

Disrupting organised crime in the UK: Tackling violence, intimidation and coercion

Michael Lewis, Daniel T. Beaumont, Rob Ewin

Interventions are increasingly being designed to disrupt ongoing criminal activity rather than identify crimes that have already been committed (Innes & Sheptycki, 2004). The emerging emphasis on disrupting organised criminal groups can be contrasted with older enforcement led approaches, which were resource intensive and limited in their success (Kirby & Nailer, 2013). *Rational choice theory* (Cornish & Clarke, 1986) assumes that individuals adopt a rational perspective when engaging in illicit activity and can therefore be diverted away if the cost of doing so outweighs the benefits. This holds some premise for the disruption of organised criminal groups, providing that the complexities of this phenomena are better understood. Organised criminal networks are heterogenous and operate at varying levels (Kirby & Nailer, 2013), engage with other known associates and diversify into different types of crime (Galeotti, 2005); making assessment of their strategies problematic. There is a common understanding, nevertheless, that criminal groups are ultimately driven by profit with violence, intimidation and coercion administered to further their criminal purpose and obstruct the policing response to them (Dean, Fahsing & Gottschalk, 2010; Stelfox, 1996). Yet, it is this behaviour that makes members of organised criminal groups visible and susceptible to intervention, thereby making disruption viable.

The chapter will expand on this approach, defining organised crime before identifying a number of multi-agency strategies adopted to tackle behaviours, such as violence, often thought to be a vessel for maximising criminal entrepreneurship. There will be a focus on organised crime manifesting in the United Kingdom (UK), solely making reference to other countries for comparison purposes.

Defining organised crime

Organised crime has received considerable attention in recent years as Governments have become increasingly aware of its scope, costs and dangers. Indeed, 'organised crime' as a phenomenon has been integrated into the vocabulary of politicians and the wider public, yet there remains no agreed reference point for which it can be defined while satisfying all parties (Woodiwiss & Hobbs, 2009). Definitions vary according to their sources, and although politicians and law enforcement are likely to delineate organised crime in a manner that is conducive to their operations and risk management, social scientists prefer a deeper, more theoretical basis for their analysis (Wright, 2006). The focus of the term appears to depend on

who is defining it and for what means (Sergi, 2016). Thus, achieving a unified definition of organised crime may, at present, prove challenging, and instead a review of the reoccurring themes within existing definitions is recommended.

The term 'organised crime' has readily been applied, albeit subjectively, to a certain type of more sophisticated, complex set of criminal activities embedded within a network of illicit markets. Activities are known to involve a plethora of financially-rewarding crimes, including firearms, drugs, child sexual exploitation (CSE), modern slavery and human trafficking, which are often 'enabled' through violence, corruption and intimidation (Albanese, 2008; Hauck & Peterke, 2010; Wright, 2006). However, restricting the definition of organised crime to a simple list of serious illegal activities does not provide any meaningful information on the 'organised' element of the crime, or the characteristics of the group that are initiating these activities. Such a view essentially depicts organised crime as an indicator of criminality, which is problematic as organised crime is heterogenous, dependent on context, persons involved, and the market within which it subscribes to; activities are therefore likely to vary across groups. Engagement in such activities does not automatically indicate involvement in organised criminality (Hauck & Peterke, 2010), and ignoring this would make organised crime impossible to measure, let alone respond to (Crocker, Webb, Garner, Skidmore, Gill & Graham, 2017).

Organised crime has also been conceptualised through the defining characteristics of the organisations themselves (Hagan, 2006), with groups falling into either a hierarchical or enterprise model. It is the former that has been associated with organisations, such as the Italian Mafia and Mexican drug cartels (Paoli, 2006), and recognised in Finckenauer's (2005) approach to organised crime. He listed eight analytic defining variables of organised crime, which included "lack of ideology, structure/organised hierarchy, continuity, violence/use of force or use of threat, restricted membership, illegal enterprises, penetration of legitimate businesses and corruption" (Longo, 2010, p. 17). According to Longo (2010), it is the hierarchical structure and continuity of the organisation that gives organised crime its collective identity. If specific individuals leave, or indeed are detained by law enforcement, they are simply replaced by others. This therefore enables organisations to continue and adapt to changes in the external environment, thus making disruption problematic. Organised criminality, much like legitimate businesses, have distinct enterprises such as those handling recruitment, cash flow, communications and the management of people (Wright, 2013). Law enforcement activity can fail where interventions only focus on specific elements of the

enterprise, or seek to detain only ‘high profile’ members without a focus on their wider business, recovery of criminally gained assets, and removal of money laundering capability.

