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Growing up in a high crime area: A thematic approach to perceived reasons for local high crime

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to qualitatively explore male participants' perceptions of growing up in high crime areas and their perceived reasons for local crime. Previous research has found that the public tend to deem the causes of crime as external rather than individual factors (Jones and Levi 1987; Campbell and Muncer 1990; Gabbidon and Boisvert 2011). However, previous public perception research is neglected, thus their experiences have been somewhat disregarded. Seven male participants aged 18-24 years old took part in a semi-structured interview. A thematic analysis informed from Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to generate themes. The five key themes were: 'relationships', 'environmental factors', 'individual factors', 'cycle of crime' and 'prevention'. The key themes generated sub-themes in order to gain full comprehension of the themes. The qualitative method provides an updated and altered insight into perceptions of crime causation and could be used in the future to gain a better understanding of crime causation. Furthermore, it may be applicable to crime prevention and reduction techniques.

KEY WORDS:	CRIME CAUSATION	PUBLIC PERCEP-TIONS	SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS	THEMATIC ANALYSIS	CYCLE OF CRIME

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Introduction

Defining crime may seem unambiguous yet there is little consensus, creating a complex issue when exploring crime. Although there is no solitary definition, the basic components reflect "...dominant beliefs, morals and values held at a particular time..." (Scott, 2010:9). Both crime and delinquency tend to be characterised as an act that defies society's norms that are frequently portrayed within punishable laws. Delinquent acts refer to those carried out by a child or adolescent (Regoli et al, 2014). This includes criminal acts and non-criminal acts, which are largely associated with anti-social behaviour. Delinquency at a young age is associated with later criminal behaviour. Consequently, it is important to consider both definitions when exploring the causal factors of crime.

In recent years, policy makers and the public have focused on criminal and delinquent acts committed by young people. In particular, young males as "…women everywhere are less likely to commit crime than men" (Mooney et al, 2013:116). It is acknowledged that public perceptions are important as government policies are without doubt shaped by the reservations of the public. Public perceptions of crime have been researched regarding a number of concerns: race and crime (Wright and Younts, 2009; Thompson and Bobo, 2011), fear of crime (Lewis and Maxfield, 1980; Lane, 2002), the accuracy of public estimations of prevalence (Warr,1982; Haines and Case, 2007), public views on policing (Wentz and Schlimgen, 2012), courts and sentencing (Robert, 2003; Applegate, David and Cullen, 2009; Mitchell and Roberts, 2012), and capital punishment (Ellsworth and Ross, 1983). However, "…very few scholars have asked the public about their opinions on crime causation" (Gabbidon and Boisvert, 2011:50).

This limitation may be due to professionals regarding lay-people's perceptions as "…simplistic, ill-informed, and irrelevant, reflecting an inadequate grasp of the complexity of the problem…" (Flanagan, 1987:231). This ignores the importance of public perceptions of crime causation, which could be a significant error as the public may hold constructive information due to residing in areas where criminal behaviour is more likely to occur, "…especially citizens that reside in areas where crime is a major concern" (Gabbidon and Boisvert, 2011:50). Additionally, Quinsey and Cyr (1986) found that there were few variations of opinion between laypersons and clinicians when determining if crime was caused by internal or external sources.

Literature available for public opinions on crime causation is neglected and the majority of research is dated or was conducted in America. The American and UK criminal justice systems vary, yet public opinion of crime causation does not. Literature from both suggests similar multiple external causes of crime (Jones and Levi 1987; Campbell and Muncer 1990; Gabbidon and Boisvert 2011). However, it should be acknowledged that there is a need for updated and UK based research to display a more realistic and current representation of public perspectives of causes of crime.

Literature began with early polls such as Gallup (1946, cited in Erskine, 1974) who found nearly half (47%) stated 'lack of parental control and supervision neglect' was the main cause. Public perceptions in these early years suggested parental influence was the central theme (Gallup, 1946; Gallup, 1954; Gallup, 1963; Harris,

1966; all cited in Erskine, 1974). By the mid-60s to early 70s, a new dominant theme of 'too lenient sentencing' began to emerge (Gallup 1964; Harris 1969, both cited in Erskine, 1974). The reoccurring themes throughout early research suggest that crime causation is typically seen as an external problem as opposed to an individual one.

Although the majority of research is American, an early UK based study generated similar findings. Jones and Levi (1987) looked at crime causation from the perspectives of the public and the police. The public sample consisted of 960 individuals who filled out a questionnaire. "Among the public, the most favoured causes were 'lack of discipline in the home' (57%). 'unemployment' (51%), and 'boredom because there is not enough to do' (37%)" (Jones and Levi, 1987:9). Other high ranking causes were 'bad influences from films', 'newspapers and television', 'lack of discipline in schools', 'not enough opportunities in life' and 'courts too lenient'. This is consistent with previous research that causation of crime is due to environmental or external factors rather than individual factors.

