp.143-160.

Millie, A. (2014). ‘What are the police for? Re-thinking policing post-austerity, in J.M. Brown (ed.) *The Future of Policing*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Mills, J., Bonner, A., and Francis, K. (2006). The development of constructivist grounded theory. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5(1), pp. 1-10.

Ministry of Justice. (2012). *The Rehabilitation Revolution – next steps*. Government press release [online]. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/the-rehabilitation-revolution-next-steps> [Accessed 26th April 2019].

Ministry of Justice. (2013). *Transforming Rehabilitation. A revolution in the way we manage offenders*. Government report [online]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228580/8517.pdf [Accessed 28th April 2019].

Mitchell, B. and James, M. (1998). A Pedagogy of belonging. *Reclaiming Children and Youth*, 7(3), pp. 113.

Moore, J. (1991). *Going Down to the Barrio: Homeboys and Homegirls in Change*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Morgan, D. (1996). Focus Groups. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22, pp. 129-152.

Morgan, D. and Krueger, R. (1993). ‘When to use focus groups and why’. In, Morgan, D. *Successful Focus Groups: Advancing the State of the Art*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, pp. 3-19.

Morris, N. (2016). *Crime figures rise sharply amid fears gang members becoming more ruthless in attempt to secure territory*. The Independent [online]. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/crime-figures-rise-sharply-amid-fears-gang-members-becoming-more-ruthless-in-attempt-to-secure-a6826246.html> [Accessed 20th October. 2017].

Muncie, J. (2009). *Youth and Crime*, 3rd Ed. London: Sage Publications.

Muncie, J. (2014). *Youth and Crime*, 4th Ed. London: Sage Publications.

- National Institute of Justice. (2008). *Gun Violence Programs: Operation Ceasefire*. [online] Available at: <https://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/gun-violence/prevention/pages/ceasefire.aspx> [Accessed 5th March. 2018].
- National Crime Agency. (2015). *NCA Intelligence Assessment. County Lines, Gangs and Safeguarding*. National Crime Agency. London: National Crime Agency.
- National Crime Agency. (2016). *County Lines Gang Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply*. National Briefing Report. London: National Crime Agency.
- National Crime Agency. (2017). *County Lines Violence, Exploitation & Drug Supply 2017*. National Briefing Report. London: National Crime Agency.
- National Crime Agency. (2019). *County Lines Drug Supply, Vulnerability and Harm 2018*. Intelligence Assessment. London: National Crime Agency.
- Newman, R., Talbot, J. and Catchpole, R. (2012). *Turning young lives around: how health and justice services can respond to children with mental health problems and learning difficulties who offend*. Prison Reform Trust Briefing [online]. Available at: http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/turningyounglivesaround_FINAL.pdf [Accessed 9th January. 2018].
- NHS. (2019). *Hospital admissions for youths assaulted with sharp objects up almost 60%*. NHS [online]. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/2019/02/teens-admitted-to-hospital/> [Accessed 1st August. 2019].
- Northumberland Safeguarding Children's Board (2018). *Gang Activity, Youth Violence and Criminal Exploitation Affecting Children*. [online]. Available at: http://northumberlandlscb.proceduresonline.com/chapters/p_ch_affected_gang_act.html [Accessed 26th February. 2018].
- NSPCC. (2016). *Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/> [Accessed 27th July 2018].
- NSPCC. (2017). *Child Sexual Exploitation: Who is affected*. NSPCC [online]. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/child-sexual-exploitation/who-is-affected/> Accessed 4th December 2017].
- NSPCC. (2018). *A child's legal rights: Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines*. NSPCC online. Available at: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/legal-definition-child-rights-law/gillick-competency-fraser-guidelines/> [Accessed 21st July 2018].
- O'connor, J. (2006). *City blighted by gun crime had hoped the worst was behind it*. The Telegraph [online]. Available at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1510539/City-blighted-by-gun-crime-had-hoped-the-worst-was-behind-it.html> [Accessed 26th February. 2018].

Office for National Statistics. (2012). *Ethnicity and National Identity in England and Wales: 2011*. [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/ethnicity/articles/ethnicityandnationalidentityinenglandandwales/2012-12-11> [Accessed 17th January 2018].

Office for National Statistics. (2015). *The English Indices of Deprivation 2015*, Statistical Release. Department for Communities and Local Government [online]. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/465791/English_Indices_of_Deprivation_2015_-_Statistical_Release.pdf [Accessed 16th January 2019].

Office for National Statistics. (2016). *Youth Justice Statistics 2015/16*. Government report [online]. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585897/youth-justice-statistics-2015-2016.pdf [Accessed 11th January. 2018].

Office for National Statistics. (2017). *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2017. Government report* [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingmar2017> [Accessed 7th November. 2017].

Office for National Statistics. (2018a). *The nature of violent crime in England and Wales: year ending March 2017*. Government report [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/the-nature-of-violent-crime-in-england-and-wales/yearendingmarch2017> [Accessed 27th February. 2018].

Office for National Statistics. (2018b). *Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW)*. [Online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforhouseholdsandindividuals/householdandindividualsurveys/crimesurveyforenglandwales> [Accessed 27th February. 2018].

Office for National Statistics. (2018c). *Crime in England and Wales: year ending June 2018*. Government report [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/bulletins/crimeinenglandandwales/yearendingjune2018#overview-of-crime> [accessed 16th April 2019].

Office for National Statistics. (2018d). *Children living in long-term workless households in the UK: 2017*. Government report [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/bulletins/childrenlivinginlongtermworklesshouseholdsintheuk/2017> [Accessed 28th April 2019].