The use of force, violence and intimidation have been considered as strategies to gain power and control territory, and have readily been associated with hierarchical organisations, such as the Italian Mafia. These strategies have been viewed as ‘anti-state’ activity that threaten national institutions, and as such, have been coined a political concern (Longo, 2010). Whilst some scholars believe that a hierarchical structure is necessary to exercise this ‘anti-state’ activity, others have suggested that a centralised structure is suffice, providing that any violence, as a form of territorial control, occurs solely at a sub-national level to avoid direct conflict with the state (e.g. Catanzaro, 1993, as cited in Longo, 2010).

Arguably, there has been an evolution in organised crime, with a shift from traditional definitions relating to structure towards ‘entrepreneurial crime’, which focuses on a financial or economic objective. Traditional forms of organised crime predominantly utilised power to protect specific interests whereas entrepreneurial crime is said to have transformed itself into the national economy, accumulating profit through the production of services and goods, and using violence and intimidation more so to sustain competitive advantage (Dean *et al.*, 2010; Longo, 2010). Smith (1975) conceptualised entrepreneurial crime as a response to a latent illicit demand that extended beyond the legal market. However, Paoli (2002) rejected this, claiming that definitions of organised crime cannot be narrowed down to the provision of illegal goods and services. She argued that illicit market dynamics were often unorganised, lacking rules, security and controls, and were therefore not conducive to organised crime. Instead, Paoli (2002) referred back to the traditional viewpoint, stating that there is more to organised crime than the illegal entrepreneurial activities, making reference to several non-economic roles, such as protection and the supplying of votes.

The enterprise model, nevertheless, was proposed in response to an increase in the effect of organised crime on member states of the European Union (EU, 1998; Smith, 1980). As such, a joint report of the European Commission and Europol was published in 2001 outlining a working definition of organised crime (Wright, 2006). This demarcates organised crime through eleven characteristics (Elvins, 2003, p. 34): “1). *Collaboration of more than two people*; 2). Each with own appointed tasks; 3). *For a prolonged or indefinite period of time*; 4). Using some form of discipline or control; 5). *Suspected of the commission of serious criminal offences*; 6). Operating at an international level; 7). Using violence or other means for intimidation; 8). Using commercial or business-like structures; 9) Engaged in money laundering; 10). Exerting influence on politics, the media, public administration, judicial

authorities or the economy; and 11). *Determined by the pursuit of profit and/or power*". Of these characteristics, six have to be identified, with the four in *italics* needing to be among the six for a case to be viewed as organised crime.

These characteristics place significant emphasis on the formation of structured links to allow for a range of criminal acts or exploitation that generate profit. Article 2 of the United Nations (UN) Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2004, p. 5) supported this view and defined an organised criminal group as: "A structured group of three or more persons, existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences... in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or material benefit". Thus, there are similarities between the EU and UN definitions of organised criminal groups, with organisational structure depicted as an important concept. This is not to say, however, that organisations adopt the same characteristics or structures, rather there are more subtle, implicit differences across groups that relate to function, and this facilitates a range of organised criminal activity.

Although organisational structure has long been associated with more traditional forms of organised crime, its importance seems to have extended to entrepreneurial crime, suggesting that the hierarchical and enterprise models are less distinct than initially thought. Adopting a social network analytical approach offers further insight into the structural systems underpinning organised criminal groups, and according to Mcillwain (1999), such organisations are underpinned by a social system comprising a multiplex set of relationships among individuals (and with other groups) whose overall aim is to provide illicit goods and services. These connections are stated to be fluid and interdependent, largely influenced by the context in which the organised criminal activity takes place (Longo, 2010). The provision of services by organised crime groups should not be underestimated as many current forms involve human trafficking as a key element to service the sex, agricultural, drug production, domestic and beauty demands of western cultures (Aronowitz, 2001; FitzGerald, 2012).

It becomes apparent that there is little consensus on the meaning of the term 'organised crime'. Whilst conceptualisations share common features, there are also differences, and it is arguably these differences that further convey organised crime as a heterogeneous construct. Definitions of organised crime should not be abandoned, rather they are to be viewed as a foundation for continual dialogue between academics and practitioners where theoretical understandings can be merged with worked experience. It is this relationship that will aid the generation of vital knowledge aimed at improving the effectiveness of counter-organised crime policies, and the consequent disruption of organised criminal groups (Longo, 2010).

However, there are notable limitations with the aforementioned definitions in that organised crime has been conceptualised in such a manner to facilitate both law-enforcement and political interest, and as such, there are theoretical features or characteristics that have likely been omitted. Definitions, such as the enterprise model, provide a focus for the policing of organised crime so as to avoid an ineffective use of resources. The inclusion of illicit activities, whilst fitting with modern criminal law (i.e. individuals are punished for what they do, not what they belong to), also supports the detection of organised crime, which only tends to become apparent during further investigation (Hauck & Peterke, 2010). Attending to illicit activities, such as violence, somewhat increases the visibility of organised criminal networks and may prove to be one method of identifying and deterring such groups. Yet, this method of detection is by no means straightforward and challenges remain, which are highlighted in the ensuing section.

