

**Ride to Die: Masculine Honour and Collective Identity in the  
Motorcycle Underworld**

Journal:	<i>Journal of Criminological Research, Policy and Practice</i>
Manuscript ID	JCRPP-05-2018-0017.R1
Manuscript Type:	Research Paper
Keywords:	Organized Crime, Masculine Honour, Collective Identity, Hell's Angels, United Kingdom, Violence

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## Abstract

This article discusses the nature and extent of violent practice in the motorcycle underworld. It does this by considering the murder of Gerry Tobin, and then uses the biography of the founding member of the Hell's Angels motorcycle club for a critical analysis. We are interested in understanding the role of *masculine honour* and *collective identity*, and its influences in relation to violence – namely fatal violence in the motorcycle underworld. We argue that motorcycle gangs are extreme examples of what Hall (2012) considers 'criminal undertakers' – individuals who take 'special liberties' often as a last resort.

## Keywords

Organised Crime, Masculine Honour, Collective Identity, Hell's Angels, United Kingdom

## Introduction

August 12<sup>th</sup> 2017 marked the ten-year death anniversary of Gerry Tobin. Gerry, a member of the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC), was travelling down the M40 motorway after returning from a Hell's Angels annual event when a green car pulled alongside him and fired multiple shots (Campbell and Balakrishnan, 2008). Gerry died immediately at the scene. This paper critically analyses Gerry's death with significant attention to *masculine honour*, *collective identity* and violent practice in the motorcycle underworld.

## Organised Crime and Contract Murder

Organised crime research in the UK draws towards the consensus that the phenomenon is sustained by collusion, corruption and complacency, which makes it difficult to excavate facts (Gounev and Ruggiero, 2012; Congram, Bell and Lauchs, 2013; Lavorgna, Lombardo and Sergi, 2013). In the UK, Wright (2006) argues that organised crime has become 'disorganised', as there is a contemporary absence of home grown, effective organised crime networks, which therefore has provided an entrée for today's transnational crime syndicates (Southwell, 2009). On the contrary, a series of ground-breaking ethnographies have established that violence, illegal trading networks and organised crime are deeply woven into the social and cultural fabric of British born working-class citizens (Winlow, 2001; Hobbs, 2013; Fraser, 2015). In addition, they all allude to the definitional ambiguities surrounding gangs, professional criminals and organised crime groups. Fraser and Hobbs (2017) argue that the academic and political categorisation of these phenomenon's as the pitfall of understanding the complex nature of these social realities. They persuasively urge scholars to be mindful of the wider structures that shape criminal collaborations of which include, but are not limited to: the political economy, the proletarian class, industrialism and post-industrialism. Other scholars, however, take a more functional approach and centre

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6 their arguments on what is meant by the description “organised” in the term “organised  
7 crime” and how there are various ways of answering this question, including the suggestion  
8 that this supposed organisation is intermittent, flexible and weak, rather than hierarchical and  
9 stable (Coles, 2001; Naylor, 2004; van Duyne, 1996; Williams, 2001). Whilst it is not our  
10 aim in this paper to critically engage in this debate, we accept that it is often difficult to  
11 conclude authoritatively about these matters given the blurred and slippery world of  
12 organised crime and the violence that accompanies it, or at least provides an enabling  
13 context. However, it is imperative to acknowledge pioneering research that consider  
14 organised crime groups and other criminal fraternities.

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18 To strengthen the understanding of ‘organised crime’ globally, scholars suggest  
19 differentiating organised crime from ‘enterprise crime’ and the ‘mafia’ (Gambetta, 2009;  
20 Varese, 2010). The enterprise model is based on the premise of ‘continuum’ – from  
21 ‘legitimate to illegitimate’ business ventures (see, Smith, 1975; Reuter, 1983). Schelling  
22 (1971) argues that a key component of organised crime is “monopoly” that “seeks not only  
23 influence, but exclusive influence” (p.72). Indeed, if the enterprise model considers  
24 organised crime groups primarily focusing on “illegal profits” and “monopolization”, they are  
25 likely to “systematically commit crimes with serious damage for society” (Kleemans, 2013:  
26 p.617). Through the enterprise model, this would be achieved by “loose networks” of  
27 individuals, who seek to “regulate and control the production and distribution of a given  
28 commodity or service unlawfully” (Varese 2010: p.16). The work of Paoli (2004)  
29 distinguishes the Italian mafia and criminal enterprises and reveals, that mafias are not  
30 restricted to economic profiteering, as they are often motivated by power and profit. This is  
31 often influenced by ‘cultural values’, which clearly forms as part of their “collective identity”  
32 (Fijnaut and Paoli, 2006). In short, the ‘enterprise’ form of organised crime is commonplace  
33 in the UK and large parts of Europe (Hobbs 2013; Klerks 2003; von Lampe 2008).

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40 Whilst some scholars have discussed the problems of differentiating criminal groups, others  
41 have attempted to clarify distinctions. For instance, Ferrell (1996) notes the importance of  
42 how members of these groups see themselves in identifying as one of a gang and how  
43 others within their communities perceive them. Criminal orientation and ‘self-identification’  
44 are often indicators of a group evolving into a street gang (Klein, Maxson and Miller, 1995).  
45 However, it is also worth noting that some scholars do not view gangs and organised crime  
46 groups as separate entities. Densley (2014) rightly argues that some gangs can ‘evolve’  
47 into, or be employed by organised criminal groups, suggesting a fluidity to the concept as  
48 well as the presence of a division of labour.

**Comment [MR1]:** R1: ‘The last sentence of the first paragraph on page 2 requires further development and explanation’.