Office for National Statistics. (2019). *Labour market overview, UK: April 2019*. Government report [online]. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/april2019> [Accessed 26th April 2019].

- Omizo, M. M., Omizo, S. A. and Honda, M. R. (1997). A phenomenological study with youth gang members: Results and implications for school counsellors. *Professional School Counselling*, 1(1), pp. 39-42.
- Osborn, D. R. and Tseloni, A. (1998). The distribution of household property crimes. *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 14, pp. 307-330.
- Owen, T. (2012). Theorising Masculinities and Crime: A Genetic-Social Approach. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociological Theory*, 5(3), pp. 972-984.
- Padfield, M. and Proctor, I. (1996). The effect of the interviewer's gender on the interview process: a comparative enquiry. *Sociology*, 30(2), pp. 355-366.
- Patrick, J. (1973). *A Glasgow Gang Observed*. Glasgow: Methuen Publishing Ltd.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Payne, Y. and Hamdi, H. (2008). "Street Love": How Street Life Oriented U.S. Born African Men Frame Giving Back to One Another and the Local Community. *Urban Review*, 41(1), pp. 29-46.
- Pearce, J. J. and Pitts, J. M. (2011). *Youth gangs, sexual violence and sexual exploitation: a scoping exercise*. The Office of the Children's Commissioner for England, Luton: University of Bedfordshire.
- Pearson, G. (1983). *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears*. London: Macmillan.
- Pearson, G. (2006). Disturbing continuities: 'peaky blinders' to 'hoodies'. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 65, pp. 6-7.
- Peters, E (1994). *Ethnography*. Unpublished paper, Edge Hill University.
- Pettifor, T. (2016). *Kids aged 10 caught with guns as gangs lure thousands of youths into crime epidemic*. The Mirror [online]. Available at: <http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/kids-aged-10-caught-guns-7645335> [Accessed 20th October. 2017].
- Phelan, O., Ward, M. and McGuinness, F. (2018). *Poverty in Liverpool*. London: House of Commons Library.
- Pitts, J. (2007). 'Reluctant Gangsters: Youth Gangs in Waltham Forest'. Report for the Waltham Forest Crime and Community Safety Partnership.
- Pitts, J. (2008). *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing.
- Pitts, J. (2012). Reluctant Criminologists: Criminology, Ideology and the Violent Youth Gang. *Youth & Policy*, 109, pp. 27-45.

Platt, L. (2010). *Ten year transitions in children's experience of living in a workless household: variations by ethnic group*. Office for National Statistics [online]. Available at: https://calls.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/PopTrends06_tcm77-161608.pdf [Accessed 28th April 2019].

Powell, R. (1997). *Basic research methods for librarians* (3rd ed). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Pyett, P. M. (2003). Validation of Qualitative Research in the "Real word". *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(8), pp. 1170-1179.

Pyrooz, D., Decker, S. and Webb, V. (2014). The Ties That Bind: Desistance From Gangs. *Crime & Delinquency*, 60(4), pp. 491-516.

Pyrooz, D., LaFree, G., Decker, S. and James, P. (2018). Cut from the Same Cloth? A Comparative Study of Domestic Extremists and Gang Members in the United States. *Justice Quarterly*, 35(1), pp. 1-32.

Ralphs, R., Medina, J. and Aldridge, J. (2009). Who needs enemies with friends like these? The importance of place for young people living in known gang areas. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 12(5), pp. 483-500.

Rees, G. (2011). *Still Running III: Early findings from our third national survey of young runaways 2011*. London: The Children's Society.

Rees, G. and Lee, J. (2005). *Still Running II: Findings from the Second National Survey of Young Runaways*. London: The Children's Society.

Reynolds, P. (2015). *Medical Cannabis: The Evidence*. CLEAR Cannabis Law Reform [online]. Available at: https://www.bmj.com/sites/default/files/response_attachments/2015/03/Medicinal%20Cannabis%20The%20Evidence%20V1.pdf [Accessed 14th February 2019].

Ribeaud, D. and Eisner, M. (2010). Are Moral Disengagement, Neutralization Techniques, and Self-Serving Cognitive Distortions the Same? Developing a Unified Scale of Moral Neutralization of Aggression. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 4(2), pp. 298-315.

Robinson, G. (2016). *A small-scale investigation into the possession of firearms amongst street gangs in Liverpool*. Unpublished Masters dissertation. Liverpool John Moores University.

Robinson, G., McClean, R. and Densley, J. (2018). Working County Lines: Child Criminal Exploitation and Illicit Drug Dealing in Glasgow and Merseyside. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 1-18, DOI: 10.1177/0306624X18806742

Roe, S. and Ashe, J. (2008). *Young people and Crime: findings from the 2006 Offending, Crime and Justice Survey*. Home Office Statistical Bulletin. London, UK.

Rogowski, S. (2011). Managers, Managerialism and Social Work with Children and Families: The Deformation of a Profession? *Practice*, 23(3), pp. 157-167.

Room, R. (2005). Stigma, social inequality and alcohol and drug use. *Drug and Alcohol Review* 24, pp.143-155.

Ruggiero, V. (2010). Unintended Consequences: Changes in Organised Drug Supply in the UK. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 13(1), pp. 46-59.

Ryan, G. W. and Bernard, H. R. (2000). Data management and analysis methods. In, Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, S. (Eds). *Handbook of qualitative research*. (2nd Ed) pp. 769-802. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sanders, W. (1994). *Gangbans and Drive-Bys*. New York: Routledge.

