Grafting: "The boyz" Just Doing Business? Deviant Entrepreneurship in Street Gangs

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Abstract

The paper attempts to disseminate street gang research by Hesketh (2018) that has identified not only the changing face of street gangs but also young people's perceptions between employment and criminality in areas of Merseyside becoming blurred. In particular, disenfranchised young males are turning to involvement with drug dealing street gangs as a substitute for employment. Such is the demand for class A drugs in night-time economies, that street gangs in areas close to such economies are developing a dark business like dimension for which Hesketh (2018) has termed "*Deviant Entrepreneurship*"[1]. This can range from selling drugs on behalf of adult organised crime figures (known on the streets of Liverpool as "*grafting*") to self-employment as sole trading deviant group enterprises having several "grafts" that recent research by Robinson, Mclean and Densley (2018) has noted, has extended into the annals of Criminal Child Exploitation (CCE). The paper concludes by suggesting that Merseyside is only one in many marginalised areas of the United Kingdom facing a similar problem as young people involved in street gangs attempt to realise their potential not through legitimate employment means but through dark entrepreneurial techniques learnt from older peers and adult figures.

Keywords: Crime Firms, Criminal Child Exploitation, Cuckooing, County Lines, Debt Bondage, Deviant Entrepreneurship, Delinquent Apprenticeship, Euro-Gang Research Network (EGRN), Grafting, Street Gangs

Introduction

In researching risk and protection factors, specifically, the five domains of family, individual, school, peer and neighbourhood within the context of gang membership and non-membership on Merseyside, Hesketh (2018) has identified an evolving dimension in gang membership. This builds on Densley's (2013) observations that some street gangs are advancing into full scale criminal collective business enterprises. It is one that sees drug dealing become a central driver in the perpetuation and evolution of street gangs. Such has been the prevalence of drugs on Merseyside, perceptions between legitimate employment and criminality have become blurred for many disenfranchised young males (by young people we mean within an age range of 18-30). The impact of austerity since 2008 in

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[1] Hesketh (2018) defines "deviant entrepreneurship" as the ability to apply entrepreneurial knowledge and business enterprise skill within criminality for the goal of financial profit.

marginalised areas of Merseyside has seen an increasing shortage of legitimate job opportunities. This has meant that a resulting masculinity crisis has seen young males involved in some street gangs generating alternative, deviant entrepreneurial pathways to earning money and status as a substitute. Hesketh (2018) noted that a determining factor behind the shaping and changing structure of street gangs towards such deviant entrepreneurship appears to be that of location. Thus, the nearer street gang prevalent areas are to the city centre of Liverpool, the more recognition there appears to be for the financial potential of recreational drugs as a business commodity.

Such deviant entrepreneurship has also been reinforced by Densley (2013), who claims that young people have identified a financial niche for their street gangs, as community drug enterprises or contraband carriers for bigger and darker figures in organised crime. Moreover, in an earlier paper Densley (2012) contends:

> Gangs evolve from adolescent peer groups and the normal features of street life in their respective neighbourhoods. In response to external threats and financial commitments, they grow into drug- distribution enterprises. In some cases, gangs then acquire the necessary special resources of violence, territory, secrecy, and intelligence that enable them to successfully regulate and control the production and distribution of commodities or services unlawfully (p. 517).

Further, Densley has commented, "the gang now represents both 'crime that is organized' [sic] and 'organized [sic] crime'" (p.518). These two elements Densley asserts are quite distinct, with the first representing crime that involves cooperation, the adoption of roles, a degree of planning and specialism with the second referring to what Densley calls a "monopolistic control over the production and distribution of a commodity and/or service" (p.518). Much earlier work surrounding observations of deviant entrepreneurship have also been noted. In an unpublished report involving thirty-nine inmates and forty-two police, narcotics and correctional officers at four Californian correctional institutions, Skolnick, Corre, Navarro and Rabb (1988) have identified different gang patterns. These include highly structured street gangs that are instrumental or entrepreneurial whose main aim is the business of the distribution of drugs. Moreover, Hagedorn (1998) suggests, "the work of drug dealing in [a] central city is in many ways an innovative, entrepreneurial, small-business venture" (p.21). Further, Hagedorn's research also revealed significant differences between the ways drugs are distributed in poor inner-city neighbourhoods. After surveying 28 drug-selling businesses that employed a total of 191 people, Hagedorn notes that in inner-city areas, drugs are a major employer of young, excluded and minority males. In concluding, Hagedorn asserts that in the city centre environment drug sales are no longer based around the street corner, but "have in fact transformed into a more mobile, less risky, innovative entrepreneurial venture" (p.21).