Organised crime and gang violence

The National Crime Agency (NCA), formally known as the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) until October 2013, is responsible for tackling organised crime at a national and international level in England and Wales. Their policing model is mostly consistent with the enterprise model and views organised crime as a set of varying illicit activities committed by a group. The emphasis on criminal activities as a defining feature distinguishes organised crime in England and Wales from that occurring in other countries, such as Italy, which Sergi (2015) associates more with the hierarchical (structural) model. There are also deviations from the enterprise model, albeit to a lesser extent, in that organised crime in England and Wales is linked to gang-related activity, such as violence (Hobbs, 2013), which on the surface does not necessary fit with the model's entrepreneurial focus. The English conceptualisation of organised crime as local gang-style enterprises has thus been disputed (e.g. Klein, Maxson & Cunningham, 1991). However, there is now general acceptance that it is the 'seriousness' of the criminal activity that differentiates local gangs from established organised criminal groups, with the latter associated more with increased bouts of severe activity (Home Office, 2014), which, unsurprisingly, is likely to result in disproportionate harm (Kirby, Francis, Humphreys & Soothill, 2016). Both groups, nevertheless, are reported to be rooted in their local territories and linked to drugs and violence manifesting at street-level (Sergi, 2015).

As such, violence, intimidation and coercion have readily been associated with both street gangs and organised criminal groups (e.g. Decker & Curry, 2000; Ratcliffe, 2016). Reference to violence in this instance, however, does not involve that which manifests on an

individual basis for personal gain, rather it relates to violence occurring in the context of membership specific to the gang or organised criminal group. There is much debate as to whether street gangs evolve into criminal business organisations, with scholars proposing that gangs may form, but not necessarily reach the highest developmental stage and commit more serious offences for profit (Densley & Harding, 2018; Pitts, 2019). It is at the highest level where gangs are said to shift from the recreational and criminal stages to financial goal orientation. Yet, this mutation is likely to be determined by the opportunities available, pre-existing forms of criminality in the area, gang member attributes and local enforcement (Pitts, 2019). In areas of weaker local enforcement, with criminality unfamiliar to the Policing control there are distinct opportunities for organised criminality; for example, the current trajectory of county lines drug supply chains and cuckooing. In these instances, law enforcement has to learn of the criminality, its context and boundaries, and then respond. This can be time consuming. Evolutionary trajectories may therefore differ across gangs, resulting in varying levels of organisation and commitment to instrumental goals.

Regardless of level or sophistication, violence, intimidation and coercion are prevalent in gang life. Wright (2006), however, makes a distinction between tactical and strategic forms of violence, noting the latter to be utilised both directly and indirectly by well-established crime groups. Strategic violence is adopted to fulfil longer-term goals, which may directly relate to growth, survival, and the need to protect the organisation from competitors or law-enforcement. This may also occur indirectly, for example, where adults belonging to an established organised crime group mentor younger members through the business-like restructuring of street gangs, thus resulting in entrepreneurial expansion to rural and coastal areas; formally known as county lines (Hesketh & Robinson, 2019). The emergence of county lines over the past six years has resulted in a dramatic rise in violence, specifically knife crime, due to street gangs attempting to protect their territory and enhance market growth (usually for the supply of drugs). The involvement of children and young people as vulnerable gang members also raises issues surrounding criminal exploitation (Pitts, 2019), and therefore becomes a safeguarding concern requiring a proactive policing response.

Violence, intimidation and coercion occurring at a more tactical level focuses on achieving short-term goals, such as encouraging legitimate businesses to part with money or provide a service (Wright, 2006). In some instances there is little need for tactical violence, and instead, the reputation of the organised criminal group is sufficient to coerce others to succumb to their demands and/or deter local citizens from providing valuable intelligence to the police (Crocker *et al.*, 2017). As such, coercion in this respect may be viewed as an

instrumental form of illegitimate power (Wright, 2006), and to some extent resembles the traditional characteristics of mafia-like organised crime. It is this power that also enables the more sophisticated organised criminal groups to become less visible as the ‘players’ at the top, whose reputation has established them as influential, instruct younger individuals to execute duties on their behalf. Areas where legitimate employment opportunities are rare become an attractive hunting ground for organised criminal groups to enlist vulnerable adults or young people. A case study of a London borough found that established organised criminals, commonly identified as older foreign nationals (usually over the age of 26 years; NCA, 2015) partaking in more serious crime for a sustained period of time (Francis, Humphreys, Kirby & Soothill, 2013), to have coerced local youths into conducting retail-level drug dealing activities, in some instances using intimidation to force them (Hales & Hobbs, 2010).