Another UK based study, Campbell and Muncer (1990) studied laypersons' perceptions of the causes of crime and indicated causal direction. They used 29 laypersons in an introductory psychology class in a suburban community college. Participants were asked to state six key causes of crime in a free-response format that produced 33 distinct causal categories. The 10 most commonly cited causes were put into a grid evaluating 27 pathways as the participants were asked to consider whether the causes are likely to bring about the effects. Figure 1 below demonstrates the seven main causes and their causation direction.
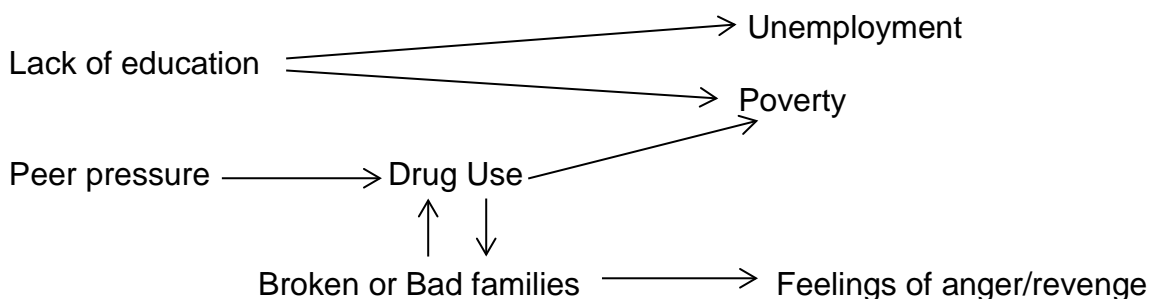

Figure 1: Lay model of crime causation (Campbell and Muncer, 1990:415)

Consistent with past and current research, more external factors were specified as a cause of crime in comparison to individual or psychological factors. Most nominated societal causes were 'poverty', 'bad families', 'lack of education', 'unemployment', 'peer pressure' and 'bad neighbourhood'. The most nominated personal factors were: 'drug use', 'mental illness', 'feelings of anger or revenge', 'greed' and 'alcohol use'. The laypersons suggested areas for intervention for crime reduction policy are education and drug use due to these being central to contribute to poverty. Investigating how the public believe crime can be prevented may be beneficial when looking at crime causation, as "…these findings are essentially mirror images of their concepts of the causes" (Erskine, 1974:288). However, the study is dated. Therefore, it may be that these findings are not strictly relevant today.

Nonetheless, it has been noted that external or environmental factors continue to be the key causes of crime according to the public. Gabbidon and Boisvert (2011) studied the views of crime causation. 359 participants were asked 37 questions rating their level of support for numerous criminological theories: classical theory, biological theory, psychological theory, social disorganization theory, strain theory, subcultural theory, social learning theory, social control theory, labelling theory, critical theory and environmental theory. "The highest rated cause of crime fell under environmental criminology 'opportunity/not being caught'…" (Gabbidon & Boisvert, 2011:53).

Additional high ratings supported the psychological theory: 'drug and alcohol problems' and 'lack of compassion/concern'. Others support social control theory, 'not close to parents/guardians' and 'not involved in positive activities'. One more supported strain theory, 'obtain material wealth any way'. The lowest rated fell under biological, 'substance use during pregnancy' and other low rating in this theory 'brains work differently' and 'genetics'. Individual theories appeared to be the most favoured among Philadelphia residents. Individual theories place value on family and friends when explaining criminal behaviour. Also, they felt alcohol and drug problems were contributors to crime causation.

This research is beneficial as it is a recent account of the publics' perceptions of crime causation by using numerous varying criminological theories. The findings suggest which theories are considered factors in crime causation and which theories are disregarded. On the other hand, it still generates the predicament that multiple theories can contribute to explaining the causes of crime. Additionally, rating the level of support for numerous theories does not allow participants to freely express what they believe the causes of crime are.

It is clear from previous research the public deem the causes of crime as external factors. It is also obvious there are many possible factors that could contribute to crime causation. It is important to notice those factors can elaborate into a causal sequence. For example, "…where parental mishandling leads to truancy, which in turn leads to an unstable job record, which in turn leads to adult crime" (Farrington and West, 1990:122). Therefore, it is essential to consider causal sequence when asking the public their opinion of crime causation.

Present Study
Due to the lack of previous literature, the present study intends to explore perceptions of crime causation. The research focuses on young males, as they are overrepresented in the criminal justice system because they commit the majority of crime (Shaw, 2010). The research will be centred in Manchester due to it previously being referred to as 'Gunchester' via the media thus containing high crime and deprived areas (Communities and Local Government, 2011; Home Office 2013; UK CrimeStats 2014). High crime areas were chosen to allow individuals who have experience of criminal acts and criminal individuals to discuss their perceptions of crime causation. This may reveal a valid representation of perceptions of crime causation in their region, opposing estimations of crime causation from a location whereby the individual rarely witnesses crime. The main aim is to qualitatively explore male participants' perceptions of growing up in high crime areas and their perceived reasons for local

crime. More specifically, the research questions aim to explore and answer the following:

1) To explore the extent to which young males perceive crime causation to be external factors in accordance with Jones and Levi (1987), Campbell and Muncer (1990) and Gabbidon and Boisvert (2011).