Defining a Gang

Ever Since Puffer's first academic definition of the term in 1912, there has been continuous debate over what actually constitutes a street gang. The re-emergence of youth counter-culture in the UK mainly in response to marginalisation and series of isolated knifing and shootings which started in London (Marfleet, 2008), re-ignited the label of "gang"[2] in the media and subsequently in social commentary and academia until then, British scholarly attention to street gangs was scarce, yet It has become quite clear that there still is a lack of generic clarity in defining a gang. In 1997, Klein invited a small group of social science academics (Weerman, Maxson, Aldridge, Medina, and Gemert) to discuss how the study of street gangs in Europe could progress. From this group grew what has become known as the *Euro Gang Research Network* (EGRN). Recognising the need for a clear definition, the group came to a consensus about what should be defined as a gang. Thus, according to the authors, "*a street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity.*" (Weerman, et al., 2009, p. 20). Since its inception, and despite critics (Aldridge, Medina-Ariz and Ralphs, 2012), the definition has been adopted and well cited by many gang research publications including Hesketh (2018).

The Declining Blue Collar Labour Market, Masculinity Crisis and Job Centre Embarrassment: Catalysts to Deviant Entrepreneurship?

Beatrice Campbell was one of the first contemporary writers to link masculinity crisis to crime and in particular to British working-class youth. Writing in 1993, she observed "The great *unspoken* in the crime angst of the Eighties and Nineties was that it was a phenomenon of masculinity (p. 211). Since Campbell's observations, several studies have highlighted the pressures placed on young men that can lead to a crisis in masculinity. They include a 2014 report by the Campaign for Living Miserably (CALM) who analysed the pressures and expectations put on both men and women. The report noted that in terms of employment, 42% of men said that despite gender equality, they still felt pressure to be the main breadwinner. Such a burden would suggest that there is still an outmoded and warped perception of masculinity by young men. It is an observation that Hesketh (2018) has noted in particular, in many of working-class young men involved in street gangs on Merseyside.

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[2] Interestingly, and with some irony, research in the UK (Smithson, Christmann, Armitage, Monchuk, Whitehead, Rodgerson, 2009; Hesketh, 2018) has noted that very few young people involved in what Hesketh (2018) terms "Deviant Street Groups"(DSGs) as opposed to "gangs" actually identify with or in fact even use the term 'gang'. As Smithson et al. (2009) have asserted the "use of the term by practitioners may be serving to add coherence and identity to what is, in reality better described as transitional groups. This labelling exercise may have created the very circumstances it sought to challenge" (p.7). Moreover, unpublished research by Hesketh and Lyons (2014) has observed the existence of young people involved in street gangs on Merseyside close to the city centre of Liverpool who has fully embraced deviant entrepreneurship by identifying themselves as *'firms'* with marketing and selling territory.

Within these groups, there exists a strong belief that without blue-collar employment opportunities, what was traditionally perceived by young men as a rite of passage to masculine manhood, criminality remains the only means by which true masculinity can be achieved through visual demonstrations of power reflected in physique, toughness through aggression and a complete ignorance of risk, as well as the subordination of women (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As Collier (1998) has asserted, "put simply, work is (or should be) the key reference point through which men's subjectivities are understood. Without work, and in particular without an appropriate initiation into work, the transition from childhood/youth to male adulthood is rendered problematic. Boys remain boys and full adulthood is then deferred, achieved precariously or ultimately not achieved at all" (pp. 74-75).

Moreover, Jones, Martin and Kelly (2018) have identified a relatively new catalyst that is further contributing to blurring the boundaries between employment and criminality. Jones et al., have noted a growing concern regarding NEETS', young people who are Not in Employment Education or Training. The authors note that an increasing number of this group are becoming in effect "*hidden NEETs*", that is, young people refusing to claim benefit because of feelings of humiliation and embarrassment. Jones et al. (2018) found such young people were in fact, finding alternative means of generating income which involved criminal activity including drug dealing.