Drug markets, such as those observed with county lines, are linked to a high prevalence of violence, or threat of violence, which is usually administered to enforce the payment of drug debts, disrupt local drug markets, sanction informants and resolve competition (Hesketh & Robinson, 2019; Lupton, Wilson, May, Warburton & Turnbull, 2002). This approach to business is known to circumvent further bouts of violence, often in retaliation; thus exacerbating the problem and causing significant damage to an area’s reputation. Whilst some residents may be too intimidated to report the occurrences, others may feel compelled to take action in an attempt to protect their community (Crocker *et al.*, 2017; Lupton *et al.*, 2002). However, the recruitment of local youths to facilitate the dealing of drugs works well here in diverting police attention from the activities of the key ‘players’ within the organised group (Stelfox, 1996). Local law enforcement may respond to smaller sub-elements of the organisation, depending on resource availability, and simply offer intelligence to the wider policing community which may not serve longer-term interests or tackle other elements of the criminal business. There may become an intense policing response to victims, which may require more resources, diverting further attention from the core crime business.

Despite conflicting views (e.g. Sergi, 2015), this approach tentatively conveys a role for the hierarchical model within organised crime in England and Wales; although, networks seem to be dynamic and less formal (Levi, 2003) in comparison to those associated with more traditional mafia-type organisations. The pursuit of profit also continues to support the application of the entrepreneurial model. Indeed, the presence of overlapping hierarchical and entrepreneurial features suggest that the configuration of an organised criminal group is fluid, dependent on context and desired outcome. One would assume that this flexibility also allows for diversification when there is a need to evade police detection, form new alliances and extend

geographical scope (Galeotti, 2005). Pitts (2019) provides an example of the well organised Beaumont gang in Waltham Forest who were ‘going county’ (a reference to county lines), recruiting younger people via mobile communication to traffic and sell drugs in the South East and South West of England, and South Wales. They were also found ‘cuckooing’ homes (i.e. the use of violence and abuse to target the homes of others and use them as bases for drug dealing) belonging to vulnerable adults in Waltham Forest, turning them into ‘crack houses’. When police intervened, the gang diversified into the robbery of high value motor vehicles.

Conceptually and operationally, organised crime is becoming more complex. The ability to diversify into a range of legitimate and illicit activities gives rise to challenges when establishing associated harms, in turn making it difficult to prioritise crimes and offenders (Kirby, 2013). In the ‘absence of law’ (i.e. “the actual or perceived inability of the police to counter the threat posed”; Pitts, 2019, p. 69), individuals are becoming increasingly anxious and assume responsibility for managing risk themselves. This method of informal social control is known to result in an escalation of violence, and maintains a perceived lack of both protection and police legitimacy (Pitts, 2019; Wilson, 2012). However, authorities are attempting to combat this view, requesting that communities report suspicious activity; yet, those at most risk are arguably hard to reach and intelligence is often poor, thus limiting the effectiveness of detection at a local level (Crocker *et al.*, 2017).

In a recent study, Kirby, McManus and Boulton (2018) emphasised the challenges of policing hostile environments. Individuals residing in areas associated with higher concentrations of organised criminal groups were found to perceive their neighbours as less likely to intervene in scenarios relevant to organised crime (e.g. drug dealing). However, there was subtle disparity between these areas, which suggests that communities interpret and respond to incidents in different ways and would therefore benefit from tailored community engagement programmes. Low levels of collective efficacy consistently reported by those living in areas where organised criminal groups proliferate was also a particular concern (Kirby *et al.*, 2018), and interventions should arguably focus on improving resilience through fostering trust, social integration and motivation among residents. Consistent with the *broken windows theory* (Wilson & Kelling, 1982), communities that are able to work together and involve the police are likely to prevent low-level crime escalating into more serious forms. Indeed, with regards to organised crime, this level of severity has already been reached and instead there should be an emphasis on encouraging community support, where residents feel collectively able to provide intelligence without fear of retribution.

The complexities outlined so far arguably warrant further attention. The presence of organised criminal groups within local areas are noted to impinge on community confidence, and indeed, increase opportunities for impressionable youths to be drawn into abnormal patterns of criminality. Low levels of collective efficacy act as a barrier to disruption strategies, where a lack of informal community policing inhibits the sharing of information and perpetuates a culture that favours little contact with law enforcement. An innovative, tangible and urgent intervention is thus warranted that considers societal, cultural and environmental factors, and supports the development of more resilient and cooperative communities that proactively help to deter and disrupt organised crime. This moves the chapter on to explore the role of policing in organised crime, specifically in terms of ‘disruption’.