Sanders, T., O'Neill, M. and Pitcher, J. (2017). *Prostitution: Sex Work, Policy and Politics*. London: Sage Publications.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. 5th Ed. Harlow, England: Prentice Hall.

Savage, M. (2017). *Call to fine schools that illegally exclude poorly performing pupils*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2017/dec/17/call-to-fine-schools-that-illegally-exclude-poorly-performing-pupils> [Accessed 2 July. 2019].

Savage, M. (2019). *Schools told to stop using exclusion to boost their results*. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/may/05/schools-exclusions-review> [Accessed 2 July. 2019].

Savage, M. and Silva, E. B. (2013). Field Analysis in Cultural Sociology. *Cultural Sociology*, 7(2), pp. 111-126.

Scourfield, P. (2012) 'Defenders against Threats or Enablers of Opportunities: The Screening Role Played by Gatekeepers in Researching Older People in Care Homes', *The Qualitative Report*, 17(28), 1-17.

Sharkey, J. Shekhtmeyster, Z., Lopez, L., Norris, E. and Sass, L. (2011). The protective influence of gangs: Can schools compensate? *Aggression and Violent Behaviour*, 16, pp. 45-54.

Shaw, A. (2018). *Merseyside's Vital Signs. Children and Young People Edition 15/16*. Vital Signs. Merseyside.

Shaw, C. R. and McKay, H. D. (1942). *Juvenile delinquency and urban areas; A study of rates of delinquents in relation to differential characteristics of local communities in American cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Short, J. and Strodtbeck, F. (1965). *Group Process and Gang Delinquency*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shukor, S. (2007). *Boston Miracle Inspires UK's gang fight*. BBC news [online]. Available at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/7099049.stm> [Accessed 17th January 2018].

Simpson, J. (2017). *Boys dying on the streets in gang turf war*. The Times [online]. Available at: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/boys-dying-on-the-streets-in-gang-turf-war-vzl6t9z86> [Accessed 6th December. 2017].

Smeaton, E. (2009). Off the radar and at risk: children on the streets in the UK. *Housing, Care and Support*, 12(3), pp. 22-27.

Smithson, H., Christmann, K., Armitage, R., Whitehead, A. and Rogerson, M. (2009). Young People's Involvement in Gangs and Guns in Liverpool. [online] Available at: <http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/24788/1/acc-guns-and-gangs-report.pdf> [Accessed 22 October. 2017].

Smithson, H., Monchuk, L. and Armitage, R. (2012). 'Gang Member: Who Says? Definitional and Structural Issues', in Esbensen, F. and Maxson, C. (Eds). *Youth Gangs an International Perspective: Tales from the Eurogang Program of Research*. London: Springer. pp. 53-68.

Sonterblum, L. (2016). *Gang Involvement as a Means to Satisfy Basic Needs*. NYU Steinhardt [online]. Available at: <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/appsych/opus/issues/2016/spring/sonterblum> [Accessed 9th November. 2017].

Spergel, I. A. (1995). *The Youth Gang Problem: A Community Approach*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Spicer J (2018) 'That's their brand, their business': how police officers are interpreting County Lines. *Policing and Society*. DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2018.1445742

Spicer, J., Moyle, L. and Coomber, R. (2019). The variable and evolving nature of 'cuckooing' as a form of criminal exploitation in street level drug markets. *Trends in Organized Crime*, DOI: 10.1007/s12117-019-09368-5.

Spradley, J. (1979). *The Ethnographic Interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Squires, P., Silvestri, A., Grimshaw, R. and Solomon, E. (2008). *Street Weapons Commission: Guns, Knives and Street Violence*. Centre for Crime and Justice Studies. London. pp. 1-158.

- Staff, J. and Kreager, D. A. (2014). Too cool for school? Violence, peer status, and high school dropout. *Social Forces*, 87(1), 445-471.
- Stephenson, M., Giller, H. and Brown, S. (2007). *Effective Practice in Youth Justice*. Collumpton: Willan Publishing.
- Strandh, M., Winefield, A., Nilsson, K. and Hammarstrom, A. (2014). Unemployment and mental health scarring during the life course. *European Journal of Public Health*, 24(3), pp. 440-445.
- Sturrock, R. and Holmes, L. (2015). *Running the Risks: The links between gang involvement and young people going missing*. London: Catch 22.
- Sudman, S. and Bradburn, N. (1973). Effects of Time and Memory Factors on Response in Surveys. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 68, pp. 805-815.
- Sullivan, J. (2000). Urban Gangs Evolving As Criminal Network Actors. *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 11(1), pp. 82-96.
- Sullivan, J. P. (2001). Gangs, hooligans, and anarchists: The vanguard of netwar in the streets. In J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt (Eds.), *Networks and netwars: The future of terror, crime, and militancy* (pp. 99–128). Santa Monica, CA: RAND.
- Sutherland, E. H. (1947). *Principles of Criminology*. Fourth Edition. Philadelphia: Lippincott.
- Sykes, G. M. and Matza, D. (1957). Techniques of Neutralization. *American Sociological Review*, 22(6), pp. 664-670.
- Sykes, O., Brown, J., Cocks, M., Shaw, D. and Couch, C. (2013). A City Profile of Liverpool. *The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning*, pp. 1-20.
- Taylor, C. (1990). *Dangerous society*. East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press.
- Taylor, S., Bogdan, R. and DeVault, M. (2015). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource, 4th Ed.* Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley.
- The British Society of Criminology. (2015). *Statement of Ethics for Researchers* [online]. Available at: <http://www.britsocrim.org/documents/BSCEthics2015.pdf> [Accessed 27th July 2018].
- The Centre for Social Justice. (2009). *Dying to Belong: An In-Depth Review of Street Gangs in Britain*. London: Centre for Social Justice.
- The Centre for Social Justice. (2014). *Girls and Gangs*. London: Centre for Social Justice.