Revision: Agreed – we have made the above point more explicit by discussing key definitional debates surrounding ‘organized crime’.

**Comment [MR2]:** R1: ‘The paper requires a more extensive discussion of the literature related to organised crime and gangs in both the UK and internationally’.

Revision: Agreed – we have taken into consideration the above comment and therefore a section has been inserted which considers organised crime.

**Comment [MR3]:** R1: The literature review requires further development overall. For example, there is no mention of research on gangs and the paper would benefit from a more critical appraisal of a wider range of sources.

Revision: Agreed – we have taken into consideration the above comment and therefore a section has been inserted which considers gangs.

Indeed, violent practice has often been a catalyst to exert dominance over an illicit product or service (Wright, 2006; Gambetta, 2009; Varese, 2010; Hobbs, 2013), and this is consistent with the findings from the 2000 Palermo Convention for Transnational Organized Crime (UNODC, 2004). In recent years, scholars have drawn attention to the synergy between organised crime and contract killers (Shaw, 2017; Kassab and Rosen, 2018). MacIntyre *et al.* (2014) describe a hitman as “a person who accepts an order to kill another human being from someone who is not publicly acknowledged as a legitimate authority regarding ‘just killing’” (p.326).

The pioneering work of Levi (1981) is the first to academically chart contract hits within a psychological context. However, the pitfall of the research is that the primary findings are based on one hitman who was convicted of multiple hits. This is also the case for research that has been done through the FBI’s Homicide Working Group, which focuses on murders executed by individual killers (Black, 2000; Black and Cravens, 2001). Indeed, the work of Mouzos and Venditto (2003) is one of the most useful scholarly contributions as it provides a detailed examination of the levels of police intervention and prevention of successful and attempted hits. More recently, within a British context, Cameron (2013) explored the economics of contract murder, whilst Wilson and Rahman (2015) have discussed the motivations and the psychological reframing processes of ‘becoming a hitman’. The findings of Wilson and Rahman (2015) resonates the work of Sykes and Matza (1957), in the sense that some hitmen ‘drift’ into this lethal practice, which involves the killers separating their morally responsible self from the rest of themselves to strategically kill.

MacIntyre *et al.*’s. (2014) pioneering study developed a four-division typology: Novices, Dilettantes; Journeymen; and Masters. We are particularly interested in ‘Journeymen’ hitmen, given that we are discussing two of the most internationally renowned motorcycle gangs – the HAMC and the Outlaws MC (OMC) – of whom are recognised as ‘*Outlaw*’ biker organisations and organised crime groups (Scaramella *et al.*, 1997; Trethewy and Katz, 1998; Lavigne, 2000; Marsden and Sher, 2006). This parallels with MacIntyre *et al.*’s (2014) understanding that Journeymen operators are either affiliated, or somewhat attached to the criminal underworld. MacIntyre *et al.* (2014) define a ‘Journeyman’ hitman as someone who is “capable, experienced, and reliable but not an especially exceptional performer” (p.10). They suggest that Journeymen are likely to be ‘organised’ in how they go about conducting the hit, but may nonetheless leave traces of forensic evidence at the crime scene. Typically, their targets are business associates or gang rivals of those who contract the hit and MacIntyre *et al.* (2014) hypothesised that Journeymen hitmen come from military backgrounds, or occupations encompassing the use of firearms. They also suggest that Journeymen are usually apprehended through local, police intelligence networks which, for

**Comment [MR4]:** R1: A more extensive ‘linking section’ is required to transition from research on organised crime to the review of extant literature and contract killings.

Revision: Agreed – a linking section has now been established.

**Comment [MR5]:** R1: The section on contract murder requires further development i.e. research is cited but not explained in sufficient detail.

Revision: Agreed – a dedicated section has been inputted which critiques some of the key existing literature.

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6 them, was their most important finding given that it was local intelligence, which brought  
7 most of the British hitmen in their sample to justice, as well as the perpetrators of Gerry's  
8 death.  
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### 10 11 12 **Masculine Honour and Collective Identity** 13

14 This sub-section critically reviews the key criminological literature on masculinities and  
15 violence, providing a context in which to situate this research and its theoretical arguments.  
16 In particular, we discuss the successive paradigm shifts (Hood-Williams, 2001) within the  
17 literature concerning masculinities and violence, and draw attention to the plurality of gender  
18 expression (Ellis, 2016), specifically the socially, culturally and historically contingent nature  
19 of masculinity.  
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23 The investigation into the relationship between masculinity and violence, which examined  
24 why males seemingly appear to engage in, and commit, higher proportions of crime than  
25 females (Renzetti, 2013; Gundy and Kappeler, 2014), appeared to commence with an  
26 examination of men's biology (Walklate, 2004). There have been numerous studies that  
27 have attempted to search for answers within the male body, running with assertions that, in  
28 contrast to the 'meekness of femininity' (Ellis, 2016: p.10), men are naturally violent and  
29 aggressive, with overwhelming and insatiable sexual drives (Smart, 1976; Brittan, 1989). So  
30 too, positivist orientated research has attempted to place the causes for violent behaviour at  
31 dangerously high testosterone levels, problematic chromosome patterns, and instincts that  
32 have evolved as a means of gaining and defending resources (Hearn, 1998; Edwards, 2006;  
33 Jones, 2008). Jones (2008) and Wieviorka (2009) note that violence has strong cultural  
34 dimensions both in how it is perceived, as well as its prevalence, which are influenced by  
35 temporal, spatial and contextual factors. While the legacy of the positivist studies still lingers  
36 today, criminological investigations gradually began to focus more on the individual's  
37 immediate social contexts and wider socio-structural conditions in order to explain their  
38 involvement in crime. These more sociological studies highlighted the significance of male  
39 and female "sex roles" in creating patterns of crime by sex (Messerschmidt, 1993).  
40 Sutherland and Cressey (1966) draw attention to such patterns:  
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47 [V]ariations in the sex ratio in crime are so great that it can be considered that  
48 maleness is not significant in the causation of crime itself but only as it indicates  
49 social position, supervision, and other social relations  
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51 (Sutherland and Cressey, 1966 cited in Ellis, 2016: p.19).  
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6 Ellis (2016) continues, noting that sociologist Talcott Parsons attributed young males' greater  
7 involvement in crimes due to a sense of alienation within the context of family, and that their  
8 actions suggest a form of 'compensatory masculinity' (p.19). Further to this, Cohen's (1955)  
9 study of delinquent youth gangs drew on the previous works of Sutherland and Parsons, and  
10 suggested that the activities of these gangs did not comprise the qualities associated with  
11 the male sex role. In particular, the gang represented a solution for young men experiencing  
12 alienation from society's respectable values embodied in the middle-class institution of the  
13 education system. While these early twentieth century studies attempted to re-orientate the  
14 discussion away from the male body, they still appeared to be guided by assumptions that  
15 sex roles were in situated within nature.