Policing organised crime: A shift towards disruption

Defining organised crime is complex and resultantly gives rise to challenges for law-enforcement when developing proactive strategies surrounding detection, disruption and investigation (Coyne & Bell, 2011). It is their inherent flexibility that provides organised criminal groups the ability to identify risks and opportunities for exploitation at a pace that exceeds law enforcement response. The processing of criminal technology, recording of witness statements, interviewing of suspects, obtaining of any necessary expert testimony, all add to the complexity of policing organised criminality. This has led to agencies having to consider alternative policing approaches to tackle this growing national and international concern. With some law enforcement agencies preferring surveillance, remote technology, and the use of informants to enable them substantial intelligence and evidential material. These resources are more complex to administer, offer higher risk, and can be politically sensitive.

At present, particularly at a local level, the response to organised crime in England and Wales is governed by the police and their partners. Although not a strict requirement, it is recommended that individual police forces, of which there are 44 in England and Wales, including the British Transport Police, produce profiles of organised crime within their geographical jurisdiction and develop a plan based on CONTEST (i.e. Pursue, Protect, Prevent and Prepare), the UK’s counter-terrorism strategy (Crocker *et al.*, 2017). Policing organised crime in this manner conveys it as a national security threat similar to that of terrorism. Whilst organised crime and terrorism have distinctly different characteristics and motives, they are both sociologically classified as specific forms of group crime (Zubrzycki, 2015), and as such, applying a counter-terrorism initiative may aid interventions in dealing with organised crime, specifically when aiming to reduce harm. Kirby (2013) indicates that prevention is central to

the policing of terrorism and the investigative process therefore revolves around the ability to understand who the terrorists are and how they function within and as a group. He further notes that there are several means of preventing terrorist incidents, which include the arrest or deportation of the offender and target hardening (i.e. increasing the difficulty to execute an act of terrorism through removing facilitating mechanisms, such as funding and personal contacts). In applying this approach to organised crime, Kirby (2013) conveys the importance of first understanding the parts forming the criminal process and then using this information to prevent it from happening by disrupting criminal networks and plans.

Thus, disruption and prevention appear to be key concepts when tackling organised crime. Although prevention focuses on the crime itself and explores methods of removing the opportunity for this to occur, it is disruption that takes action to manage the risks that stem from the social domain (Wright, 2006); that is, the offender's network, lifestyle and routine, which are all important for the growth of the organised criminal group. Disruption has been described as a "more flexible, transitory and dynamic tactic that can be used more generally to make the environment hostile for the organised crime" (Kirby, 2013, p. 160), and concentrates predominantly on the offender. Yet, as highlighted, organised criminal groups consist of members with varying seniority and capability; all of whom collectively exhibit a range of legitimate and illegitimate activities. Certain members of the criminal group may be more visible than others, which provides an additional obstacle to overcome. Consider the Beaumont gang for instance, the more established members are likely to be hidden and protected whilst the younger recruits are exposed, trafficking and selling drugs at street-level. These extra layers enhance the complexity of the response required, and consequently, a tailored intervention is warranted that considers offence type(s), offender characteristics and the context within which crimes are being committed (Kirby & Snow, 2016).

According to Bright and colleagues (2017), law enforcement strategies may be able to disrupt and dismantle organised criminal networks by attending to social (i.e. connections between key members in the group) and human capital (i.e. key members with specific attributes or skills that facilitate the group's goals). Strategies which endeavour to remove key members with high social capital aim to fragment the organised network. The removal of members with high human capital, however, targets functioning (e.g. the illicit production of substances; Robins, 2009). Disruption strategies that focus on social and human capital have been found to be more effective than opportunistic law enforcement methods, such as 'stop and search' (Bright *et al.*, 2017). It is the latter, nevertheless, that may prove useful for targeting recruits working at street-level.

Interventions that focus on more integral members of an organised criminal group are likely to encounter challenges relating to network characteristics. To overcome these, Duxbury and Haynie (2019) emphasise the importance of recognising criminal network resilience when developing disruption strategies. They state that organised groups who prioritise security and limit their visibility through minimising connections are likely to be more robust to disruption than groups who are more efficient, involving highly connected members responsible for relaying tasks and information. It is the security-orientated networks, however, that take longer to recover following disruption due to the smaller pool of eligible replacements (Duxbury & Haynie, 2019). Following disruption, organised criminal networks are likely to reflect on vulnerabilities and reshape their structure to prevent further damage (Morselli, 2009). Interventions should therefore be flexible in their approach whilst also being aligned to the type of criminal network. Intelligence becomes crucial when tailoring such interventions, as does obtaining information from those who have disengaged from involvement in organised crime (Douglas & Smith, 2018).