2) To explore the extent to which young males perceive the causes of crime to interlink in accordance with Farrington & West (1990).

3) To explore the perceptions of beneficial intervention of crime, in accordance with Campbell and Muncer (1990).

Methodology

Design: A qualitative approach of interviews was chosen to allow individuals to freely discuss their life experiences in their own words, thus giving voice to commonplace people (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). In particular, semi-structured interviews were chosen to help the researcher develop a rapport with the participants and explore interesting aspects, as the interviewer is able to take an adaptable approach towards the order, introduction and exclusion of particular questions (Banister et al, 2011). Analysis of the data has been completed using the qualitative research method of thematic analysis to discover key themes from interviews. The thematic analysis was performed from seven semi-structured interview transcripts, precisely seven male volunteers. According to Braun & Clarke (2006) thematic analysis identifies, analyses and reports patterns within data, which provides a flexible approach potentially providing rich, and detailed data, thus this method was deemed the most appropriate.

Developing Materials: Interviews A-G all followed the same semi structured schedule including preformulated topics and open-ended questions that were enhanced by probes of interest (Schensul, 1999). Within the transcripts, 'I' refers to the interviewer and 'P' refers to the participant (Appendix 1-7). The semi structured interview schedule was constructed from a range of sources: previous literature and the researchers' personal experiences (Appendix 8). This approach was selected in order to broaden the research area and deflect restriction of possible findings (Appendix 9). Previous literature was made up by Jones and Levi (1987), Campbell and Muncer (1990), Farrington & West (1990) and Gabbidon & Boisvert (2011), as they directly linked to the research. The most common causes of crime stated by the public in previous literature were considered and topics of interest were constructed from their findings.

Participants:
Table 1: Participant and interview information

Pseudonym:	Age:	Ethnicity:	Location in Manchester:	Date of Interview:	Time of Interview:
Eckran	18	White British	Gorton	31/01/2014	46 minutes 55 seconds
Joseph	23	Black British	Gorton, Longsight and Chorlton	06/03/2014	66 minutes 57 seconds
Ronald	18	White British	Gorton	07/03/2014	29 minutes 9 seconds
Daniro	24	Black British	Longsight and Moss Side	09/03/2014	48 minutes 14 seconds
Riley	24	Black British	Longsight and Ardwick	09/03/2014	38 minutes 31 seconds
Hughey	23	Black British	Longsight and Gorton	09/03/2014	49 minutes 12 seconds
Lewis	19	Black Caribbean	Moss Side and Old Trafford	12/03/2014	34 minutes 45 seconds
					Total: 5.22 hours of data

Contact with participants was obtained by means of an opportunity or snowball sampling. Peers were asked via an invitation sheet if they were willing and available to participate, who - using their contacts – were able to recruit further appropriate participants (Appendix 10). Peers were initially used, as the close relationship is advantageous allowing the participant to speak freely and trust the researcher (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). The participants were taken into a prearranged quiet area to read an information sheet, fill in a consent form and ensure adequate understanding before the interviews were conducted (Appendix 11 and 12).

In order to protect the participants they were asked to choose a pseudonym of preference. Interviews were conducted in a safe and relaxed setting of their choice including my home, their home and their place of work. The participants were males aged 18-24 years old, due to statistics demonstrating males commit more and serious crime in comparison to females, thus when exploring perceptions of crime causation, it is important to explain why men are more likely to commit crime than women (Cole, 2013).

Participants were chosen from the Manchester area as Thompson (2013) recently declares Greater Manchester crime rates are on this rise with all crime recorded in the North West up by 2.3%. Specifically, theft is 7.8% higher, household burglary up by 5.4% and shoplifting up by 10.7%. Scheerhout (2014) maintains this is the first time Manchester has had rising crime in over twenty years. Therefore, it is important to explore perspectives of people who are exposed to crime, as they may hold a more accurate insight into crime causation through their experiences.

Seven interviews were conducted, as although there is no fixed number a small sample "…is the way in which analytic, inductive, exploratory studies are best done" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006:496). This could be due to qualitative research being concerned with meaning and not making generalisations. Therefore, if the sample size is overly large, data can become repetitive, monotonous and, eventually, superfluous (Mason, 2010).

Data Collection: The participant prearranged a quiet area, as it is courteous to allow the participants to select the interview location (King and Horrock, 2010). However, the researcher ensured this location was reasonably quiet and could offer privacy. The interviews lasted precisely 29-67 minutes. The semi-structured interview process involved asking participants open-ended questions derived from topics on the interview schedule. Probing was used to gain more data when the participants answer was vague or incomplete (Farrell, 2011). Interviews were recorded on an M-AUDIO Dictaphone and an IPhone 4 to ensure a clear copy. A pilot interview was conducted including reflective questions to check for any problems with the interview schedule but none were discovered, thus the schedule remained the same (Appendix 13).

