

Using a prevention and disruption model to tackle a UK Organised Crime Group.

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Structured Abstract:**Purpose**

Although the capability and proliferation of organised crime groups (OCG's), can overwhelm the finite resources of policing agencies, responses often rely on enforcement led approaches that are resource intensive and limited in effectiveness. More recently disruptive and preventative approaches (associated with volume crime), have been promoted, although the detail often remains ambiguous. This paper provides a case study of an innovative disruption approach, implemented by a police force situated in the North of England, against an OCG.

Design

The multi-agency disruption tactics, identified in the project, were categorised using the five themes highlighted by Cornish & Clarke (1986) in their paper on Rational Choice Theory. The impact generated by the interventions was evaluated by comparing criminal conviction data and police intelligence prior to the police operation commencing with similar data two years after this date. This data was supported by semi-structured interviews with seven police officers (including patrol, detective, middle and senior ranking officers), three members of external public sector organisations and five members of the local community where the OCG resided.

Findings

The study shows the approach was effective in both reducing the threat of the OCG as well as generating support from police practitioners, partner agencies and community members.

Practical implications

The evaluation showed the disruption operation was successful in both limiting the capability and capacity of the OCG. As it was delivered with no increased resources it provides a viable and cost effective method of reducing the threat caused by organised crime and increasing confidence in the police. It is argued, in theory, this approach can be transferred to any police agency across the world.

Originality

Case studies in relation to the prevention and disruption of organized crime are rare

Keywords: organized crime, organized crime groups, disruption, prevention.

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Running Heads:

INTRODUCTION

Castels (1996, 1998) argues organised criminal groups (OCGs) have seized the commercial, political and social opportunities caused by late modernity. An increasingly mobile and interconnected world (both physical and virtual), has created criminogenic possibilities from which illegal entrepreneurialism can prosper. Indeed organized crime is viewed as an insidious global phenomenon, a powerful economic force engaged with the illicit transnational movement of people, commodities, and services (Kirby & Penna, 2011). Although the detail of what constitutes organized crime is often disputed by academics (Finckenaer, 2005), and the sums involved ambiguous, the problem is significant enough to threaten the stability of many international governments. The United Nations estimated US\$125b a year is generated through illicit transnational crime flows (UNODC), and Europol, in their 2011 threat assessment, highlight the constantly evolving nature and growth of this phenomenon. This evolution therefore presents a significant challenge to law enforcement agencies. However this is not just at an international level but throughout each tier of criminality, from transnational to national to regional to local. In the UK it is estimated there are approximately 38,000 offenders operating within 6,000 organised crime groups (Home Office 2011), and in 2005, it was estimated that 'less than 6 per cent were being targeted' (HMIC 2006: 5). This challenge is increasing as law enforcement agencies face budget reductions as a result of the worldwide recession (Gilmour, 2008). This study examines the operational effectiveness of using a disruptive and preventative methodology to tackle OCGs in a more cost effective manner. Specifically it follows officers from a Police Force in the North of England, for a three year period, as they identify and confront an OCG based within their jurisdiction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The first stage of any response to organized crime is its identification. This is in itself problematic as a unified definition of organized crime remains elusive with von Lampe (2011) currently accumulating 185 definitions from academics and practitioners across the globe. The identification of organized crime is clearly a

complex and multifaceted phenomena and although Albanese (2007; 2008) argues analysis should focus on illicit markets and products, that relate to the provision of illicit services and goods and infiltration of legitimate business, the overwhelming focus remains on the criminal actors. In this way definitions generally focus on such issues as: collaboration of more than two people; serious offences; in pursuit of profit and/or power; using violence or intimidation; and operating across borders (van der Heijden, cited in Gilmour, 1996). This study also concentrates on the offenders using the common UK operational definition, outlined in the Serious Organized Crime Agency Threat Assessment (2006:2), which highlights.... “Those involved on a continuing basis, normally working with others, in committing crimes for substantial profit or gain, for which a person aged 21 or over on first conviction could expect to be imprisoned for three years or more”.