As noted, knowledge obtained through intelligence-led approaches, can be used to develop and inform disruption strategies. Through intelligence, the NCA for example, is able to make an assessment of threat that can then be used to inform policing strategies more locally (Sergi, 2015). However, this so-called “golden-thread” of policing (Home Office, 2010, p. 23) has received considerable criticism, with law enforcement agencies accused of focusing on what is already known, using recorded and investigated criminal activity to subsequently predict what is not known (Ratcliffe, 2008). There is a demand to move away from this predictive methodology to gathering intelligence that is anticipative and accounts for broader factors, such as environment and type of criminal network, which are central to understanding how organised criminal groups operate (Coynne & Bell, 2011). Reverting back to the onus on the offenders themselves, Verfaillie and Beken (2008) reflect on the importance of detecting rather than targeting, identifying opportunities from the criminal perspective so as to allow for new intelligence to be obtained. Revisiting the Protect and Prevent strands of the UK counter-terrorism strategy may assist with this, extending covert and overt surveillance to also include the monitoring of vulnerable groups who are deemed at risk of being recruited by organised criminal networks (Crocker *et al.*, 2017). Focusing solely on historic information is likely to limit disruption strategies by solely attending to known suspects and old ways of working, neglecting the notion of organised criminal activity as an evolving and resilient construct, and indeed, the harm suffered by communities and businesses through which groups operate (Innes & Sheptycki, 2004).

Intelligence-led disruption strategies place significant emphasis on joint working, where there is an expectation that law enforcement agencies share information to aid the detection of organised crime. However for this to be effective, Crocker *et al.* (2017) call for clearer guidance on individual roles and responsibilities to avoid confusion or overlap across agencies when collecting information, which has historically proven difficult to implement (Leong, 2007). Rather, there was a preference for an enforcement-orientated approach whereby organised criminals were prosecuted. Whilst this method is still used today, it tends to only be implemented for lower level offences (e.g. Kirby & Snow, 2016), simply due to the estimated number of active offenders being far greater than those facing prosecution at any one time. It has therefore been deemed an inefficient and unsustainable use of police resources, especially as many organised criminals will continue to operate and exploit others whilst in prison.

As such, there has been a shift from prosecution to the reduction of organised crime, with disruption strategies becoming central to this. There are an increasing number of proposals conveying disruption as an effective intervention for tackling organised crime, yet few have received empirical attention (Kirby & Nailer, 2013). Rather, it would appear that such suggestions are based on ‘gut instinct’ or anecdotal evidence. Kirby and Snow (2016), however, sought to systematically analyse organised crime disruption and investigated the manner in which English police forces tackled 15 organised criminal groups, which comprised a total of 99 individuals. One hundred and sixty-one interventions were identified, ranging from one to twenty-nine for each organised criminal group. For analysis purposes, Kirby and Snow (2016) categorised the interventions into five broad themes, which were as follows: 1). Policing behaviours; 2). Specific investigative activity (e.g. search warrants); 3). The use of the Criminal Justice System (e.g. prosecution of low level offending); 4). The control of assets (e.g. the repossession of property); and 5). Activity that controls or modifies the behaviour of the suspect.

In this instance, ‘policing behaviours’ refer to activities that explicitly make suspects aware that they are being targeted. Despite fear of inducing displacement (i.e. crime directed from one target to another, or to a new location, due to the removal of an opportunity for crime or seeking to prevent it; Clarke, 2012), similar deterrence strategies have been adopted in the United States (US) with promising results (e.g. Braga, Weisburd & Turchan, 2018). Legal options for prevention also exist with the creation of preventative orders such as the Slavery and Trafficking Risk Orders (STRO, Pt 2 The Modern Slavery Act 2015) designed to create criminal sanctions based on cumulative evidence and perceived risk. Based on *rational choice theory*, which posits that crime is likely to be prevented when offenders perceive costs to

outweigh the benefits (Cornish & Clarke, 1986), focussed deterrence strategies adopt a multi-agency approach to communicate incentives and disincentives to targeted gang members (Kennedy, 2008) whilst also enhancing procedural justice and police legitimacy. Explicit messages are conveyed directly to gangs, informing them that any use of violence will be met with a rapid and severe policing response (Braga & Weisburd, 2012). At the same time, an emphasis is also placed on the benefits of non-violent behaviour to encourage a change in offender perception.

This approach alone is unlikely to disrupt organised crime as group members may purposely reduce their criminal activity during active interventions to avoid detection (especially those networks who are conscious of security). Other proactive crime prevention mechanisms are therefore expected to be at play to assist with this process. Yet, the diverse array of disruption techniques highlighted by Kirby and Snow (2016) arguably go some way to tackle organised crime as a heterogenous construct and block opportunities to sustain illicit activities across contexts; thus, increasing the perceived cost of committing crime. It is important at this stage to also recognise that police agencies operating at a local, national or international level have varying levels of resources, and as such, their response to organised crime is determined by both capacity and capability. Identifying the most appropriate disruption strategy would help with resource allocation, but research in this area remains limited due to methodological and ethical concerns; concerns that view the disruption process as intrusive and manipulative, and difficult to evaluate due to a lack of predetermined outcome variables. This section therefore concludes with a recommendation that academics and practitioners work together to consider an alternative means of ethically determining the effectiveness of specific disruption strategies when tackling organised crime.