Analytical Process: For thematic analysis to be carried out the data collected from the interviews was transcribed, analysed and reflected on; this was completed for each participant (see Figure 2 below).
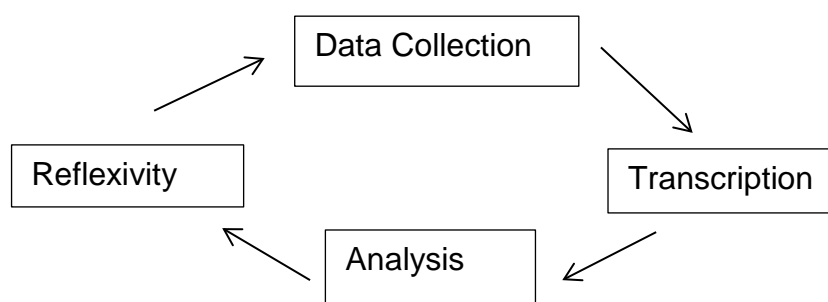
Figure 2: Analytic Strategy

Transcription involved repeatedly listening to the interview recording and typing the data carefully. Transcripts include all slang, anecdotes and colloquialism but bad language was removed (Farrell, 2011). This was a lengthy process but it was necessary to gain a written account to refer to and help familiarise the data before analysis. Once transcription was completed, analysis took place. Thematic analysis of the data was considered before and during analysis as it is versatile and the process should remain consistent throughout.

The basic aim of the thematic analysis is to find key themes throughout the data; this can be done in several ways. Braun and Clarke (2006) give a clear account of the different types and levels of analysis that can be conducted through thematic analysis. The first relates to how the themes are identified: inductive or bottom up (theoretical). An inductive approach implies "…the researcher approaches the data without a theoretically informed coding frame" (Willig, 2013:60). In contrast, a researcher using a theoretical approach seeks categories of interest using an existing theory (Coolican, 2009). An inductive approach was preferred for the current research, as previous research has been taken into account within the interview schedule, thus analysis of the data using a theoretical approach might limit findings as it only permits data to fit into previously existing themes.

Another option is the level at which themes are recognised; at a semantic or latent level. According the Braun and Clarke (2006), a sematic approach refers to themes identified at surface meaning and the researcher is simply considering what the participant has disclosed. Conversely, a latent approach is an interpretation of what the participant has revealed (Willig, 2013). Sematic level of identification was selected because research on public opinions of crime causation is overseen. Consequently, it is logical to take participants statements at face value instead of interpreting data when basic findings are required.

Thematic analysis can also be performed within both realist/essentialist and constructionist paradigms. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain the essentialist/realist approach as focusing on motivations, experiences and generally taking meaning in a direct manner. Whereas, constructionist paradigm "…seeks to theorise the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:85). The present research epistemology is constructed within a realist/essentialist paradigm again because the topic is neglected, thus basic knowledge from experience and language needs to be acknowledged before a more advanced analysis is required. Overall, the current research attempted to help the reader get a sense of vital themes by delivering a rich thematic interpretation of the whole data collection.

Ethical Considerations: Personal supervisors in Manchester Metropolitan University accepted ethical approval (Appendix 14). Ethical guidelines outlined by the British Psychological Society by were considered using: invitation sheets, information sheets, consent forms, and debriefing sheets (Appendix 15). These informed the participants of the research aims and procedures and covered issues such as confidentiality and their right to withdraw. Strenuous efforts were made to protect the data and to ensure the participants confidentially. However, confidentially was a potential issue as data was discussed with academic tutors and transcriptions are appended to the report therefore participants were able to select a pseudonym in order to remain anonymous. They were not subject to physical or psychological harm, but as the research included discussing their personal upbringing and essentially crimes committed by themselves and others, the topics were approached considerately. The participants were also made aware they could disclose as little or as much information as they desired. Additionally, due to the nature of the topic risk to researcher was taken into account (Davis, 2003). Participants were chosen through either an opportunity sample of peers or a snowballing sample of further appropriate participants known to the initial participants, who volunteered to discuss their life experiences thus reducing the risk. In addition, the interviews were held in locations with means of communication and with other individuals nearby, therefore, cautions were considered prior to conducting the interviews to reduce any potential risk to the researcher.

Analysis

From the analysis, five subsequent themes were established as consistent in the majority of the seven interviews; four of which provide sub-themes to help explain the core themes thoroughly (see figure 3 below).