Method

This paper is based on the research by Hesketh (2018) which primarily addresses the issue of street gang involvement and non-involvement in gang prevalent areas of Merseyside. Specifically, the research addressed why some individuals with similar backgrounds do or do not become involved in deviant street groups and the potential implications for their future life choices. The study made several observations around differences between street gang members, ex-street gang members and non-street gang members of which deviant entrepreneurship was one. This was noted within in the street gang and non-street gang members samples. For this study, Hesketh (2018) adopted the following method:

Participants:

Two samples of participants were drawn from marginalised areas of Merseyside consisting of a total of 44 males age range 18-25 (one consisting of 26 gang involved participants), and the second containing 11 non-gang participants (termed "*Non-Group Participants*" (NGPs)) and 7 individuals identified as ex-gang participants. In determining gang and non-gang members, such participants had self-reported as being a member or former member of a deviant street group that met the Euro-Gang Research Network (EGRN) 2009 criteria for defining a gang, since at the time of writing, the definition represented the most commonly

cited definition of a "gang". in contrast, the non-gang members self-reported as not being affiliated to any group that conformed to the EGRN definition.

Data collection:

Data collection involved breaking away from the stranglehold semi-structured interview has on qualitative data collection. To do this, a specially adapted version of Wengraf's (2001) Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method (BNIM) was designed. This saw each interview situation broken into two basic sub-sessions:

Sub-Session 1 (SS-1):

In this first session, participants were asked a single question called an "*SQIN*" (Single Question Inducing Narrative) to describe their life, in terms of their family, friends, involvement in the criminal Justice system (CJS) and future aspirations. In the case of the non-street gang members and ex-street gang members[3], the question was re-phrased to why they had not become involved in the CJS as street gang members. During this session, the researcher simply took notes on what Wengraf (2001) terms "*Particular Incident Narratives*" (PINs), that is, narrative incidents that had occurred in each participants life surrounding family, friends, involvement/non-involvement with the CJS and future aspirations.

Fifteen-minute break: During this short break, the researcher identified questions surrounding the PINs to put to each participant in second sub-session.

Sub-Session 2 (SS-2) the return to narrative:

The second session began with the researcher asking the participant to reflect back on the identified PINs.

In sum, each participant produced two lengthy transcripts of narrative for data analysis.

Data Analysis:

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[3] Ex-gang members where asked why they had not become involved in the CJS as gang members as opposed to why they had because all of the ex-gang members while conforming to involvement with a gang that met the ERGN definition, had not been involved in a gang for a prolonged time.

Data were analysed using the Strauss and Corbin (1990) version of Grounded Theory (GT). In this comprehensive version of GT, three stages, open, axial and selective coding were utilised in the following way:

Open coding
This involved the researcher reading through each transcript and developing concepts that are coded, in this case, line by line sections of speech as accurately and precisely as possible. Each section was coded in as many ways as possible, with all possible meanings taken into account until *theoretical saturation* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p.188) was achieved resulting in a coding list. Moreover, during the open coding process memos were written both prior to and during the open coding stage. Taking the form of a brief theoretical note concerning a general idea about the data. The use of memos was also utilised, memos form a fundamental part of the grounded analysis process and they are encouraged both by Strauss and Corbin (1990) and by Birks and Mills (2011) in what is one of the very latest interpretations of ground theory. It should be noted that during this process some concepts possessed conceptual properties to be included in two or more categories. This can be exemplified by a concept taken directly from one participant (in effect an in vivo code[4]) "*black sheep*". This was used to describe the participants' perception of how he was seen by family members and his subsequent reflections about his personal identity. That is, how he saw himself both in a domestic familial and community setting. This appeared to denote a *negative family experience* and later, subsequently, *past personal identity factors*. At stage one, all transcripts had been fully coded as a result of the constant comparison method. Table .1 shows the number of concepts and categories generated for both gang members and Non-gang/ex-gang members.

Table 1. Open coding: Number of concepts generated (stage one)

Sample	Concepts	Subcategories
Gang members	932	105
Gang non-members/ex-members	949	106

Axial coding
Having completed the initial open coding stage, more intensive work began on putting the fractured data back together in its revised form as advocated by Strauss and Corbin (1990). The actual process used in this Axial Stage Two was basically to make connections between categories mapping how each category is related to others in order to establish if there was a relationship or simply a co-existence. The aim of this stage is the development of the main categories through analysis of what have become subcategories beyond just dimension and

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[4] In vivo codes: words or phrases used directly by the interviewee that can be used as names for codes and categories in the coding process.

properties. At this particular point, Strauss and Corbin suggest that the researcher "focus on specifying a category (*phenomenon*) in terms of the conditions that give rise to it" (1990, p.97). To do this they recommend that the researcher begin to relate subcategories to a main category by using what they have called the *"paradigm model"* (1990, p.99).