Although law enforcement agencies have become more proactive in their approach, using an ‘intelligence-led approach in relation to serious and organized crime (Ratcliffe, 2008), they continue to focus upon enforcement, which involves the arrest and prosecution of the most prolific offenders. This approach is time consuming and expensive, and its efficacy as well as its usefulness as a measure can be challenged (Albanese, 2008). Nicholas, et al. (2007), graphically illustrate the inefficiency of an enforcement-based approach using general crime data from the British Crime Survey (BCS) and UK police crime records. Using a hypothetical sample of 1,000 crimes they argue only 410 (41%) would be reported to the police; 287 (28.7%) subsequently recorded; 75 (7.5%) offenders detected; 37 (3.7%) receive criminal charges; 21 (2.1%) proceed to the court; 15 (1.5%) found guilty; and only 4 (0.4%) would receive a custodial sentence. They continue that even if a further 10% were prosecuted, this would merely raise the incarceration rate by 0.4%, making little difference in outcome whilst consuming significantly more resources. Reflecting on this argument, Ratcliffe (2008) argues a more effective strategy would be to use an intelligence-led approach to prevent the crimes at source.

Although the debate between prevention and enforcement has previously concentrated upon ‘volume crime’ (for example shoplifting, vehicle crime, minor

assault and burglary) interest has more recently turned to whether these principles can be used as a more effective and inexpensive approach to organised crime (Kirby & Penna, 2010; Bullock et al. 2010). Tilley (2005:266), argues that 'crime is the intended consequence of unintentional opportunity' therefore from this perspective it follows that by reducing the opportunity, crime can be prevented. This is the essence of a Situational Crime Prevention approach (SCP), which focuses on the 'here and now' rather than wider or more abstract biological, psychological or sociological explanations surrounding the causes of crime (Clarke, 1995). Specifically 'Routine Activity Theory', an influential theory in this approach argues there are three conditions that must come together, in time and space, for a crime to occur: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the lack of a capable guardian (Cohen & Felson, 1979, Felson, 2002, Clarke and Felson, 2008). As such by directing the intervention to reduce the motivation of the offender or vulnerability of the potential victim, the likelihood of criminal activity can be reduced (Laycock, 2005).

As Clarke (1997) suggests SCP is different to enforcement led approaches as it, "seeks not to sanction but to [...] forestall the occurrence of crime" (Clarke, 1997:2). A further prominent theory within this stable is 'Rational Choice Theory' which assumes the offender adopts a rational perspective when engaging in offending behaviour; albeit this decision-making may be distorted through alcohol or other cognitive malfunction (Laycock, 2005). Extending this argument Cornish & Clarke (1986), propose offenders can be diverted from crime if the cost of committing it is greater than the benefit to be gained. Specifically they highlight five operational approaches that reduce the motivation of the offender, thereby achieving this objective in practice: a) increase the effort needed by the offender to commit the offence; b) increase the risk of detection; c) reduce the reward gained from the crime; d) reduce the provocation that may surround the crime (this is a category often applied to disorder); and e) remove any excuse the offender may use to justify their actions. Although this approach was used primarily to reduce volume crime (which concentrates around static locations and victims), more recent research is emerging to show this principle can also hold true for organized crime. Kennedy (2009) revealed how U.S. gang members could be deterred from committing violent

crime if the interventions were sufficiently tailored to make it meaningful for the individual involved. Similarly Kirby & Penna (2010:204) showed how OCGs, involved in people trafficking, could be disrupted when the opportunities evident in the criminal process could be blocked. In this way Kirby & Penna (2010), encourage a deeper understanding of the crime process, specifically: establishing where the profits are made; who the actors are (offenders, victims and facilitators); as well as identifying the areas where criminal opportunity presents itself (for example inadequate government regulation). However not all academics are optimistic as to the benefits of this approach. Von Lampe (2011) argues the concept is useful, although at times has to be modified to such a level that its universal application can be questioned. Levi and Maguire (2004), feel there is insufficient research surrounding situational crime prevention and its implementation in relation to organised crime. There is also concern that removing the opportunity will merely cause displacement. Kleemans, et al. (2010) illustrated this concept highlighting that when the main ingredient for ecstasy (PMK) was restricted in the Netherlands it caused Dutch OCGs to work with Chinese OCGs to obtain an alternate supply. This rendered the restrictions useless, and added the offence of smuggling to the organized crime repertoire.

However the profile of prevention and disruption as a viable strategy has increased. During July 2011 the UK Government published their latest organized crime strategy, 'From the local to the global' (Home Office, 2011). As the title suggests it attempts to attack organized crime at all levels, looking for a more innovative approach whereby the wider policing community has a role in reducing organized crime. Its approach was based upon three principles: stem the opportunities for organized crime to take root; strengthen the use of enforcement against organized crime (using the full range of lawful interventions); and safeguarding communities, business and the state by examining and reducing vulnerability. However although prevention and disruption are terms used extensively by law enforcement agencies, there is limited empirical evidence of this approach being used and such approaches are notoriously difficult to implement. Whilst Sir Robert Peel may have been the first to highlight the importance of a preventative approach when forming the Metropolitan police in

1829, other police leaders have tried and failed in their attempts to mainstream the philosophy. The main difficulty appears to emanate from an organizational culture that values arrest and enforcement approaches more than prevention (Murray, 2005; Read & Tilley 2000).