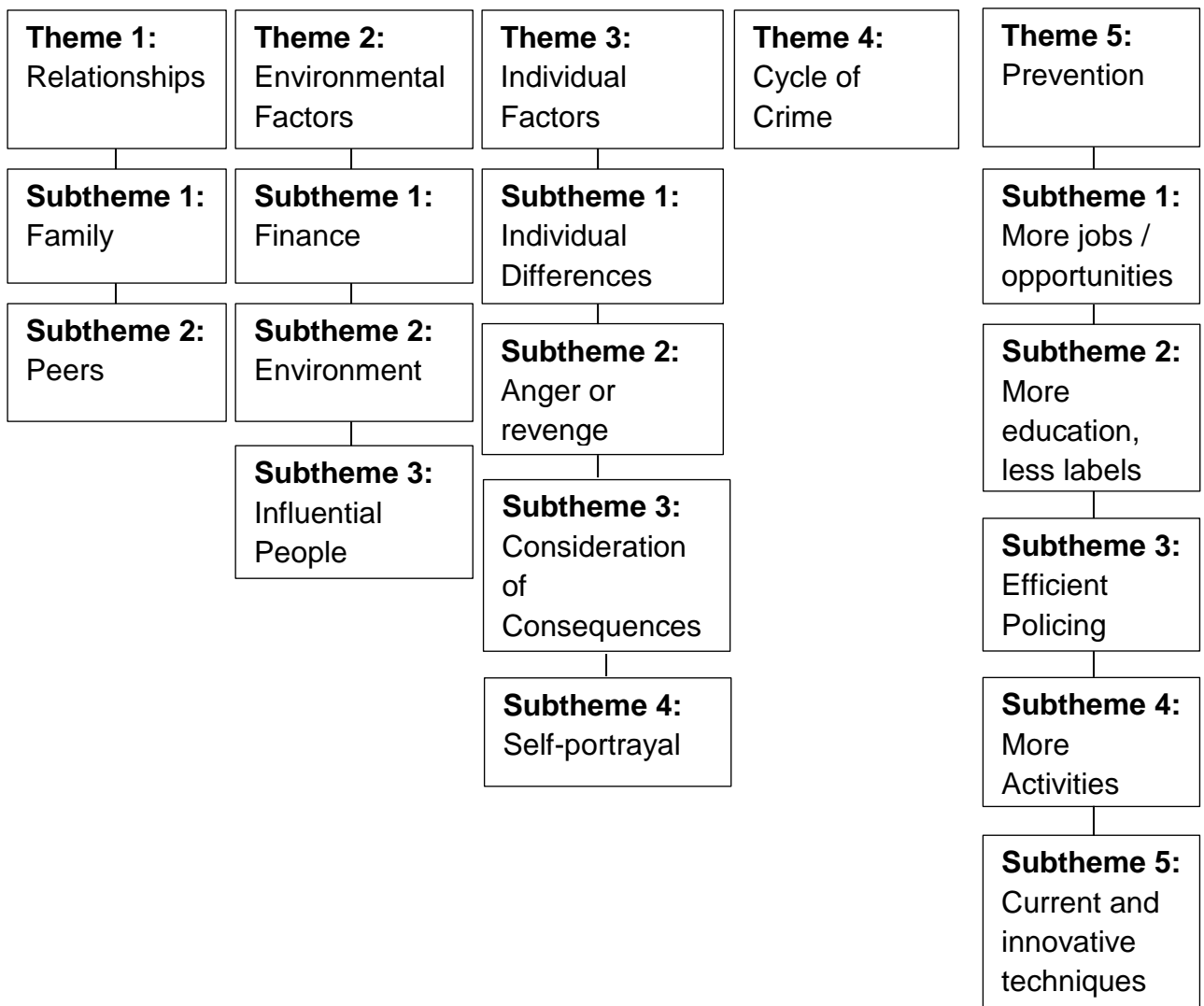| **Theme 1:** Relationships	**Theme 2:** Environmental Factors	**Theme 3:** Individual Factors	**Theme 4:** Cycle of Crime	**Theme 5:** Prevention
Subtheme 1: Family	**Subtheme 1:** Finance	**Subtheme 1:** Individual Differences		**Subtheme 1:** More jobs / opportunities
Subtheme 2: Peers	**Subtheme 2:** Environment	**Subtheme 2:** Anger or revenge		**Subtheme 2:** More education, less labels
	Subtheme 3: Influential People	**Subtheme 3:** Consideration of Consequences		**Subtheme 3:** Efficient Policing
		Subtheme 4: Self-portrayal		**Subtheme 4:** More Activities
				Subtheme 5: Current and innovative techniques

Figure 3: Five themes and sub-themes

The themes are discussed with selected examples throughout. However, this will only represent a small proportion of data related to the themes thus appendix 1-7 includes a colour coded scheme on each transcript to highlight additional data to justify the themes.

Relationships
The first theme 'relationships' was consistent throughout all participants. It refers to relationships increasing the likelihood of individuals committing a crime thus is a perceived crime causation factor.

Family: All participants discussed the importance of family life especially concerning single parents. This is apparent within the following examples:

> Daniro: "…there weren't many dads but the few guys who
> did they all made something out of their selves whereas,
> the rest you know they had no father figure they were just
> running wild committing crime." (89-92)

> Hughey: "There's just a mum maybe like three or four kids
> it might be harder for her to manage that many kids and
> they might go on the street ... and they'll find the wrong
> role models if they've not got that at home." (112-115)

This portrays the importance of having two parents at home and demonstrates how this interlinks with crime. Historically, previous research has suggested family is an important crime causation factor (Gibson 1996; Roberson, 2011). All participants interviewed agreed that family is a cause of crime (appendix 1-7).