While filtering several similar subcategories emerged. For example, *negative family reflections* and *positive family reflections* (both related subcategories). These were later merged to form a main category of *family experience* since there existed some general properties within both in terms of extent of exposure to the family and duration of time spent with family members were similar. Others such as *crime action* and *directed* and *proactive objectives* were carried through since these both proved to be very strong *strategy* subcategories that became categories in themselves. Again, as with the open coding stage any observations and thoughts made were included in this stage. Table. 2 shows the total number of categories identified for each sample at the axial stage, stage two of the analysis.

Table 2. Axial coding: merging sub-categories into main categories (stage two)

Sample	Sub-category	Main category
Gang members	105	68
Non-gang members/ex-members	106	66

Selective coding

In the third and final stage of the analysis, the emphasis was placed on identifying a *core category* or categories that would represent the central phenomenon within the main coding paradigm. For this, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest, the researcher now moves from description to conceptualisation via a five-step process that first involves the formulation of a *storyline*, and then attempts to *relate categories* around the core category again using the *paradigm model*. Such category relationships should be done on the dimensional level, at which point the researcher should then *validate* those relationships against the data. The final stage is to *fill in* categories that may need further refinement. Strauss and Corbin (1990) stress, however, that this five-stage process need not be taken in a linear sequence, "in reality one moves back and forth between them" (p. 118). Strauss and Corbin observed that such integration of categories, even for some seasoned researchers can be very difficult. However, such was the richness and density of the data that the main issue became quite obvious and a core category emerged relatively quickly. This was identified as *"coping with marginalisation and limited opportunity"*. When attempting to identify or create a core category as Strauss and Corbin further note, "just like categories, the core category must become developed in terms of its properties. If you can tell the story

properly, in addition to revealing the core category the story should also indicate its properties" (1990, p.123). In this study, the core category produced two major properties *resilience* and *perceived risk* together with their dimensional range. These were identified throughout the data within each sample see (Table. 3).

Table 3. Properties and dimensions of the core category
(stage three)

Sample	Property	Dimensional range
Gang members	Resilience	Low
	Risk	High
Ex-gang/non-gang members	Resilience	High
	Risk	Low

Of the significant observations that emerged in determining differences between gang members, ex-members and non-members, deviant entrepreneurship was found to be of high importance within the gang member sample. In particular, it was noted gang members located near the city centre of Liverpool and its vibrant night-time economy had not only begun to utilise and recognise their drug resource in a business-like fashion, but also were perceiving such activity as a form of work (grafting) as opposed to acknowledging it as criminality. This was reflected not only in the organised nature of the groups but also in the language used. This can be seen in the narrative of three participants below, the first of which describes being not so much in a "gang", but a "*firm of boys*", whose influence is being derived from the link with adult organised crime and its exploitation of young people:

> "I used to be in a firm of boys ... and yes organised crime is connected. You see them in the paper like. Boys, because they're trying to make money trying to look like gangsters, but it's the big fellas you don't see getting all the money. I have turned in a grand a day for some fella just sitting in a park, then out of that, I will get a hundred and fifty. I mean I had a grand before, now I have got one fifty. I have no prospects ... who is going to take me on? I walk around thinking I am hard! It is the little lads that are making the money, but it's the big fellas out there who are really making the money" (Gang member).

> "First started with stealing for weed to use, then dealing drugs, proper grafting. That's how it goes around where I live. You start off getting involved

with the boys because there is nothing else to do. You are drawn into it, trying to escape through the weed. Then as you get older and there is no work, you take the only job there is … proper graft for the big boys. I got caught serving some beak [cocaine] to a couple of lads outside a pub, been caught a few times now but it doesn't stop me because the money drives you" (Gang member).

"The gang thing where I live, there are reasons why it's that big around Norris Green. It's not just about terrorising people for a laugh anymore. It's going bigger; there are older people involved in the background. It's all about the graft now, making money to get by. Getting doe in so you can have the nicer things in life. There are no jobs around by me, so we have to make our own jobs. It's easy for a group of scally lads to go into business, if you know the right people" (Gang member).