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20 Here it is important to take into account the work of Messerschmidt (1993) and his seminal  
21 work on the socially structured action of masculinity, which attempts to assist in explaining  
22 the masculine nature of crime. Within this particular theoretical framework, the social  
23 construction of masculinity places particular emphasis on ideas such as dominance, sexual  
24 competency, and a un-acknowledgment of feminine characteristics and attributes. This  
25 notion of the social construction of masculinity, especially in relation to crime, is perhaps  
26 best illustrated in the work of Connell (1995), in which he argues that there is no such thing  
27 as one masculinity but many. Further to this, Connell suggests that there is a form of  
28 masculinity in which men strive to achieve – namely “hegemonic masculinity” (Gardiner,  
29 2013; see also Cooper and McGinley, 2012; Spencer, 2013).

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33 Moreover, the concept of “hegemonic masculinity” has also been met with criticism. For  
34 example, Hall (2002) argues that this concept downplays the role of political economy and  
35 class power in a theoretical evacuation of capitalism's global socio-economic process.  
36 Following the work of Bourdieu (1984; 1990), Hall (2002) argues that the rule of capital is  
37 more dependent on symbolic cultural capital than on overt violence. Thus, capitalism,  
38 according to Hall, creates a hyper-masculine proletarian “other”, who is insecure and  
39 peripheral social inclusion depends on their serviceability. Further to this, as cited by Ray  
40 (2011), to regard violence as “social domination neglects the dimorphic nature of violence as  
41 symbolic and material practice” (p.91). Hall (2002) reinforces that capitalism drove the  
42 pacification of internal territory crucial to its social reproduction, but this subsequently  
43 resulted in violent behaviour no longer being the route to power or affluence. Here, it is  
44 important to note that crimes such as homicide are predominately committed by those  
45 situated with the marginalized fragments of the working class (Ray, 2011).

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51 According to Bairner (1999), within this context men with “dead end lives” might find allure  
52 and meaning in guns, violence and gangster way of life. Furthermore, Hatty (2000) notes  
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**Comment [MR6]:** R1: Far more consideration of extant literature related to gender, and masculinity is required

Revision: Agreed – all highlighted text are new additions, which address reviewer's comments  
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6 that “violence is the prerogative of the youthful male, especially when confronted by the  
7 contradictions and paradoxes of thwarted desire and personal and social disempowerment”  
8 (p.6). According to Ray (2011), this particular approach to masculinities and violence  
9 suggests that violence or subcultures of violent practice might be “part of a response to  
10 perceived crises rather than an expression of a dominant masculinity” (p.93). Indeed,  
11 Bourgois’s (2003) research into Puerto Rican migrants to the USA demonstrates such crises  
12 in action. This particular ethnographic study of street-level drug dealers in East Harlem found  
13 that the work these migrants sought was disappearing, but they were unwilling to take jobs in  
14 the service sector, as this was perceived as ‘women’s work’. Further to this, the migrant’s  
15 wives and partners did gain such employment and as a result gained more financial  
16 independence, consequently threatening the historically male dominance in the household.  
17 Due to this perceived threat to their masculinity, such men “took refuge in the drug economy,  
18 where there were very violent norms of gang rape, sexual conquest, abandonment of  
19 families and ‘real manhood’ based on devotion to group membership” (cited in Ray, 2011:  
20 p.93). This notion of masculinity in crises has been met with some challenges, with Hall  
21 (2002) arguing that there is not so much a crises of masculinity, but rather a crises on the  
22 traditional capitalist order where the separation between criminality and legality are blurred,  
23 where hyper-masculinity is deeply embedded and pointless hostility rages on the margins of  
24 neo-capitalism. In particular, the injuries of class, which consist of shaming and self-doubt,  
25 “set the scene for contests for dignity” (cited in Ray, 2011: p.95). With reference to this  
26 notion of dignity, attention will now shift to focus upon the idea of masculine honour and the  
27 concept of collective identity within the context of organised crime.