- The Centre for Social Justice. (2018). *Providing the Alternative. How to transform school exclusion and the support that exists beyond*. London: Centre for Social Justice.
- The Children's Society. (2015). *From child prostitution to child sexual exploitation*. The Children's Society [online]. Available at: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/news-and-blogs/our-blog/from-child-prostitution-to-child-sexual-exploitation> [Accessed 6th March. 2018].
- The Children's Society. (2018). *Knowing the Signs of CSE*. The Children's Society [online]. Available at: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/knowning-the-signs-of-child-sexual-exploitation> Accessed 6th March. 2018].
- The Children's Society (2019). *Tackling Criminal Exploitation*. The Children's Society [online]. Available at: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/our-work/tackling-criminal-exploitation-and-county-lines> [Accessed 29th July. 2019].
- The National Youth Agency. (2004). *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work*. The National Youth Agency: Leicester: UK.
- Thomas, J. (2016). *Tit-for-tat turf wars over drugs and ego behind spate of bloody shootings across Merseyside*. Liverpool Echo [online]. Available at: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/liverpool-shootings-gun-crime-merseyside-11033212> [Accessed 6th December. 2017].
- Thomas, J. (2017). *Seven shootings in TEN DAYS sparks fear of gang wars on Merseyside Streets*. Liverpool Echo [online]. Available at: <http://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/news/liverpool-news/seven-shootings-ten-days-sparks-13170451> [Accessed 6th December. 2017].
- Thrasher, F. (1927). *The Gang. A study of 1,313 Gangs in Chicago*. Chicago, Ill: University of Chicago Press.
- Treadwell, J., Briggs, D., Winlow, S. and Hall, S. (2012). Shopocalypse Now. Consumer Culture and the English Riots of 2011. *British Journal of Criminology*, 53(1), pp.1-17.
- Valentine, G. (1996). Angels and Devils: Moral Landscape of Childhood. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 14(5), pp. 581-599.
- Valentine, G. (2004). *Public Space and the Culture of Childhood*. Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Volkow, N. D., Baler, R. D., Compton, W. M. and Weiss, S. R. (2014). Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 370, pp. 2219-2227.
- Vowell, P. R. and May, D. C. (2000). Another Look at Classic Strain Theory: Poverty Status, Perceived Blocked Opportunity, and Gang Membership as Predictors of Adolescent Violent Behavior. *Sociological Inquiry*, 70(1), pp. 42-60.

- Wade, R., Shea, J., Rubin, D. and Wood, J. (2014). Adverse Childhood Experiences of Low-Income Urban Youth. *Paediatrics*, 134(1), pp. 13-20.
- Walker-Barnes, C. and Mason, C. (2001). Perceptions of risk factors for female gang involvement among African American and Hispanic women. *Youth and Society*, 32(3), pp. 303-336.
- Weale, S. and Adams, R. (2019). 'It's dangerous': full chaos of funding cuts in England's schools revealed. The Guardian [online]. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/08/its-dangerous-full-chaos-of-funding-cuts-in-englands-schools-revealed> [Accessed 29th April 2019].
- Webster, C., MacDonald, R. and Simpson, M. (2006). Predicting criminality? Risk factors, neighbourhood influence and desistance. *Youth Justice*, 6 (1), pp. 7-22.
- Wells, E. L. and Rankin, J. H. (1991). Families and delinquency: A meta-analysis of the impact of broken homes. *Social Problems* 38(1): 71–93.
- Whittaker, A., Cheston, L., Tyrell, T., Higgins, M., Felix-Baptiste, C. and Havard, T. (2018). *From Postcodes to Profit. How gangs have changed in Waltham Forest*. London: London South Bank University.
- Whittemore, R., Chase, S. K., and Mandle, C. L. (2001). Validity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 11, 522-537.
- Whitworth, A. (2013). Local inequality and crime: exploring how variation in the scale of the inequality measures affects relationships between inequality and crime. *Urban Studies*, 50(4), pp. 725-741.
- Whyte, W. F. (1943). *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Wilkinson, R. and Pickett, K. (2008). Income Inequality and Socioeconomic Gradients in Mortality. *American Journal of Public Health*, 98(4), pp. 699-709.
- Williams, K. (2004). *Criminology*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Williams, P. (2016). *TRIGGERPOOL: Liverpool gets killer nickname after recent surge in gun deaths*. Daily Star [online]. Available at: <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/news/latest-news/563440/Triggerpool-Liverpool-nickname-gun-deaths-weapons-crime> [Accessed 5th March. 2018].
- Williams, P. and Clarke, B. (2016). *Dangerous Associations: Joint enterprise, gangs and racism. An analysis of the process of criminalisation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals*. London: Centre for Crime and Justice Studies
- Windle, J. (2013). Tuckers Firm: A Case Study of British Organised Crime. *Trends in Organised Crime*, 16(4), pp. 382-396.

Windle, J. and Briggs, D. (2015a). Going solo: the social organisation of drug dealing within a London street gang. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 18(9), pp. 1170-1185.

Windle, J. and Briggs, D. (2015b). "It's like working away for two weeks': The harms associated with young drug dealers commuting from a saturated London drug market'. *Crime Prevention and Community Safety*, 17(2), pp. 105-119.