The goal of this study is to increase understanding of how prevention and disruption can be used operationally to tackle organized crime by exploring the actions of a Police Force situated in the North of England over a period of three years. Specifically it will establish how an OCG is targeted for action, explore the interventions made, and assess the impact of these interventions by monitoring the quantitative impact as well as listening to the opinion of representatives from the police, other public agencies, and the community. However prior to presenting this case study there is a need to distinguish between the concepts of 'prevention' and 'disruption'. Kirby & Penna (2010:205) detail these differences in a previous paper, however in essence 'prevention' is taken to refer to those interventions that successfully stop or dismantle a single organized crime event, specifically those that "change a process or environment in a sustainable manner". In contrast 'disruption' is, "a more flexible, transitory, and dynamic tactic, which can be used more generally to make the environment hostile for the organized crime group this approach focuses on disrupting the offender's networks, lifestyle and routines". Having clarified these concepts the paper will now explain how the empirical evidence was gathered.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers, who were security vetted prior to the study, initially made contact with the police force during 2008 and followed the project for approximately three years. Gilmour (2008) in a previous paper explained how, during this period, police forces across England and Wales were engaged in a national project to systematically identify and analyze all OCG's within their jurisdiction. Once identified each Police Force used a set criteria to assess the actual and potential threat they generated. This assessment criteria included: a) the level of injury to victims or

others caused by the OCG; b) the level of harm to the community; c) the level of impact to police/ government reputation; d) the criminal capability or capacity of the OCG; e) the geographic extent or ability of the OCG to cross borders (local, regional, national, or transnational); and f) the economic impact the OCG has on society. This assessment was based on criminal intelligence from a wide variety of sources and although the researchers were asked not to disclose specific details Ratcliffe (2002) has previously outlined the framework of an 'intelligence led' approach, which includes open sources, surveillance, informants, and financial investigation.

As such by April 2009 the Police Force used in this study had mapped and ranked all the known OCGs in their jurisdiction and were faced with a dilemma. There were insufficient resources to tackle all OCGs in their area and by engaging with a resource intensive prosecution against the leaders of the most prominent OCG could result in associates filling the vacuum, leaving no resources to tackle the remainder. The leadership of this particular police force decided to attempt a more cost effective solution, using a multi-agency approach to deliver preventative and disruptive responses within the framework of SCP. Using project management the Constabulary applied a bronze, silver, gold methodology (Alison & Crego, 2005), placing individual management accountability at strategic, tactical and operational levels. The Police set the aims of the project as: reducing the financial profitability of the OCG; dismantling the OCG structure (and deterring others from taking its place); improving the safety of the area; and increasing public confidence in the police. In essence the strategic thrust of the police approach was to combine with other agencies to engender a zero tolerance approach regarding any inappropriate behavior exhibited by members of the OCG. The aim was to generate a hostile environment, reducing the opportunities for the OCG to commit crime.

This study uses both quantitative and qualitative data in an attempt to obtain the widest possible assessment of the operation. Quantitative data, from closed source national and local police systems, was used to develop a profile for each OCG member, which included offending history both prior, and two years after the operation had commenced (obtained April 2009 and April 2011). Qualitative data

was obtained by interviewing individuals involved in the operation, specifically seven police officers, three members of external public sector organisations, and five members of the local community, with all respondents being in the age range of 30 years to 75 years. The researchers were able to randomly choose police officers from those working on the project. As such the sample was balanced in relation to rank, role and gender with respondents including a Chief Officer, local Police Inspector, detectives and patrol officers. This was a significant and representative proportion of officers involved in the operation and provided an overview in relation to strategic, tactical and operational issues (Alison & Crego, 2005). The respondents from the three public sector partner agencies in essence selected themselves, as they were the lead representatives from the external agencies most frequently used on this project. As such they were selected due to their level of participation. This left the selection of the community representatives and the assistance of the Neighborhood Inspector was required in relation to introductions. Unsurprisingly the researchers were introduced to the most active members of the small community who lived in the same area as the OCG. Although these were a small group there was some scope to balance the participants in terms of gender and socio-economic background. As the participants constituted a diverse group overall, semi-structured interviews were used to provide flexibility when exploring the complex and sensitive issues surrounding this subject (Barriball and White, 1994). The interviews took place in police and private premises (based on the preference of the respondent), and adhered to the following framework:

Operational police officers were interviewed regarding:

- The impact of the OCG on the community.
- The effectiveness of the policing interventions.
- The effectiveness of the preventative strategy.
- How the success of the police operation was gauged.