Discussion

Deviant Entrepreneurism and Street Gangs on Merseyside

On Merseyside, it has become increasingly evident that some young males involved in street gangs (in the EGRN definitional sense) or as Hesketh (2018) have termed "*Deviant Street Groups*" (DSG's) are gradually evolving in some areas developing dangerous and deviant entrepreneurial traits. Like many other areas in the UK, Such forms of deviant entrepreneurship on Merseyside has been given a name by those who practice it, "*grafting*". Grafting, once a term used to describe a hard day's blue-collar labour can take several forms from the context of criminality. On the streets and housing estates of Liverpool, however, it has become most commonly associated with drug dealing. From within this perspective, grafting can range from a single individual acting as a sole trader[5] involved in a series of drug transactions (called serving) on the street or as a *"drop off"* to the buyer's door by a car. In both these approaches, the dealer/s will have bought an inexpensive mobile phone known in Merseyside as a "*graft phone*" from which his/her business will revolve around. The number is circulated by buyers to other friends and a

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[5] Hesketh (2018) has noted that the solo-grafters are those who have now reached an age or in a relationship resulting in disengagement away from the gang in terms of hanging around streets but who have used contacts and learnt entrepreneurial skill to become sole-traders having acquired their own four wheel motorised transport.

lucrative "*graft round*' is built up with the potential of spreading to other locations[6]. Grafting has become a convenient label by which young people (not just on Merseyside) can neutralise and morally disengage from the idea of a criminal offence, most notably drug dealing. Recent media reports and ongoing research (Robinson, Mclean and Densley, 2018) has identified yet another evolving level of grafting within street gang deviant entrepreneurship which has been noted to be highly prevalent on Merseyside, in addition to Manchester and London, that of Criminal Child Exploitation (CCE) and exploitation of vulnerable adults.

Criminal Exploitation of Children and Vulnerable Adults by Street Gangs

While CCE and exploitation of vulnerable adults have become geographically widespread (Home Office, 2018) there is still very little in terms of academic research covering such harm. Presently, the most common form of recognised CCE and exploitation of vulnerable adults from the viewpoint of street gangs has become known as "*county lines*"[7]. This usually involves street gangs[8] attempting to fully exploit the market from within their existing location. This is done by expanding their drug dealing operation to rural or coastal areas where the supply of drugs has been scarce. The operation itself sees gang members using mobile phone lines (hence the name 'county lines') as the main tool of communication. The actual exploitation itself takes the form of children that can be as young as 12 (some deemed as '*clean skins*' that is, without a police record) and vulnerable adults who are recruited either through social media or via the street, then initially groomed through the offer of free designer clothes, drugs or money which can quickly turn into "*debt bondage*", that is, the young person having to repay the street gang through drug runs and recruiting other young people.

Children exploited into working the county lines are often tasked with transporting drugs supplies from their urban city to the county location, having to use risky techniques in order to conceal large quantities of narcotics. Once in the county location, such children are placed in the homes of vulnerable drug users, previously sought out and taken over by street gangs (known as "*cuckooing*"). Whilst many young people are coerced into selling drugs through the idea of debt bondage, research by Robinson, Mclean and Densley (2018) has found that some young people embrace this role, falsely identifying themselves as valuable to their exploiter and thus willing to take the maximum risk with minimal reward. This latter observation also fits into the area of criminological *edgework* since not only are some of the young people embracing the role, but they are also finding the risk and identity of acting and being 'bad' alluring and seductively exciting.

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[6] Interestingly, Hesketh (2018) notes a recent dimension to be added to this marketing strategy now includes dealers sending text messages around the phone number list of buyers involving cut-price offers such as "*buy three £40 bags [cocaine/known as 'lemo', 'beak' in Liverpool] for £80*".

[7] The term "county lines" was first coined by the Home office in 2013 with the lines being monitored by the National Crime Agency since 2015.

[8] CCE and exploitation of vulnerable adults can also be perpetrated by Organised Crime Groups and by single offenders.

In adopting this position, it is not uncommon for oppressed young people to begin exploiting the vulnerable drug users with whom they are residing. Indeed, in order to pass the boredom and monotony between waiting for customers, young people use drug users for their own entertainment, sometimes tasking them with eating excrement off the floor in exchange for free drugs. Yet, whilst some young people have reported enjoying working the county lines, describing it as 'a laugh', the working conditions endured are less than humane, putting young drug runners at risk of a number of physical health issues (Windle and Briggs, 2015) as well as inhibiting their emotional development. Surrounded by normalised drug use and drug paraphernalia in run-down, half-furnished dwellings, young people are often encouraged by drug users to participate in heroin and crack cocaine consumption. In addition, the risk of witnessing drug overdoses as well as having to protect themselves against attacks from drug users and other drug dealers provides many young people with particularly traumatic experiences that are likely to affect them throughout adulthood. County lines and the exploitation of young people to distribute drugs is an extremely lucrative business model for organised older gang members who reap maximum profits without taking any of the risks. Operated and enforced through fear, street gangs know that if caught by the police, young people will take full responsibility for their involvement in drug supply in fear of the prospect of being labelled a "*grass*". In this scenario, street gangs will select another young person from their pool of runners and remain detached from ever having to get their hands dirty and complete drug transactions. At the time of writing, the Children's Commissioner has estimated there are at least 46,000 children in England involved in street gang activity, with 4,000 young people in London alone being exploited by street gangs running county lines.