Conclusion

Organised crime as a theoretical and operational entity is becoming more complex and thus requires a policing response that focuses on organised networks at varying levels and across contexts. There needs to be an emphasis on intelligence-led approaches that predict developments in organised crime rather than relying on known information as a means of detection. Proactively identifying those vulnerable to exploitation may prove valuable in disrupting gang-related enterprises in England and Wales, with a partnership approach between law enforcement and community agencies further strengthening this. A range of disruption strategies have been found to be useful in deterring organised crime, and indeed violence and intimidation, beyond resource-intensive enforcement methods. However, further empirical

investigation is required to more effectively align disruption strategies with organised crime, and in doing so, tailoring interventions to account for varying offender characteristics, offence types, and the context within which organised networks are functioning.

References

- Albanese, J. S. (2008). Risk assessment in organized crime: Developing a market and product-based model to determine threat levels. *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 24, 263-273.
- Aronowitz, A. A. (2001). Smuggling and trafficking in human beings: the phenomenon, the markets that drive it and the organisations that promote it. *European journal on criminal policy and research*, 9(2), 163-195.
- Braga, A. A., & Weisburd, D. L. (2012). The effects of focussed deterrence strategies on crime: A systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49, 323-358.
- Braga, A. A., Weisburd, D. L., & Turchan, B. (2018). Focussed deterrence strategies and crime control: An updated systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical evidence. *Criminology and Public Policy*, 17, 205-250.
- Bright, D., Greenhill, C., Britz, T., Ritter, A., & Morselli, C. (2017). Criminal network vulnerabilities and adaptations. *Global Crime*, 18, 424-441.
- Clarke, R. V. (2012). Opportunity makes the thief. Really? And so what? *Crime Science*, 1, 1-9.
- Cornish, D. B., & Clarke, R. V. (1986). *The reasoning criminal: Rational Choice perspectives on offending*. New York: Springer.
- Coyne, J. W., & Bell, P. (2011). The role of strategic intelligence in anticipating transnational organised crime: A literary review. *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 39, 60-78.
- Crocker, R., Webb, S., Skidmore, M., Gill, M., & Graham, J. (2017). *The impact of organised crime in local communities*. Surrey: Police Federation of England and Wales.
- Dean, G., Fahsing, I., & Gottschalk, P. (2010). *Organised crime: Policing illegal business entrepreneurialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Decker, S. H., & Curry, G. D. (2000). Responding to gangs: Comparing gang member, police and task force perspectives. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 28, 129-137.
- Densley, J., & Harding, S. (2018). *Gangs in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice.

- Douglas, K., & Smith, R. G. (2018). Disengagement from involvement in organised crime: Processes and risks. *Trends and Issues in Crime and Criminal Justice*, 1-15.
- Duxbury, S. W., & Haynie, D. L. (2019). Criminal network security: An agent-based approach to evaluating network resilience. *Criminology*, 57, 314-342.
- Elvins, M. (2003). Europe's response to transnational organised crime. In A. Edwards, & P. Gill (Eds.), *Transnational organised crime: Perspectives on global security* (pp. 28-41). London: Routledge.
- European Union. (1998). *Article 1 of the joint action of the Justice and Home Affairs Council to create a criminal offence to participate in a criminal organisation*. Brussels: European Union, Council of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers.
- Finckenauer, J. O. (2005). Problems of definition: What is organised crime? *Trends in Organized Crime*, 8, 63-83.
- FitzGerald, S. A. (2012). Vulnerable bodies, vulnerable borders: Extraterritoriality and human trafficking. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 20(3), 227-244.
- Francis, B., Humphreys, L., Kirby, S., & Soothill, K. (2013). *Understanding criminal careers in organised crime*. Crime Research and Analysis, 64. London: Home Office.
- Galeotti, M. (2005). *Global crime today: the changing face of organised crime*. London: Routledge.
- Hagan, F. E. (2006). "Organized Crime" and "organized crime": Indeterminate problems of definition. *Trends in Organized crime*, 9, 127-137.
- Hales, G., & Hobbs, D. (2010). Drug markets in the community: A London borough case study. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 13, 13-30.
- Hauck, P., & Peterke, S. (2010). Organized crime and gang violence in national and international law. *International Review of the Red Cross*, 92, 407-436.
- Hesketh, R. F., & Robinson, G. (2019). Grafting: "The boyz" just doing business? Deviant entrepreneurship in street gangs. *Safer Communities*, 18, 54-63.
- Hobbs, D. (2013). *Lush life: Constructing organised crime in the UK*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Home Office. (2010). *Policing in the 21st century: Reconnecting police and the people*. London: The Stationary Office.
- Home Office. (2014). *Serious and organised crime local profiles: A guide*. London: The Stationary Office.