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35 The notion of masculine honour has traditionally focused upon cultural factors and  
36 influencers in order to assist in explaining why men from particular societies may express  
37 more overt masculine qualities. Thus, we draw attention to the concept of *collective identity*,  
38 which has been used extensively by social movement scholars attempting to determine how  
39 social movements generate and sustain commitment and cohesion between actors over a  
40 period of time (Fominaya, 2010). Snow (2001) defines the concept of *collective identity* as:

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46 ...a shared sense of ‘oneness’ or ‘we-ness’ anchored in real or imagined shared  
47 attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in  
48 relation or contrast to one more actual or imagined sets of others (p.212).  
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**Comment [AL7]:** R1: Far more consideration of extant literature related to gender, and masculinity is required

Revision: Agreed – all highlighted text are new additions, which address reviewer’s comments  
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6 Johnson and Demetriou (2016) state that masculine honour has usually been thought to  
7 depend on the man's virility, martial valor, and willingness to defend his woman and social  
8 prerogatives with violence. Moreover, the authors suggest that "what really matters for male  
9 honour is performance, especially on the battlefield" (p.4), and that battles or other forms of  
10 violent encounters are frequently an occasion for men to flaunt their courage and martial  
11 excellence, often due to an audience of their peers being present to witness their display of  
12 masculine honour. This resonates with the work of Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009), who  
13 analysed the significance of honour with regard to lethal gun-related violence in Britain. With  
14 reference to Campbell's (1993) notion of hyper-aggressive forms of masculinity, the authors  
15 highlighted the term "on the road", which was often referred to by their interviewees to  
16 explain the importance of violence in the protection of their perceived masculinity.  
17 Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009) argue that "on the road":

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23 ...is a vision of purified masculinity where being 'hard' assumes master status. This is  
24 a masculinity where backing down in the face of honour and status threat is difficult  
25 and where the onus to retaliate in the face of provocation is imperative (p.367).  
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29 Developing this term "on the road" further, the authors suggest that street-level drug dealers  
30 or street robbers need to be "physically strong or intimidating and there is a 'business logic'  
31 to punishing those who steal from you" (p.371). Thus, street codes also represent ideas of  
32 honour, responsibilities and patterns of action that are necessary when particular events  
33 arise. These codes include the essentials of "never inform[ing] the police", "one must always  
34 be loyal to one's area and associates", and stressing the imperative of "righting physical  
35 attacks or verbal attacks with equivalent or superior force" (p.371).  
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38 In bringing this sub-section to a close, we refer to Polk (1994), who states that "not all males  
39 feel compelled to defend their reputation or status with such violence. Why it is that some  
40 males pursue violence to secure their reputation or status, while others avoid such  
41 challenges, is a major theoretical question that must guide future research" (p.188). Taking  
42 this into consideration, we seek to develop such theoretical understandings in relation to  
43 masculine honour, collective identity, and organised crime – namely to that of the HAMC.  
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## 47 48 **Methodology**

49 In regards to theoretical framework, we accept that there are various and often conflicting  
50 perspectives on the nexus between masculinity and violence. However, our methodological  
51 approach seeks to analyse the paradigms of *masculine honour* and *collective identity*, and  
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6 how the OMC applied this notion when executing the senseless murder of Gerry Tobin. So  
7 too, we triangulate these findings by critically analyzing the biography of the founding  
8 member of the Californian chapter of the HAMC – Sonny Barger. Further to this, a case  
9 study inevitably offers “constraints and opportunities” (Easton, 2010: p.119). One such  
10 constraint was being limited to secondary sources as a means of data collection. The  
11 primary justification for adopting this approach derives from the issue of validity in regards to  
12 offender narratives (Presser, 2009; Presser and Sandberg, 2015). Having said this, it is  
13 important to note that in recent times there have been several pioneering ethnographic  
14 studies on bikers gangs which display successful in-depth qualitative interviews with  
15 offenders (Wolf, 2008; Droban, 2017; Kuldova and Sanchez-Jankowski, 2018). Interestingly,  
16 all the ethnographers validate those that they have researched through cross referencing  
17 secondary information, of which includes; court transcripts, police records and media  
18 sources. |

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23 Given this, the use of only secondary sources was deemed less of a constraint and  
24 presented fewer pitfalls in the way of reliability and validity of data. The strength of a case  
25 study approach is that it offers scholars a variety of ways to examine new research areas in  
26 some depth (Eisenhardt, 1989). Despite the scepticisms that a case study approach often  
27 receives, Rowley (2002) argues that such a method may offer “insights that might not be  
28 achieved with other approaches” (p.16). Yin (1994) also notes that a case study approach is  
29 appropriate when the researcher has little or no control over the variables under  
30 investigation, in comparison to a laboratory experiment, for example, in which it is necessary  
31 to replicate the phenomenon under investigation.

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36 Case study approaches have also the advantage of being flexible about the types of data  
37 that they can employ. Within this case study, we were fortunate that both Gerry’s murder and  
38 Sonny Barger’s time in the Hell’s Angels have been much commented upon and written  
39 about in a range of sources. We also had access to books (both scholarly and ‘true crime’),  
40 and newspaper articles. Newspaper articles were collected via Nexis, a search engine,  
41 which houses all major British newspapers, including both national and regional titles  
42 (Yardley, Wilson, and Lynes, 2014).

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46 Indeed, it would be naïve to overlook concerns of research validity in relation to the use of  
47 true crime sources. So too, it is worth noting that much in-depth enquiry into homicide has  
48 stemmed from ‘true crime’ genre and investigative journalism (Clarkson, 2003, 2008;  
49 Thompson, 1996, 2011). Indeed, offender narratives in biographical formats offer an in-  
50 depth account of criminal careers, of which most academic work overlooks or fails to  
51 achieve. While texts like Barger *et al.* (2001) are often dismissed by academic

**Comment [MR8]:** R1: The methodology is missing citations. For example, the sentence on the validity of interviewing murderers requires a reference and further development, particularly as multiple scholars have successfully conducted qualitative interviews with convicted murderers/violent offenders. Not to mention the plethora of studies that have considered violent crime on the streets and by use of ethnographic methods – which should at least be mentioned within the methodology section.