Peers: All participants stated that peer influence is a major factor in committing crime. For example:

> Eckran: "That's generally probably the main reason I'd say
> that people in areas like Gorton and stuff like where a lot of
> the crimes being committed by teenagers and like young
> people then yeah it's all based around peer pressure…you
> won't get many people doing it on their own..." (80-84)

> Riley: "Absolutely cos peer pressures major especially at that
> age like teenage cos everything is image and tryna' look good
> in front of your friends..." (140-141)

Participants suggest peer pressure is more influential within teenage years. However, if an individual commits their first offence because of peer influence it is more likely they will continue to commit crime and stay associated with the same peer group as indicated here:

> Lewis: "…most of the time the reason why people commit
> crimes is because of the people that they're hanging around
> with and their crowd." (140-142)

Environmental factors
The second theme 'environmental factors' was the most prevalent factor discussed by the participants.

Finance: 'Finance' signifies financial gain or money. This was stated in many different circumstances thus includes: acquiring money, 'struggling' without money, jobs providing money, relative deprivation and illegitimate acts generating more money than legit acts. Criminal acts with reference to money were the highest stated crime causation factor within the data. Examples include:

> Joseph: "He's doing it because his family needs more money
> to live…" (661-662)

> Ronald: "…the amount of money I can earn in a week I'm
> gunna earn in a day…" (199-200)

The latter implies money can be made quicker through illegitimate ways. This was stated throughout all transcripts (appendix 1-7). The participants propose money is a major crime causation factor as people do not want to 'struggle' and money is the means to the end of that 'struggle'. Participants discuss this 'struggle' as lack of money or material goods in comparison to others thus this is relative deprivation opposing poverty or neediness (Campbell and Muncer, 1990). They also recommended the lack of income due to unavailable jobs causes people to commit crime:

> Daniro: "Yeah a lot of guys I know that they've tried to be legit, tried and tried and tried, it's not working they can't get jobs so only option left is to you know crimes…" (511-512)

Environment: 'Environment' refers to negative surroundings, absent opportunities in the environment, boredom due to bad environment, availability to get involved in the area and difficulty getting out of the area. The following samples will display the differential environmental impacts:

> Eckran: "…there's things that lower class people or people of a certain race will never be able to achieve." (315-316)

> Joseph: "…it's just like lack of lack of things to do on the street. There is nothing at all for kids to do…" (153-154)

> Ronald: "…once you're sort of locked in it is tough to get out so people struggle…" (170-171)

> Riley: "…there's so many characters around so it's just all around you. So if you really wanted get involved you could …" (543-545)

> Hughey: "I think a lot of people do turn to crime who are sort of good people because they live in these bad areas…" (395-396)

This reveals that a 'bad environment' can influence individuals in many ways. It also suggests factors interlink due to lack of opportunities and boredom ultimately leading to crime (Mauro and Carmeci, 2007). Crime is then easier to commit due to the availability in the area and then they continue to commit, as it is difficult to get away from the area and away from other criminal individuals, which connects, to the next subtheme 'influential people'.

Influential people: Participants suggested either famous role models or role models from the surrounding area could influence people to commit crime.

> Hughey: "…people are seeing rappers as role models, young black kids and they're rapping about stealing all they time. They're rapping about taking drugs all the time so it's where they're getting their values from as well." (85-88)

> Lewis: "…that's why they get involved because they think all it takes for them is to do certain crimes and then they'll earn money and be like that person that they look up to as their role model in the community." (122-124)

Influential people were described as role models to individuals and it was suggested that they look up to these 'bad' role models and attempt to commit crimes to emulate them. This was discussed in relation to no role model in the family home, thus values are taken from others or committing crime to gain money to be similar to the influential person, suggesting more interlinking factors.

Individual factors
The third theme 'individual factors' signifies how individual personality traits and characteristics can increase the likelihood of individuals committing crime.

Individual differences: 'Individual differences' indicates how people's personal characteristics cause them to react differently to situations.

> Riley: "…erm it depends on the person and their background and how they feel it's all on the individual." (566-567)

> Hughey: "…I think you can only sort of mould and individual so much…" (240)

This suggests that individual differences will impact if an individual chooses to commit crime regardless of their environment. Other examples are shown within the transcripts (appendix 1-7).

Anger or revenge: 'Anger or revenge' refers to people committing crime because they have a personal vendetta against another: individual, group or location.

> Individual example:
> Ronald: "...he's just sort of gone off on one sort of in one rash decision he's stabbed him or shot him..." (143-144)

> Group example (the police):
> Daniro: "…his van was stuck (laughs) everyone in the ends came round and was like shaking the van, bottling –glassing it and everythin' it was funny erm. Yeah erm and he was frightened for his life this cop…" (339-341)

> Location example (Fallowfield):
> Joseph: "…his mate was shot dead on erm Stockport Road and then… he went and got himself a gun within five minutes and he went up to the street that they lived on in Fallowfield and shot them both in the face…" (269-272)

This was discussed in relation to external things e.g. gangs and negative relationships with the police etc. Nevertheless, it still relates to loss of personal control over their emotions thus causing an individual to commit crime.