Wood, J. (2015). 'Why gang members commit more crime: Group processes and social cognitive explanations'. In, Crighton, D. A. and Towl, G. J. (Eds). *Forensic Psychology*, 2nd Edition. Wiley-Blackwell, UK, pp. 353-369.

Wood, J. and Alleyne, E. (2013). 'Street Gangs: The Inter- and Intra-Group Processes', in Wood, J. and Gannon, T. *Crime and crime reduction*. Hove, East Sussex: Routledge.

Wood, J., Foy, D. W., Layne, C., Pynoos, R. and James, C. B. (2002). An examination of the relationships between violence exposure, posttraumatic stress symptomatology, and delinquent activity: An ecopathological model of delinquent behaviour among incarcerated adolescents. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment and Trauma*, 6, pp. 127-146.

Yates, J. (2006a). *Youth and Crime in a Working Class Community*, unpublished PhD thesis, Leicester: De Montfort University.

Yates, J. (2006b). 'You Just Don't Grass'" Youth, Crime and 'Grassing' in a Working Class Community. *Youth Justice*, 6(3), pp. 195-210.

Yates, J. (2012). What Prospects Youth Justice? Children in Trouble in the Age of Austerity. *Social Policy and Administration*, 46(4), pp. 432-447.

Young, T. (2009). Girls and Gangs: 'Shemale' Gangsters in the UK? *Youth Justice*, 9(3), pp. 224-238.

Young, T., Fitzgerald, M., Hallsworth, S. and Joseph, I. (2007) *Groups, gangs and weapons: A Report for the Youth Justice Board of England and Wales*. Youth Justice Board (YJB) for England and Wales, UK.

Young, T., Fitzgibbon, W. and Silverstone, D. (2013). *The role of the family in facilitating gang membership, criminality and exit*. London: Catch 22.

Zimring, F. E. (2011). *The City that Became Safe: New York and the Future of Crime Control*. The Joseph and Gwendolyn Straus Institute for the Advanced Studies of Law and Justice. New York University School of Law.

Appendices

Appendix 1.



Edge Hill
University

PRACTITIONER INFORMATION SHEET

Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A Case Study of Merseyside

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide if you wish to participate.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research project is to investigate: (1) gang-involved young people's understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation, (2) practitioner's understandings and perceptions of Child Criminal Exploitation, (3) the extent to which Child Criminal Exploitation occurs within gangs, and; (4) whether gang-involved young people identify with when they are being criminally exploited.

Who can take part?

Anybody with an experience and knowledge of working with gang-involved young people.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do you will be asked to sign a consent form to confirm that you understand the purpose of the research and what is expected of you. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time and do not need to give a reason. Any information that you have already provided will be destroyed up to four weeks after participation.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be required to undertake one (or several) interviews with the researcher which will last for between 30-90 minutes. If you are happy to do so, the interview will be recorded and then transcribed. You may also be observed and/or shadowed by the researcher during normal activities and during some of your sessions/meetings. Once complete, you will be provided with a summary of your

interview as interpreted by the researcher and will be given the opportunity to make any suggestions, comments and/or improvements that will contribute towards the final thesis.

Are there any risks / benefits involved?

There are no risks involved in taking part in this study however if you feel affected by any part of the research, the NHS can be contacted at 111, and details of counselling are at <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/counselling/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

Will my taking part in the study be kept anonymous and confidential?

Any information you provide will be kept strictly confidential. You do not have to disclose your name at any point during the research however the researcher will require you to sign a consent form. This will be kept separate from any other information you provide and stored securely in a filing cabinet only accessible to the researcher. The researcher may wish to use some of your interview data in the final write-up and so will ask you to provide a nickname of your choice.

Contact details of researcher:

Grace Robinson Email: robinsogr@edgehill.ac.uk

Contact details of supervisors:

Andrew Millie Email: milliea@edgehill.ac.uk

Eleanor Peters Email: peterse@edgehill.ac.uk

Franco Rizzuto Email: rizzutof@edgehill.ac.uk

Appendix 2.



Edge Hill
University

YOUNG PERSON INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Grace and I'm a researcher. That means I ask a lot of questions!!

I'm here to find out a little bit about you, the staff that work here and gangs in Merseyside. This is so that I can understand what it means to be involved with gangs and see what can be done to make young people safer.

You don't have to chat to me if you don't want to, it won't make any difference to how you are treated here, but it would be great if you do. I want to know a bit about how you came to be here, what you know about gangs and how young people can be used within a gang. It will also be helpful for me to sit in on some sessions with your worker (if that's ok with you), so that you become familiar and comfortable with me.

I will never use your name in anything that I write and I will make sure that you can't be identified. Everything you say is confidential (secret & private & won't be talked about with anyone else) except where you or someone else may be in danger or is being hurt (but I will talk to you about this first). Once I have finished, you will be able to see what I have written and if there is anything that you are unhappy with, we can remove it.

If you decide to take part and then decide later that you actually don't want to, that is fine. I will remove you from my research and will get rid of any conversations that we have had (up to four weeks after our first chat).

There are no risks in taking part in my research, but if you feel that you would like to speak to somebody outside of the service, I will provide

you with a free counselling service for young people in Liverpool/Sefton, or you can speak to the counsellor here. You will be given a copy of my research when it is complete, so that you can see how much you have helped me.

Because you are under 18, I will need you to sign a consent form. If you have any questions, please speak with me or your worker. Thanks for reading this.