Representatives from the external organizations were interviewed regarding:

- Their knowledge of the OCG.

- Their actions in reducing the criminality of the OCG, either alongside the police or as an individual organisation.
- Their evaluation of the police, and the effectiveness of the strategy and interventions against the OCG.
- Evaluation of the communication between the police and other organisations.

Members of the community were interviewed regarding:

- Their knowledge of the OCG in their neighbourhood.
- Their perceptions as to the effectiveness of the police in dealing with the OCG.
- Their future expectations.

A content analysis was then conducted across the range of responses, to highlight significant and recurring themes.

FINDINGS

The findings will be divided into three sections. The first section will explore the characteristics of the OCG and describe how offending patterns changed during the police operation. The second section will describe the interventions made by the police/ partner agencies, categorizing them within the preventative framework expounded in Cornish & Clarke's (1986) account of 'rational choice theory' (reduce the rewards, remove the excuses, and increase effort and risk). Finally the section will provide the results from the semi-structured interviews, outlining the views of the police, public agency, and community representatives.

A profile of the Organised Crime Group members

The OCG initially highlighted by the Police involved 30 individuals, who appeared to be working together on a variety of criminal endeavors. However further analysis of police intelligence systems classified 13 as core members with the remaining 17 comprising a wider network, who were used when needed. Although there were no

organized crime prosecutions against this group intelligence showed their significant involvement in this area, ranging from violent extortion to large scale fraud. From this intelligence-led approach there appeared considerable information supporting the assertion that the group members were involved in organized crime, consistent with the UK and international descriptions outlined earlier. The majority of the individuals were resident in a small rural village on the outskirts of an English city, policed on a daily basis by the local Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) who was also responsible for nearby villages. The nearest police station was approximately a 15 minute car drive away.

All but two of the 13 core members were male and all were aged between 23-56 years. There was a strong family connection as 85% were related to each other, whilst the remaining 15% were close associates, having known each other from a young age. Intelligence systems showed that no member of the core group had any legal visible income, nor did they pay taxes, although many claimed some level of social security benefit. There were visible assets associated with members of the OCG who, amongst other things, had built large detached houses in the area. The 13 members of the group had a total number of 90 previous convictions, prior to the police operation commencing. Table 1 below shows the average age and range of criminal convictions.

TABLE 1 HERE

Prior to the operation starting a content analysis showed criminal convictions generally fell within three legislative categories. The most common contravened the Theft Act (theft, handling stolen goods; aggravated vehicle taking; theft of/from a vehicle; burglary; and going equipped with tools for the intention of stealing). The second highest conviction type related to the Road Traffic Act (driving without a license; driving whilst uninsured; and dangerous driving). Finally a smaller number of the prior convictions contravened the Public Order Act (using threatening, abusive,

insulting words or behavior against others). However during the research it was highlighted by a number of police officers that the most influential OCG members were “reluctant to get their hands dirty”. As such a more detailed assessment was conducted of the number and types of convictions for each of the core members. This showed that whereas one offender had no criminal convictions (or impending prosecutions) three offenders accounted for approximately ⅔ of the total convictions and one offender accounted for 39% of convictions. As has been mentioned there was a notable absence of prosecutions involving organized crime.

The analysis revisited offending history two years after the operation had started and found a further 6 convictions and 21 pending prosecutions (range 0-4, mean 1.62). These offences were different in profile to the earlier ones. The most frequent offences were in contravention of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (S.43) and the Fraud Act 2006 (S.35). These included the depositing of controlled waste without a license and organized insurance fraud involving vehicle collisions. Perhaps the most critical appraisal was conducted by the Constabulary who re-assessed the OCG two years after the operation had commenced, using the same threat matrix mentioned in the introduction. Using available intelligence across the six criteria the police representative revealed the OCG had diminished in terms of capacity, capability and impact with a number of the offenders in prison, and some apparently desisting from criminal activity. This meant the threat score had reduced significantly and the OCG were no longer ranked as the most threatening alliance in their jurisdiction.