Revision: Agreed – An acknowledgement has been provided about validity/qualitative research.

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6 criminologists, Durham *et al.* (1995) note: “the true crime genre is an important, yet  
7 understudied, aspect of popular representations of crime” (p.144). With this in mind, it  
8 should be highlighted that true crime accounts do risk muddying the waters somewhat  
9 through a range of misrepresentations of the crimes they purport to ‘reveal’. Such impact  
10 extends from general popular understandings to official narratives (Barkan and Bryjak,  
11 2013). However, the fact that they are able to offer a thorough biographical account of  
12 offending provides a *different* type of insight to critically explore within the case study model.  
13 To ensure validity was achieved throughout the course of this research, all criminal events  
14 discussed in true crime books were cross referenced with newspaper archives. We omitted  
15 any information that we felt was unreliable or which we could not verify. |

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20 The ‘coding’ program – Nvivo was used to facilitate all secondary data. Nvivo is an  
21 established computer assisted qualitative data analysis software designed for working with  
22 text or multimedia based information, where extensive analysis of small or large data  
23 volumes is required. The software operates based on ‘known attributes’ generated by the  
24 researcher (Bachman and Schutt, 2015). So too, once the quality of the secondary outputs  
25 were manually checked for academic validity, all datasets were inputted for *coding*. The  
26 codes that emerged from the dataset were; *masculinity, honour, violence, collective identity*.  
27 We accept that one of the limitations of using Nvivo is the potential to overlook information  
28 that may not register correctly with the software. Hence, we felt that coding all secondary  
29 manually after the electronic process would do no harm. We felt that the manual process  
30 would connect us more personally to our datasets, and invariably the field of study. Indeed,  
31 the manual process was immensely time consuming, however we benefitted from the  
32 process as certain codes that we established were missed when using Nvivo. |

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37 We consider this paper a critical think piece, and acknowledge the lack of academic  
38 information on violence, and fatal violence in regards to the HAMC and OMC gangs.  
39 Various sources (see, for example Richardson, 1991; Barker, 2007; Wolf, 2008) provide  
40 commentary on the invisibility of motorcycle gangs in mainstream society, their multiple  
41 layers of secrecy, their mythology, and their convention of misinformation. Hence, all of this  
42 invariably makes it problematic for any academic research about these criminal enterprises,  
43 and their offences. Indeed, the layers of secrecy and misinformation within the motorcycle  
44 underworld has resulted us to turn towards a case-study approach, with biographical  
45 understanding of violence. Indeed, there are many advantages of combining these  
46 methods, as stories and accounts of violence are central in many street cultures and have  
47 been shown to contribute to organising relationships and social networks (Anderson 1999;  
48 Bourgois, 2003). Sandberg *et al.* (2015) also advocate stories of violence, and state that  
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**Comment [MR9]:** I would question whether it is appropriate to draw on ‘true crime’ type books as a means of data. And if the author/s choose to do so far more discussion about the ways in which the information from these sources was analysed is necessary. For example, how did the author/s note bias? Were details checked? What method of analysis was used?  
I question the validity of the methodology for this research and I am unsure whether it is appropriate to triangulate media sources with ‘true crime’ stories as described by the authors/s.

Revisions: Agreed – A new paragraph has been inserted to address the above comments.

**Comment [MR10]:** R1: What method of analysis was used? There is no mention of how the authors collected the data or coded the data, nor is there any discussion of how the data was analysed.

Revisions: Agreed - A new paragraph has been inserted to address the above comments.

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6 they are particularly important in 'violence-prone' subcultures and among those partaking in  
7 the illegal economy. We begin by critically discussing the biographical account of Sonny  
8 Barger (2001) – entitled: *'Hell's Angels: The life and times of Sonny Barger and the Hell's*  
9 *Angels motorcycle club'* – and then theoretically explore role of masculine honour and how  
10 this can be applied to the murder of Gerry Tobin.  
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### 15 **Sonny Barger: The American Badass**

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17 Ralph 'Sonny' Barger Jr. was born in 1938, and spent his childhood and teenage years in  
18 California, USA. His father – Ralph Hubert Barger Sr., was a non-aggressive alcoholic who  
19 worked as a pavement layer. Barger Sr's work commitments meant that he was away from  
20 home for long periods, and it was only when Sonny was four months old that his mother –  
21 Kathryn Carmella left him and sister – Shirley Marie for a bus driver. Sonny describes his  
22 father as a "hardworking, hard-drinking functioning alcoholic" (Barger, Zimmerman and  
23 Zimmerman (2001: p.12); *all subsequent quotes in this section are taken from Barger and*  
24 *Zimmerman's*).  
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29 Sonny was discharged from the US Army after 14 months of service. However, this period  
30 was crucial for Sonny's future, as he enjoyed spending time with war veterans, who taught  
31 him to become a machine gunner and to appreciate motorcycles. Sonny's observations of  
32 bomber squadrons and military men forming tight fraternities post wars interested him to  
33 start up his own motorcycle movement. Of note, the concept of biker 'patches' emerged  
34 from military men, who would stitch patches to represent their identity on government-issue  
35 leather bomber jackets. He recalls that the term "Hell's Angels" "had been bouncing around  
36 the military as far back as World War I, when a fighter squadron first took on the name  
37 (p.28). Soon after, Sonny created the Oakland Hell's Angels chapter, and in 1958 he  
38 founded the HAMC became club president. A swift approach was taken by Sonny to enforce  
39 club rules and discipline, in which he notes that in order "to shore up our territory fast we  
40 made up tactical rules early on" (p.32).  
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45 Throughout the biography, Sonny alludes to the importance of how members of the HAMC  
46 are obliged to support fellow members under any circumstances: "The story of the Hell's  
47 Angels Motorcycle Club is the story of a very select brotherhood of men who will fight and  
48 die for each other, no matter what the cause" (p.67); "we stand up for ourselves and a Hell's  
49 Angel should never break and run" (p.146); "it's like a golden rule: when a Hell's Angel fights  
50 a citizen or a rival club member, everybody rat-packs to his side" (p.148). So too, Sonny  
51 proudly mentions how the "Hell's Angels love to fistfight" (p.87). Often, however, the  
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Oakland HAMC chapter would go on regional and national runs as a pack, which inevitably led to violent confrontations with rival gangs, which only helped gain nationwide notoriety. Sonny recalls how “everywhere the Hell’s Angels went we’d outdrink, out-fuck, and outfight everybody. People would take one look at us and step back” (p.141).