Consideration of consequences: 'Consideration of consequences' implies people believe they will not get caught committing criminal acts or do not consider the consequences.

> Joseph: "…they don't think about it, they just act first and then think later." (64).

> Riley: "…they just think they're not gunna get caught. So that's why you don't think of the consequences…" (455-456)

This signifies individuals do not think of the consequences due to the fact that they believe they are not going to get caught. However, this was continually discussed in relation to external factors. For example, they see other individuals get away with the crime and they believe police are 'useless' (appendix 1-7).

Self-portrayal: 'Self-portrayal' indicates a person committing criminal acts due to how they perceive their self or their status.

> Eckran: "…well to gain status in terms of respect or to like gain status in terms of… I don't know like material things like robbing money for clothes and stuff…" (45-47)

> Riley: "I want money to look good to my peers, to girls or the opposite sex… to even enemies, to look good to make yourself feel better morale boosting." (288-291)

Committing crime for status was once more referred to in relation to external factors such as requiring money or material goods either to impress others or to gain status through crime, as they have no other means of attaining it e.g. through a legitimate job.

Cycle of crime

The fourth theme 'cycle of crime' represents the crime causation factors interlinking and impacting upon one another thus causing people to commit crime as they get caught in a negative cycle. The participants were directly asked if the causes of crime discussed interlinked, but there are also many other examples of interlinking factors as demonstrated above and throughout transcripts 1-7.

> Eckran: "Yeah like it's a vicious cycle…" (386)

> Joseph: "…everything interlinks in a big circle and goes round" (725-726)

> Daniro: "It's all in together cos really and truly it's just a repeated cycle…" (537)

Prevention

The fifth and final theme 'prevention' refers to participants perceptions of beneficial prevention and reduction of crime.

More jobs and opportunities: More jobs and opportunities were cited highly as a prevention or reduction of crime.

> Riley: "More jobs definitely just more opportunities in general in the area as well." (599-600)

> Lewis: "I think more job opportunities could be put in place to reduce crimes. Also erm experience opportunities..." (385-386)

More jobs and opportunities were suggested as a prevention to provide individuals with a consistent income and to occupy and structure their day.

More education, less labels: 'More education, less labels' refers to participants suggesting more education would be beneficial in opposition to labels and criminal records.

> Eckran: "…people should be taught like how things are different rather than like banged up and labelled." (560-561)

> Lewis: "…when they're dealing with people who have committed small crimes and I think that if they had something in place to offer them to get into some opportunities or to get into some courses or forms of education then I feel that would make a big impact." (277-282)

Participants proposed that when an individual is given a label they are more likely to reoffend due to criminal records suppressing opportunities and second chances. Therefore, Lewis suggested that offering a system for individuals to get their life back on track instead of giving them a criminal record for a first time minor offence would be beneficial (appendix 7: 273-283).

Efficient policing: 'Efficient policing' indicates participants suggesting better relationships with the police would be beneficial in reducing crime:

> Lewis: "…if the police try to create that bond between them, the young people and the people of the community, I feel that then people won't commit crimes so regular" (232-234)

All participants stated not only did they have a negative relationship with the police, but "your aunties, your sisters everyone hates the police" (Daniro: 374). Therefore, participants stated building better bonds with the police will stop hate crimes and produce more respect thus consideration towards criminals acts (appendix 1-7).

More activities: 'More activities' refers to participants suggesting more things to do would be a beneficial prevention.

> Ronald: "…there's gotta be more sort of things to do for younger people…" (372)

> Daniro: "I: Erm what do you think could be implemented…
> to prevent or reduce crime? P: …More stuff to do growing
> up." (545-547)

This particularly applied to youths as participants believed boredom at this age contributes to more time spent on the streets thus enhances their likelihood of committing crime.

Current and innovative techniques: 'Current and innovative techniques' indicates individuals' perceptions of the current techniques already in place and their suggestions to new techniques or systems that could be put in place to prevent or reduce crime. Firstly examples for current techniques:

> Eckran: "…putting people on tag it doesn't really do
> anything…" (531)

> Ronald: "I think basically people like PCSOs who are
> monitoring the streets sort of give people around the area it
> just gives them a better feel about sort of their safety" (389-391)

> Riley: "In terms of cameras and surveillance definitely in
> case something goes on in a certain place… (616-617)

Participants suggested surveillance techniques, including police patrolling the streets, is beneficial. However, consequences such as tag do not reduce crimes as the individual will reoffend, or in some instances, continue to commit crime whilst on tag. Innovative techniques were also suggested:

> Joseph: "There should be some kind of system that is for that,
> them kind of people who are struggling who haven't got any
> qualifications or didn't pass school there needs to some sort of
> system for them kind of people because they're the ones who
> are trapped." (611-614)

> Hughey: "…you need someone to identify in you when you're
> young what your talents are, what you're good at what you're
> not. That's what I think's missing in society…" (561-563)

Differential innovative techniques were suggested yet all could be beneficial reduction techniques (appendix 1-7). Overall, most prevention linked in with either: the education system, authorities such as police and the criminal justice system concerning criminal records, or beneficial current techniques and more things to occupy individuals should this be through means of a job or more activities in the area.