The Spread of Deviant Entrepreneurship and its implications in the Evolution of Street Gangs

It has become clear that deviant entrepreneurship mainly in the context of drug dealing as a legitimate work substitute is having an impact on an ever increasing number of young males. Aspirations and a need for status as a result of media-driven images of celebrity culture and consumption have risen to a level that far outweighs any income that legitimate blue-collar work could meet if such work was readily available. Faced with the cold hard reality of inequality and marginalisation, coupled with the deindustrialisation of trade and labour jobs, once symbols of alpha manhood, has meant that grafting drugs has become the only way in which desired conspicuous consumerist goals can be achieved. Over the last eighteen years, the presence of street gangs have increased around the UK (Pitts, 2008), such groups have over this period evolved further into criminal business enterprises as the demand for drugs has risen. We argue that such has been the impact of deviant entrepreneurship within some street gangs that such groups have now outgrown any present street gang definition that incorporates attempted age limitations. Moreover, as Arling (2011) observes, if such groups are showing signs of going beyond the classic street gang stereotype of just a group of out-of-control kids on street corners, evolving into more serious criminal enterprises and becoming more "technologically savvy" (p. 1), then such

transition as Andell (2019) suggests will begin to pose a more fundamental and complex problem, requiring a totally fresh approach towards countering gang culture. As Andell (2019) further points out, what can be seen initially as youth, friendship groups who start to dabble in grafting can suddenly and quite quickly evolve into more structured drug distribution networks.

Clearly in considering these most recent observations by Andell (2019), the influence of adult Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) is becoming a fundamental component in such transitions. This has been particularly evident with street gangs close to night-time economies who as Hesketh (2018) notes have fully embraced this entrepreneurial type influence, mentoring and opportunities from much older adult criminal figures. With such an impact has come an increase in the level of violence as street gang members protect residential and business territory. Like London and Essex which has seen many street gangs organised around a "*youngers*" and "*elders*" theme, some locations on Merseyside (Toxteth) have evolved in a similar way. This particular structure which is prevalent in Black, Asian, and other Minority Ethnic (BAME) street gangs, divides the group into those under the age of 18 ('youngers') who will be involved in the drug dealing recruitment (in many cases through exploitation) side of the street gang. They will be supervised by those over the age of 18 (elders) who will form the managerial/organisational aspect of the group. The elders will coordinate the business operations of their respective street gang and will also be involved in the acquisition of firearms, they will command authority through respect based on fear and masculine status. Hesketh (2018) noted that participants involved in street gangs with this type of structure describing a process he termed "*delinquent apprenticeship*" whereby youngers served their time as "*foot soldiers*" gaining knowledge of the street and the business of crime, progressing into the higher elders echelon as they became older.

Conclusion

This paper has sought to describe how perceptions of criminality and employment are becoming blurred in the eyes of young disenfranchised people. The lack of legitimate opportunities as a result of marginalisation has seen many young people become detached from legitimate agency. As such, they have adopted an approach mirroring the innovation stage as described in the early work of Merton (1968) and the concept of "*anomie*". Specifically, we find that young people are realising that as a result of rising inequality coupled with austere policies, there exists a considerable gap between cultural goals young people aspire to have and the institutional means to obtain those goals in their residential place and space. This resulting state of strain has led those who choose to become involved in street gang membership to adopt socially unconventional means to obtain desired goals. This, the authors note has become a form of deviant entrepreneurship (grafting).

The authors observe, that such business-like restructuring of street gangs has been driven by figures from both Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) and within street gangs themselves.

The process has initially emerged in the form of street dealing within residential locations or postcode dictated territorial patches. However, over the last six years, the authors note such entrepreneurship expanding into rural and coastal areas, becoming known as county lines. One of the main consequences of this marketing growth has seen a rise in violence, particularly in knife crime as street gangs attempt to protect their territorial boundaries as well as increase their marketing footprint in rural and coastal areas.

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