Here, it is important to note that the propensity of violence is what separates ‘patched’ bikers from mainstream bikers. Thus, the former is labelled as the ‘One-Percenters’, those that “engage in unconventional behaviour, often criminal behaviour” (Baker and Human, 2009: p.174). Quinn and Koch (2003) consider how status frustration and endless quest for power drives the 1%ers to “extreme in establishing and maintaining an image as dangerous, unpredictable, and outrageous” (p.286). Barker and Human (2009) further clarify that the One-Percenters are of “all one race, sex, or sexual orientation” (p.174). Indeed, the tension between intense allegiance and hierarchal control on the one hand, and the violent masculinity and the other, is perplexing to the ‘outsider’ (Becker, 1997). As Quinn and Koch (2003) observe, “loyalty to a national hierarchy reinforces deeply felt tribal solidarity and power” (p.289).

In 1977, the federal government put Sonny and several members of the HAMC on trial on Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) charges. The jury acquitted Barger on the RICO charges with a hung jury on the predicate acts: “There was no proof it was part of club policy, and as much as they tried, the government could not come up with any incriminating minutes from any of our meetings mentioning drugs and guns” (p.221). What the RICO case and other incidents that Sonny and the HAMC were involved in only reaffirms the collective identity of a ‘patched’ biker. They were all learning and testing times for the core values of the HAMC (Barker, 2007), and those who were unable to successfully accomplish this in the eyes of Sonny were: “disloyal, no-good chickenshit and not a true brother” (p.227).

For Sonny, maintaining a collective identity through honour and respect was imperative, and while his biography does not provide a sensational disclosure about the inner-life of the HAMC, by presenting a subjective view of the culture of the most notorious and world leading outlaw biker organisation, it provides a second opinion, that is credible to official and journalistic accounts that is worth taking note of.

### **Fallen Angel: The Murder of Gerry Tobin**

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6 The work of Canter (2003) considers “the significance of the place in which the deed is done  
7 is especially important for murder” (p.21). The nature of Gerry’s murder in the MC  
8 underworld is not foreign. In 2001, a small group of French-Canadian Hell’s Angels left the  
9 Bulldog Bash and were heading towards London on the southbound of the M40 motorway,  
10 which connects London and Birmingham. A dark coloured saloon followed the three-bike  
11 convoy, and a handgun appeared from the passenger window that fired several shots. One  
12 of the bikers was shot in the leg, but thankfully survived (Thompson, 2011). With little  
13 evidence and an uncooperative victim, the police wound down their investigation, and  
14 concluded that it was a motiveless attack that had no connections to the HAMC or the  
15 Bulldog Bash. Similarly, in 2006, Roger ‘Bear’ Mariani, a Connecticut based Hell’s Angel  
16 was assassinated on the highway I-95. Both incidents were studied by Simon Turner and  
17 Sean Creighton, who were patched OMC members from the South Warwickshire, England  
18 chapter.  
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24 Turner was a heavily tattooed OMC member who had a criminal record for violent practice.  
25 While Turner led the South Warwickshire chapter, he made Creighton his ‘Sergeant-at-  
26 Arms’. Both Turner and Creighton drew parallels with the 2001 M40 shooting, and the 2006  
27 I-95 shooting, and identified that no one had been arrested for both incidents. Meanwhile,  
28 Turner kept regularly kept up to date with international OMC affairs, and was infuriated when  
29 he found out that members of the US OMC were being killed by members of the HAMC.  
30 Turner’s motivation to kill was inspired by international events, which at the same time was  
31 encouraged by the National OMC President, Jack Rosga, who in 2007 gave OMC members  
32 the ‘green light’ to retaliate after an Outlaw was fatally shot outside a strip club in Georgia  
33 (Thompson, 2011). As far as Turner was concerned, the ruling applied to him and members  
34 of his South Warwickshire chapter.  
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39 With a motive to execute a hit, Turner recruited members from his chapter for various roles.  
40 Turner’s plans of a motorway assassination encompassed five OMC members, three  
41 vehicles, and a revolver handgun. The Crown’s case was that the murder was carefully  
42 planned, and a recognisance or “scouting” over three or four days was carried out before the  
43 killing (R. v Turner, 2010). On 12<sup>th</sup> August 2007, Hell’s Angels member Gerry Tobin, also a  
44 Harley Davidson mechanic, attended the annual “Bulldog Bash”, which had taken place at  
45 Long Marston, Airfield in Warwickshire (‘Armed guard as biker gang jailed’ *BBC News* 28  
46 November 2008). Later that afternoon, he was riding his motorcycle homewards towards  
47 London on the M40. At about 2.30pm, just south of junction 15 of the M40 motorway, a  
48 green Rover 420 pulled out of a lay-by. One of its occupants – Sean Creighton fired from a  
49 revolver at Gerry. Gerry was killed instantly. Another shot from the car was fired at the rear  
50 wheel of his motorcycle. The car was later torched. It was found by emergency services in a  
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6 remote part of Coventry, engulfed in flames ('The bloody biker', *The Independent*, 29  
7 November 2009).  
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10 While it can be accepted that the task of executing an assassination in the given  
11 circumstances would have been extremely difficult, it is important to acknowledge that the  
12 unfortunate success of the 'hit' was by no means luck. Indeed, during the investigation  
13 process, police recovered a 'dummy target' that was used by Creighton as target practice for  
14 Gerry's murder. So too, based on MacIntyre *et al's* (2014) typology, Creighton should be  
15 categorised as a "Journeyman" hitman. Here, we must also point out that some may argue  
16 that the hit committed against Gerry was executed successfully, and therefore makes the  
17 perpetrator a "master" hitman. However, Macintyre *et al.* (2014) argue that a master  
18 description can only be provided to those who avoid apprehension. Thompson (2011)  
19 discusses the difficulties during the investigation process of Gerry's murder and notes the  
20 unwillingness of HAMC member when cooperating with the police. It can be argued that  
21 members of the HAMC were reluctant to provide police with any information as it would  
22 violate their 'code' of interacting with law enforcement. This itself reveals the sophisticated  
23 and secret nature of the HAMC.  
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28 According to the Crown's case, much telling evidence was provided by vehicle index  
29 recognition technology, CCTV footage and mobile telephone cell site records. Creighton,  
30 Turner and Dane Garside were in the green Rover car. Garside was the driver and  
31 Creighton fired the fatal shot. The other applicants, Ian Cameron, Karl Garside and Dean  
32 Taylor lay in wait in a white Range Rover further along the motorway at junction 11 in case  
33 the first attempt failed. The last man, the co-defendant Malcolm Bull, was in another vehicle  
34 alone (R. v Turner, 2010). During November 2008, all the perpetrators received life  
35 imprisonments, with minimum tariffs ranging between 25 to 30 years.  
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#### 41 **Discussion**