Discussion

On the whole, the aims and further research questions were effectively explored and five key themes were generated. The themes demonstrated considerable support for previous literature discussed in the introduction. Original insights previously undiscovered were additionally established.

The insights emerged support existing research from Jones and Levi (1987), Campbell and Muncer (1990) and Gabbidon and Boisvert (2011), as young male participants largely perceive the majority or crime causation to be external. Internal factors of crime were nominated, but in comparison to external causes, they were marginal. However, they were consistent enough to create a theme therefore could not be overlooked. Internal factors were also always discussed in relation to external factors; therefore suggesting the external factors affect the internal factors.

The main causes discussed by previous literature (Jones and Levi 1987; Campbell and Muncer 1990; Gabbidon and Boisvert 2011) that are consistent in the current findings were: family, peers, unemployment, education, boredom, no opportunities/bad neighbourhood, and anger/revenge. However, the qualitative method of interviews in the present study allowed participants to freely express how the factors interlinked and the reason behind each cause. For example, 'poverty' was suggested previously, whereas the current participants suggested it was relative deprivation opposing poverty. Individuals finance was repetitively discussed and therefore has been underestimated by previous studies. Additionally, original factors such as the importance of status and the impact of influential people were discovered.

Findings also support Farrington & West (1990), as the young male participants perceived the all causes of crime to interlink. However, they indicated that some factors had greater impacts than others did. Consequently, this could be used as direction for further research. It would be beneficial to possess knowledge as to what factors directly affect other factors to apply to prevention techniques.

Findings were mixed concerning Campbell and Muncer (1999) perceptions of beneficial intervention of crime, as their findings suggest that public stated education and drugs were the main beneficial inventions due to these being central to contribute to poverty. Although the participants agreed education was an area for improvement, drugs were not. Instead, factors such as authorities, jobs and more activities were selected. In addition, as aforementioned, poverty was not a cause of crime as although money was the most cited factor, it was represented as relative deprivation rather than poverty.

Giving participants the opportunity to discuss their opinion of prevention and reduction techniques provided some innovative ideas. It is proposed that using individuals who have experience crime allowed for any original or innovative discussion due to the experiences they held. However, all participants were males thus females' perspectives could also be researched. Nevertheless, using males was justified within the introduction and method. In addition, the present study only represents high crime and deprived areas in Manchester thus should be researched on a larger scale. Other limitations are discussed in the reflexivity below.

In conclusion, the study gained an insight into male participants' perceptions of growing up in high crime areas and their perceived reasons for local crime. However, the neglected literature creates a need for this to be researched further, possibly including quantitative methods. Overall, the majority of findings exerted the external factors, thus further research could delve further into these factors along with causal direction.

Reflexivity

I chose to research this topic as I live in a high crime area and I have witnessed many young males get involved in a criminal lifestyle thus this sparked an interest. The lack of previous research into public perspectives of crime causation also persuaded me to choose this topic, as I believe the public insight is very important. As an independent researcher, it is acknowledged that my personal experiences and opinions may have affected the present research. This may have affected the research during data collection and data analysis. I had previous contact with some of my participants, thus held some knowledge into their experiences with crime related issues. I believe this previous contact is advantageous as the rapport was already established. This is important as if the participant has no trust or rapport with the researcher they "…will not open up and describe their true feelings, thoughts and intentions" (Thomas et al, 2011:357).

Conversely, I was a relatively inexperienced researcher therefore; I may not have held all of the skills that other researchers may maintain. Throughout the research, I found a handful of difficulties these were as follows. Firstly, arranging interviews became an issue as participants would change the allocated time and this became frustrating as time constraints existed. However, I remained patient and rescheduled another suitable time. Secondly, my issues became focused on conducting the interviews, as I was nervous when conducting my first few interviews. As I became more comfortable, I found it difficult to hold back my thoughts and experiences yet it was important not to express them, as I may have affected the participant's response. Thirdly, conducting the analysis was more difficult than expected. I found the large and vast majority of data harder to categorise thus more time was taken to do so.

In addition, my individual interpretation of the data may have also influenced the results. However, I studied thematic analysis in-depth before and during analysis and attempted to remain consistent throughout the analytic process. A colour-coded scheme was included on each transcript for additional justification due to the word count restriction (appendix 1-7). At the start of the research, I was eager to discover why young males commit criminal acts and the experiences they held. On the other hand, I was surprised by the amount of encounters the young males had with criminal behaviour and how it seemed to be part of their everyday life. I wanted to reflect an accurate account of the participants' personal opinions and experiences of crime causation in order to give voice to ordinary people. Therefore, I hope I have achieved that.

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