- Innes, M., & Sheptucki, J. W. E. (2004). From detection to disruption: Intelligence and the changing logic of police crime control in the United Kingdom. *Interpersonal Criminal Justice Review, 14*, 1-24.
- Kennedy, D. M. (2008). *Deterrence and crime prevention: Reconsidering the prospect of sanction*. London: Routledge.
- Kirby, S. (2013). *Effective policing? Implementation in theory and practice*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Kirby, S., Francis, B., Humphreys, L., & Soothill, K. (2016). Using the UK general offender database as a means to measure and analyse organized crime. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management, 39*, 78-94.
- Kirby, S., McManus, M., & Boulton, L. (2018). Examining the demographic profile and attitudes of citizens, in areas where organized crime groups proliferate. *Trends in Organized Crime, 21*, 172-188.
- Kirby, S., & Nailor, L. (2013). Reducing the offending of a UK organized crime group using an opportunity reducing framework: A three year case study. *Trends in Organized Crime, 16*, 397-412.
- Kirby, S., & Snow, N. (2016). Praxis and the disruption of organized crime groups. *Trends in Organized Crime, 19*, 111-124.
- Klein, M., Maxson, C., & Cunningham, L. (1991). "Crack", street gangs and violence. *Criminology, 31*, 623-650.
- Leong, A. V. M. (2007). *The disruption of international organised crime: An analysis of legal and non-legal strategies*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing.
- Levi, M. (2003). The organization of serious crimes. In M. Maguire, R. Morgan, & R. Reiner (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of criminology* (pp. 878-913). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Longo, F. (2010). Discoursing organized crime: Towards a two-level analysis. In F. Allum, F. Longo, D. Irrera, & P. A. Kostakos (Eds.), *Defining and defying organised crime: Discourse, perceptions and reality* (pp. 15-28). Abingdon: Routledge.
- Lupton, R., Wilson, A., May, T., Warburton, H., & Turnbull, P. J. (2002). *A rock and a hard place: Drug markets in deprived neighbourhoods*. London: Home Office.
- Mcillwain, J. S. (1999). Organized crime: A social network approach. *Crime, Law and Social Change, 32*, 301-323.
- Morselli, C. (2009). *Inside criminal networks*. New York: Springer.

- National Crime Agency. (2015). *National strategic assessment of serious and organised crime 2015*. London: NCA.
- Paoli, L. (2002). The paradoxes of organised crime. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 37, 51-97.
- Pitts, J. (2019). The evolution of the English street gang. *Safer Communities*, 18, 64-78.
- Ratcliffe, J. H. (2008). *Intelligence-led policing*. Oxfordshire, Willan Publishing.
- Ratcliffe, J. H. (2016). Central American police perception of street gang characteristics. *Policing and Society*, 26, 291-311.
- Robins, G. (2009). Understanding individual behaviors within covert networks: The interplay of individual qualities, psychological predispositions, and network effects. *Trends in Organized Crime*, 12, 166-187.
- Sergi, A. (2015). Divergent mind-sets, convergent policies: Policing models against organized crime in Italy and in England with international frameworks. *European Journal of Criminology*, 12, 658-680.
- Sergi, A. (2016). National security vs criminal law: Perspectives, doubts and concerns on the criminalisation of organised crime in England and Wales. *European Journal on Criminal Policy and Research*, 22, 713-729.
- Smith, D. C. (1975). *The Mafia mystique*. New York: Basic Books.
- Smith, D. C. (1980). Paragons, pariahs and pirates: A spectrum-based theory of enterprise. *Crime and Delinquency*, 26, 358-386.
- Stelfox, P. (1998). Policing lower levels of organised crime in England and Wales. *The Howard Journal*, 37, 393-406.
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2004). *Article 2: United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized crime*. New York: United Nations.
- Verfaillie, K., & Beken, T. (2008). Proactive policing and the assessment of organised crime. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, 31, 534-552.
- Wilson, W. J. (2012). *The truly disadvantaged: The inner city, the underclass, and public policy* (2nd ed.). Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Wilson, J. W., & Kelling, G. L. (1982). Broken windows: The police and neighbourhood safety. *Atlantic Monthly*, 249, 29-38.
- Woodiwiss, M., & Hobbs, D. (2009). Organized evil and the Atlantic alliance: Moral panics and the rhetoric of organized crime policing in America and Britain. *British Journal of Criminology*, 49, 106-128.
- Wright, A. (2006). *Organised crime*. Abingdon: Willian.

Wright, A. (2013). *Organised crime*. Willan.

Zubrzycki, W. (2015). Similarities and differences between organized crime and terrorism.
International Security, 7, 53-70.