My details:

Grace Robinson

Email: robinsogr@edgehill.ac.uk

My supervisors details:

Andrew Millie

Email: milliea@edgehill.ac.uk

Eleanor Peters

Email: peterse@edgehill.ac.uk

Franco Rizutto

Email: rizzutof@edgehill.ac.uk

Appendix 3.



PRACTITIONER CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A Case Study of Merseyside

Name, position and contact details of Researcher:

Grace Robinson
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Department of Law and Criminology
Edge Hill University
Ormskirk L39 4QP
robinsogr@edgehill.ac.uk
01695 657384

I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw up to four weeks from taking part, without giving a reason and that this will not affect my legal rights.

I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential

I understand that interviews might be recorded and I am happy to proceed

I understand that parts of our conversation may be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised

I understand that I might be observed

I agree to take part in the above study

(If applicable) I give permission for the young people accessing this service to be observed and for parts of their conversation to be used verbatim in future publications or presentations but that such quotes will be anonymised

Your name:
Name of researcher:
Date:
Signatures:

Appendix 4.



**Edge Hill
University**

YOUNG PERSON CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Gangs, County Lines and Child Criminal Exploitation: A Case Study of Merseyside

Name & contact address of researcher:

Grace Robinson
Graduate Teaching Assistant
Department of Law and Criminology
Edge Hill University
Ormskirk L39 2QA
robinsogr@edgehill.ac.uk
01695 657384

I have read and understand the information sheet. I have had the opportunity to ask questions

I understand that I don't have to take part and can stop at any point

I understand that my information will be anonymised (names and details changed) and confidential (private). I understand that this confidentiality may be broken if the researcher thinks I, or others, are at risk or in danger

I agree to take part in the above study

I agree to the interview being recorded

I agree to the use of quotes which have been anonymised (names and details changed)

I understand that I might be observed and I am happy to proceed

Your name:
Name of researcher:
Date:
Signatures:

Appendix 5.

Young person demographic questionnaire

Nickname/participant number:

Age:

Sex (please circle):

Male Female

Ethnicity (please circle):

White Mixed Asian Black Chinese other

Where are you from?

Knowsley Liverpool Sefton Wirral St. Helens

What is your living situation?

Two-parent family one-parent family Looked after/in care

What type of school are you in?

Not in education Mainstream school Pupil Referral Unit
(PRU)

Alternative education provider

Are you, or have you been in a gang/criminal group?

Yes No

How long have/had you been in/associated to a gang/criminal group?

<6 months 6-12 months 1-2 years 2-5 years 5-10 years > 10 years

What is/was your gang? (Please circle)

Urban Street Gang Organised Crime Gang Other (please state)

What is/was the location of your gang? (please circle)

Bootle Netherton Litherland Southport

Crosby Kirkby Walton Anfield

Kirkdale Other (please state)

What is/was the name of your gang/group?

Current criminal status (please circle):

Active Retired Semi-retired

Have you ever spent time in a...? (please circle)

YOT YOI

If yes, how long and what for?

Have you ever (been)...? (please circle)

Sexually assaulted Threatened with a gunShot/Shot at Stabbed

Injured with another weapon Robbed Kidnapped
Assaulted

Had your house targeted Had a family member/friend targeted

Asked to do something that you didn't want to do

Other (please state)

Appendix 6.

Practitioner interview schedule

- 1. What is your job title and what does this role involve?**
- 2. Have you worked with many gang-involved young people in this role?**
- 3. What is a gang?**
- 4. What's the difference between an Urban Street Gang and Organised Crime Gang?**
- 5. Is the gang label helpful for young people? – do you think they like it?**
- 6. What determines whether an individual is part of a street gang or an organised crime gang?**
- 7. Why do young people take this pathway?**
- 8. What benefits and costs are there to being in a gang?**
- 9. Do a lot of young people want to leave the gang?**
- 10. What is your understanding of the term child criminal exploitation?**
 - Where has this understanding emerged from?
 - When and where did you first hear about Child Criminal Exploitation?
- 11. What does criminal exploitation involve?**
- 12. Where does criminal exploitation takes place?**
- 13. Does criminal exploitation differ for males and females? How?**
- 14. How common is child criminal exploitation is in gangs?**
- 15. If you could put a percentage on the number of young people you work with that are/have been criminally exploited, what would it be?**
- 16. Is CCE more of a problem in Merseyside than CSE?**
- 17. What age are children at risk of child criminal exploitation?**

- 18. Are young people recruited for the purpose of being criminally exploited or is it a process that happens once they gang-involved?**
- 19. What qualities do gangs look for in someone that they can exploit?**
- 20. What's the biggest reward for a gang member committing criminal acts?**
- 21. Do young people see criminal exploitation as a positive process?**
- 22. Who are the perpetrators of child criminal exploitation? – Are they victims themselves?**
- 23. What vulnerabilities do gang-involved young people have?**
- 24. What criminal acts are young people exploited into doing?**
- 25. Why would a young person agree to commit criminal acts for somebody?**
- 26. Are young people scared to say no?**
- 27. What would happen to a young person if they said no?**
- 28. Has a young person ever told you that they were being criminally exploited?**
- 29. Are there any behavioural signs that a young person is being criminally exploited?**
- 30. Do gang-involved young people know what criminal exploitation is?**
- 31. Do gang-involved young people identify with when they are being criminally exploited?**
- 32. In your experience, how willing are gang members to accept/admit that they are being criminally exploited?**
- 33. How can we stop young people from becoming exploited if they fail to realise that they are victims?**
- 34. What would you do if you suspected a young person was being criminally exploited?**
- 35. What does your organisation do in response to child criminal exploitation?**
- 36. How could criminal exploitation be addressed and reduced within gangs?**
- 37. What pathways are in place for a young person wanting to leave a gang?**

- 38. How can we stop young people becoming involved in gangs if their families are involved?**
- 39. Are there any ways in which practice has changed in your organisation since the introduction of the term child criminal exploitation?**
- 40. Are we working towards a legal definition and a law for Child Criminal Exploitation?**

Appendix 7.