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43 While the findings of this article considers the predisposition of rivalry based violence, it  
44 should not overshadow the fact that both the HAMC and OMC are some of the biggest  
45 transnational organised crime syndicates, who often operate in a rational manner akin to  
46 traditional organised crime groups (Hill, 1980). Both have successfully adopted the 'glocal'  
47 notion of organised criminality (Hobbs, 2013), and it is evident that a symbiotic relationship  
48 exists within the HAMC and the OMC, and the criminal enterprises that occur partially or  
49 wholly within it. By disconnecting from the legal and mainstream biker society, the welfare of  
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6 the HAMC and OMC depends on that of its members, and therefore such illicit endeavours  
7 are not discouraged by these fraternities.  
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10 Concurrently, influential leaders and bikers like Sonny Barger see their personal welfare as  
11 dependent upon their club's power, and therefore will assure that it is some distance from  
12 being recognised as a criminal enterprise. As aforementioned, due to club ethics, which  
13 centres on power, tribal and cultural honour, clubs like the HAMC will support their members,  
14 even if their acts bring trouble for the group. Their patches signify the likelihood of this type  
15 of behaviour, and the colours themselves are the pinnacle credentials of a biker. Like  
16 military strips, they are honoured with the utmost respect.  
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19 Organisations like the HAMC have set rules, which are influential for the development and  
20 lifestyle of a Hell's Angel. For instance, the rules created and enforced by Barger not only  
21 abetted the Hell's Angels to become a worldwide brand, but it has also influenced the notion  
22 of masculine honour. Masculine honour has traditionally focused upon cultural factors and  
23 influencers in order to assist in explaining why men from particular societies may express  
24 more overtly masculine qualities. Developing from masculine honour, here it is important to  
25 refer to the previously introduced concept of collective identity. For the HAMC and OMC, the  
26 sense of 'oneness' or 'we-ness' is exhibited no better than through acts of collective violent  
27 practice. Sonny Barger's militaristic approach to the HAMC in its early days created  
28 discipline and territorial penetration for the Hell's Angels, which invariably shaped  
29 brotherhood and cultivated violent masculine identities for his organisation. As Oliver (1994)  
30 observes, violent masculine identities are built around an exaggerated emphasis on  
31 toughness function as a substitute for when conventional notions of masculinity are  
32 unachievable. As discussed above, for Sonny and his comrades, violence within a collective  
33 capacity was a masculine method of responding to challenges and asserting dominance.  
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39 What is also interesting to note here is how women are viewed and incorporated into the  
40 HAMC organisation. For example, Stewart (2010) presents an examination into how women,  
41 specifically the wives and girlfriends of members, come to personify particular characteristics  
42 and traits often associated with male affiliates of the HAMC. It should be highlighted here  
43 that Stewart's examination into the women of the HAMC took place in 1965, a time when  
44 women were usually seen as compliant housewives (Stewart, 2010). The findings here are  
45 of interest when we consider the work of Bourgois (2003), in which the very idea of women  
46 moving away from traditional feminine roles were a source of a perceived crises for men,  
47 who in turn moved to a life of crime. Instead, such a crises does not seem to be present  
48 within the Hell's Angels, where women seem to be encouraged to join and partake in what  
49 can considered traditional masculine behaviours. What is also of interest, and one that  
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6 requires further examination beyond the scope of this study, is why certain organised crime  
7 groups appear to be more welcoming to female involvement. For example, Nayak (1999)  
8 found that white skinhead groups appear to represent a “violent consolidation of masculinity  
9 [and] sexuality” (cited in Ray, 2011: p.93), and, further to this, Hebdige (1987) argues that  
10 such groups intend to express what is referred to as a nostalgic exaggeration of traditional  
11 male roles. As noted by Albanese (2011), gender has, historically, played a small role in the  
12 examination of organised crime. Indeed, organised crime has been perceived as a  
13 masculine behaviour with women involved only for purposes of exploitation (for example,  
14 prostitution), or as silent supporters or followers of their husbands' or loved ones' criminal  
15 undertakings.  
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20 In relation to the concept of collective identity, it could be argued that like the male members  
21 of the HAMC who have come to reject mainstream masculine qualities, females associated  
22 with the organisation have also discarded traditional feminine attributes – with both the men  
23 of the HAMC and their partners contrasting their shared characteristics against actual or  
24 imagined sets of others associated with more mainstream or accepted characteristics related  
25 to gender. While there may be a shared collective identity between both the male members  
26 of the organisation and their respective partners, it is apparent that such collectivism is  
27 limited. For example, Katz (1988) determined that women still “exist as an annex to the  
28 male gang...and the possibilities open to them [are] dictated and controlled by the boys”  
29 (p.126).  
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33 What is clear within the *Outlaw Biker's* worldview is that it can only be a male dominant  
34 ideology, with no allowance for female interference (Wolf, 2008). Thus, Messerschmidt's  
35 (1993) notion of 'hegemonic masculinity' fits the male dominated subcultures of the HAMC  
36 and OMC, which therefore provides the clubs with 'exclusive' masculine identities (Wolf,  
37 2008). In regards to subcultural values, *Outlaw MC's* place high importance and value to  
38 those with mechanical skills, especially those within their own organisation (Bay, 1998;  
39 Quinn, 2001). While there is no direct quotation to illustrate this, it can be argued that  
40 Gerry's expertise in mechanics would have been respected and utilised by HAMC members,  
41 which therefore made him a viable asset for the HAMC. So too, the points above are  
42 combined with a strong emphasis on traditional masculinity, including being honourable,  
43 tough, strong, practical, independent and non-submissive (Wolf, 2008).  
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48 Similarly, to the work of Ayres and Treadwell (2011) on the deviant and criminal practices of  
49 English football firms, it can be argued that the HAMC's practices of 'outdrink[ing],  
50 outfuck[ing] and outfight[ing]' are all characteristics much needed to craft a subcultural form  
51 of masculinity, status, and collective identity. For *Outlaw* organisations like the HAMC and  
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**Comment [AL11]:** R1: Discussion to descriptive