Young person interview schedule

What lead to you being here?

How long you been here for?

Have you been in trouble with the police?

What for?

What is a gang?

Do you know any gangs?

Are you in a gang?

How old are the people in your gang?

How many members are in your gang?

What does the gang do on a daily basis?

How old were you when you got involved in gangs?

Do/did you like being in a gang?

Do most of your friend smoke cannabis?

Why is it so common with young people?

Do many of your friends drink?

Do many of your friends take other drugs?

What is the difference between urban street gangs and organised crime gangs?

Do street gangs have much to do with organised crime gangs?

Have you ever thought about leaving the gang?

What do you think would happen to you if you left the gang?

Has anybody ever asked you to do something that you did not want to do?

Have you ever been offered something (gift/present) in exchange for doing something criminal?

Do you think any of your friends / gang members have been forced into doing something criminal that they didn't want to do?

Have you ever been promised something in exchange for you doing something criminal?

Have you ever been asked to take/give something to somebody, without being allowed to know what it is?

Have you ever been involved in taking drugs from one place to another for somebody else?

Are weapons a common problem in your area?

How easy are they to get hold of?

What is the most common weapon?

Do gangs have places/stashes where they hide their weapons?

Have you ever been asked to look after a weapon for somebody?

Have you ever been asked to use a gun for somebody?

Have you ever felt scared or threatened by any of your friends/gang members?

Have you ever felt like you couldn't say no to somebody in case something bad happened to you?

Have any of your friends/gang members ever threatened to hurt any of your family members?

Has anybody you know ever been pressured into being in a gang?

Have you ever heard of the term (child) criminal exploitation?

- Where have you come across this before?

What is your understanding of child criminal exploitation?

What do you think criminal exploitation involves?

Where do you think criminal exploitation takes place?

How common do you think criminal exploitation is in gangs?

Who do you think are the perpetrators of criminal exploitation?

Do you think you have ever been criminally exploited by a friend or gang member?

Do you think it is easy for gangs to exploit young children?

Why do you think a gang member would ask somebody else to commit criminal acts for them?

What would you do if you, or someone you know was being criminally exploited?

Do you feel like there is enough help/support available to you if you wanted to get out of the gang?

Do you feel like there is enough help/support available to you to report something like exploitation?

Appendix 8.

Demographics of young people participants

Young people	Gender	Age	Living situation	Location	Offending	Victimisation	Data
Smurf	M	17	Alone	Sefton	YOT – PWITS Class A drugs	Stabbed, assaulted, injured with weapon, house targeted	Interview & informal conversation
Elliot	M	16	Father	Liverpool	YOT – PWITS Cannabis, attempted murder (No further action (NFA))	Threatened with gun, stabbed, injured with weapon, robbed, assaulted, house targeted	Interview & informal conversation
Coxy	M	16	LAC	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Shady	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Not3s	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Biggs	M	14	Mother	Wirral	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group
Froggy	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Focus group & informal conversations
Giggs	M	16	LAC	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Informal conversation
B	M	16	Mother	Liverpool	YOT	Assaulted	Informal conversation
Wade Pal	M	14	Mother	Liverpool		Injured with weapon, assaulted, family/friend targeted, house targeted	Interview
Skepta	M	14	Two-parent	Liverpool		Assaulted	Interview
Eazi	M	16	LAC	St. Helens	YOI – welfare. Moved from London for safety	Shot/shot at, stabbed, assaulted, criminally exploited	Interview
Big Dog	M	14	Mother	Liverpool	YOT – PWITS	Shot/shot at	Interview
Nines	M	17	Father	Liverpool	YOI – burglary, PWITS Class A drugs, attempted arson	Stabbed, criminally exploited	Interview
Dezzy	M	20	Alone	Liverpool	YOT - Theft	Assaulted	Interview
Snoop	M	17	Two-parent	Knowsley	YOI – PWITS Class A drugs	Assaulted	Interview

Kenny	M	19	Alone	Liverpool	HMP – PWITS Class A drugs	Assaulted	Informal conversation
-------	---	----	-------	-----------	---------------------------	-----------	-----------------------

Practitioner	Gender	Job title	Sector
1	M	Gang Intervention worker	Charity
2	M	CCE Advocate	Council
3	F	Safeguarding Officer/Teacher, PRU	Education
4	M	Service Manager, Neighbourhood safety team	Council
5	M	Gang Prevention Programme Director	Education
6	M	Chief Superintendent	Police
7	M	Strategic Area Manager, Neighbourhood safety team	Council
8	F	Case Manager	YOT
9	F	Case Manager	YOT
10	M	Case Manager	YOT
11	F	Delivery Worker	YOT
12	F	Delivery Worker	YOT
13	F	Key Worker, Catch-22	Charity
14	M	Police Constable	Police
15	F	Delivery Worker	YOT
16	F	Connexions Employment Advisor	YOT
17	M	Delivery Worker	YOT
18	F	Case Manager	YOT
19	F	Delivery Worker	YOT
20	F	MASH Worker	YOT
21	F	Youth Practitioner	YOT
22	M	Case Manager	YOT
23	M	Detective Inspector	Police
24	M	Detective Superintendent	Police
25	F	Detective Sargent	Police
26	F	Social Worker	Local authority
27	F	Victim Support Worker	YOT
28	M	Teacher, AEP	Education

Appendix 9.

Demographics of practitioner participants

Appendix 10.

Recruitment sources / institutions accessed

1. The Criminal Justice System:

Two Youth Offending Teams from across Merseyside; Merseyside Police; Wetherby Young Offender Institute (YOI), York.

2. Education / Alternate Education Providers (AEP):

Impact Pupil Referral Unit (PRU), Netherton; SALT (Sport Art Learning and Training), Wavertree; ASSESS Education, Wavertree.

3. Local authority:

Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) (Safer Community's Partnership), Bootle; Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (KMBC), Huyton Village.

4. The third sector:

The Lewis Dunne Foundation (LDF); pan Merseyside, Catch-22, Bootle.

Appendix 11.

Thematic map

Young people sample findings

Theme one – Norms and beliefs

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Becoming involved	Kids I grew up with; off the estate; with me cousin; started smoking with friends	Beefs	Stupid arguments; arguments about money; always got beef; beef with all areas; beef from years ago; someone's sister called slag; stupid things; getting cut up; sort out beefs	Masculinity	One of the boys; mandem; brothers	Exploitation	Part of life; all kids exploit someone; depends on age; kids in year 7 will be exploiting younger kids; used not exploited; CCE myth; doesn't happen at all; excuse for when scared, get reduced sentence; used not exploited; doing us a favour
Weed / Drugs	Smoke weed; don't drink; tried Class A's; stick with weed; don't buy drugs; given weed, sell some, smoke the rest	Contacts	Hang with older kids; kids have left school	Reputation & status	Notorious; scared of name	Identity	Not a gang; group of mates; expensive clothing; desire for fashion; hang around certain road/area; in a Dingle gang; Dingle heads, that's what we're called; Tocky head; massive road, little kids over there and older over here
Crime / weapons	Need for protection; all carry weapons; got beef; fascinated by guns; felt cool; stealing bikes seemed to be the norm; chased by the police; stolen green city bike	Codes	Trust; loyalty; don't snitch; no grassing; prove yourself; grass worse than peadophile, rather be dead; hit with machete, didn't tell anyone, didn't go to hospital; not a snitch; no police				

Theme two – Marginalisation

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
Becoming involved	Started smoking weed; friends on estate; peer pressure; cannabis debt; respect from mates; growing up; normal friendship; not a gang; already knew each other; admired older; wanted to impress; got greedy; build drug debt; told to sell drugs to pay	Gong country/ County Lines	Organisation; competition; have to be the best; advertising; easy to find customers; pass number round; all punters know each other; deviant entrepreneurship	Transportation of drugs / concealment	Banking; plugging; checked's off; vaseline; condom; piles; painful; hide in mouth; hide in boxes; stashed drugs; plotted off	Working conditions	Dirty house; gas mask; slept on sofa; poor conditions; cuckoo; smells horrible; winter months; very cold; paid for heating; lived like punters; wake up early; wait for call; answer phone; send punter out; never go out; wait for return	Account of CL	Horrible experience; wanted to go; sometimes funny; go if bored; not forced; enjoyed going	Discrepancies in practitioner understandings	Wrong understanding; false documentaries; don't grab kids; not forced; send trusted people; asked not forced; approach dealer; two-way relationship; graftership
Debt bondage	Lost drugs; stolen drugs; dealers robbed; kids robbed; indebted; set-up; drugs on tick; strapping; work for free; big debt for young person; wanted to change lifestyle; can't go anywhere; people after him; telling kids to grass if spotted anywhere; picture on phone	Consequences	Trauma; witness death; witness violence; physical illness; mum breakdown; brother dead; friend sectioned; stress; offered drugs; stabbed; severe injury; prison	Fear	Too scared to blame dealer; nobody to talk to; couldn't break away; scared of dealer; dealer knew address; would always take the blame	Rewards	Elder paid for sex; expenses paid; money; protected; looked after	Vulnerability	Desire for belonging; substance use; deprivation; poverty; desire/consumerism; conflict; protection; negative upbringing; excluded from school; in care (LAC); issues in family; don't get on with dad; hopelessness; trauma	Ideal victim	Send trusted kids (other kids will grass); not grasses; normal kids; don't ask questions; innocent looking; angelic; lack of boundaries; mum didn't question absence; 'know the score'
Female exploitation (male perspective)	Paid for sex; hide drugs in mouth; shash drugs; looks legit with girl; girls don't go cunch	Denial of responsibility/ passing blame	I didn't want to smoke weed; was pressured; all me mates smoked weed; not a gang; wrong crowd; younger kids worse than us; will be worse	Denial of victim/ Drug user dehumanised	Scattiest people ever; drug users muppets; get them to do anything; drug users sly; punters slimey; either rob or beg; girls sell themselves; worthless	Normalisation	Weapon carrying; everyone carries knives; smoking weed; turn blind eye; dad smokes weed	Cannabis use	Weed relieves stress; everyone's stressed; introduced friends to weed; escape reality; stay on the weed	Justifying exploitation	They think I'm being exploited because I hang around with older lads but I'm not, they're family; I was badly used, not exploited; it was for money, you don't do nothing for nothing

1 Norms & beliefs

1 CCE

1 Deviant Entrepreneurism

2 Exploitation

2 The business of drug dealing

2 Culture of austerity

+