Agreed – please see highlighted text where we develop this key point in relation to female involvement in the Hells angels



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6 OMC, retaliation is perceived as an alternative form of criminal justice that is compulsory to  
7 undertake to defend their status of honour and masculinity. This is further reinforced when  
8 we consider the work of Winlow (2012), who argues that “men [become] acutely aware of  
9 their close proximity to other men who are willing to use violence, and the cultural benefits  
10 and respect often afforded to these individuals” (cited in Ellis, 2016: 29). In other words, to  
11 not act antagonistically may produce a form of social stigmatisation, because “responding  
12 with toughness and strength becomes imbedded in the definition of being a man” (Gilbert  
13 and Andrews, 1998: p.266). The seven members of the OMC who executed the murder of  
14 Gerry, merely saw him as an ‘object’ that would enable them to defend and advance their  
15 ‘masculine honour’. Demetriou and Johnson (2016) state: “what really matters for male  
16 honour is performance, especially on the battlefield” (p.4). In the tragic case of Gerry, the kill  
17 zone was the M40 motorway, and this particular space and place should be considered of  
18 significant, as homicide researchers often neglect and overlook place, although according to  
19 Brolan, Wilson and Yardley (2016) in their study of hitmen and the spaces of spaces of  
20 contract killings, researchers “stand to benefit significantly from such a focus” (p.3). As  
21 aforementioned, the ‘hit’ was by no means chance or luck. The assassination was  
22 premeditated and executed by individuals who had previous serious criminal convictions and  
23 had previous experiences with firearms. It can be argued that there was an urgency from  
24 the OMC to follow the orders of Jack Rosga to execute retribution. As Lauger (2014) notes,  
25 if gang members fail “to follow the script without a reasonable excuse may cause one to be  
26 labeled as an imposter” (p.14). Thus, in the case of the OMC, this displays the failure of  
27 masculine honour, collective identity, which invariably can lead to intra-gang retribution.  
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### Recommendations for Future Work

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39 We believe that future research on motorcycle gangs in the UK can benefit from a larger  
40 data set, which could open the avenue of causal understanding of organised crime and fatal  
41 violence through a social network analysis. Due to the lack of scholarly work on motorcycle  
42 gangs within the United Kingdom, future research could also benefit from a wider  
43 geographical parameter. In doing so, the research would enable a better geopolitical  
44 understanding of social embeddedness in organised crime. So too, this would be  
45 advantageous theoretically, as there would be for instance, the scope for researchers to  
46 consider the ‘underexposed role of women’ in the motorcycle underworld.  
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### Conclusion

Comment [AL12]: R1. Wider engagement with literature

Agreed – added a reference from Winlow

Comment [MR13]: A new subsection has been inserted that focuses on recommendations for future work.

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This article has revealed the instinctive, tribal and cultural natures of the HAMC and OMC by exploring the importance of masculine honour and collective identity, and how these notions were pivotal for Gerry's murder. For Sonny Barger and the men that murdered Gerry, extreme violence in defence of honour is definitively a masculine affair, which ultimately becomes influential for one to elevate themselves and their peers within an asocial hierarchy.

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