The interventions

The previous section has shown that the police operation made a difference in terms of the outcome. This section will look at the strategy and interventions in more detail. Goldstein (1979) has previously argued preventative problem solving approaches differ to traditional methods, as they generally require a partnership approach. This was certainly true of the interventions observed in this project as they were all based on a team approach, which mobilized other agencies (both commercial and public) to share information, pool resources, and deliver the most effective response. The most common partner was local government, which included

the: building planning department; anti-social behaviour officers; 'rights of way' department; and environmental services. Other partners included the: Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency; The Crown Prosecution Service; The Fire and Rescue service; Land Registry; The Environment Agency; Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs; Department of Works and Pensions; Vehicle and Operator Services Agency; as well as members of the community. The use of such partners was varied and one good example relates to the joint working between the Constabulary and the Environment agency. In this instance members of the OCG were suspected of illegally dumping waste substances and, although a serious offence, the Environment Agency had insufficient capability to conduct an effective investigation. However by allowing the Environment Agency to use the police surveillance team, evidence to prove this offence was established within a day (the police surveillance team commenting that following a cumbersome lorry was the easiest task they had ever undertaken).

The next stage was to explore whether the interventions could fit conceptually within the framework postulated by Cornish & Clarke's (1986). To do this the researchers harvested all individual interventions conducted on OCG members between April 2009 and April 2011 and established whether their aim was to:

- Increase the effort needed to commit the crime,
- Increase the risk of being caught,
- Reduce the rewards from the crime,
- Remove the excuses to justify the crime.

TABLE II HERE

Many of the police and partner tactics were repeated throughout the two-year period, however table 2 shows the main interventions. It should be noted that a

further category 'reduce the provocation to commit the crime' is suggested by Cornish & Clarke (1986). However this category more frequently relates to offences of disorder, and as the content analysis found no such interventions it was deleted from the table. The results show the interventions fit comfortably within this conceptual framework, although appearing to concentrate within the 'increasing the risk of detection' category.

The view of police, partner and community representatives

The final analysis in this section examines the opinions of those involved with the operation, specifically seven serving police officers (Group 1), three members of external organisations (Group 2), and five members of the community (Group 3). The areas discussed with the respondents have been highlighted in the methodology section. Before exploring the opinions of each individual group it should be highlighted that there was unanimous agreement the OCG had impacted negatively on the local community creating fear and intimidation. In essence it appeared the small village had been disproportionately affected by the OCG, effectively destroying a previously close-knit community.

Turning to the police officers they were in agreement that, prior to this operation, policing was ineffective in the area and made little impact against the OCG. Although they felt this operation had been effective, six of the seven officers felt it could have been improved. The reasons for this generally revolved around the scope for better partnership working, and the availability of more resources. The officers unanimously supported the zero tolerance approach to any illegal behaviour exhibited by members of the group, and felt this became increasingly effective as it continued. One officer said, "when we took action for a motoring offence or turned up at an address word quickly went around and we would be joined by other members of the group who tried to intimidate us. As the operation continued members of the group became more compliant as they realized we would not be put off by their actions" (participant 5). It was clear the interviewed police officers felt they had made a difference in reducing both the OCG criminal activity and general

bad behaviour. One of the officers said, “We always speak to them when we see them out and about. They know they can’t get away with anything” (participant 2).

Moving on to the three external partner agency representatives, similar points were highlighted. All three saw a significant change in the attitude and actions of the police. Although they initially felt there was a lack of understanding they stated communication improved significantly as the operation continued, leading to better information sharing and understanding between the different agencies. One participant supported the commonly heard theme that police interventions became progressively more successful as time progressed. It was felt this was because understanding had grown concerning the range of offending by the OCG and the diversity of sanctions that could be used by different agencies. Similarly the increased number of partner agencies and members of the community meant the flow of information increased significantly. In fact one of the partners stated, “When we shared information we saw we were often looking at the same people. Those who were causing the police a problem were also causing us a problem”. Similarly it became clear that the OCG were intimidating and it appeared partners felt more confident taking action for such issues as planning irregularities, knowing the police would support them.

Perhaps the most illuminating information came from the final interviews conducted with five members of the community, who had been village residents between 8-75 years. It was evident that the community noticed a significant amount of unreported activity and heard numerous rumours. They were very clear that the OCG was involved in criminality due to the visible level of assets with no visible means of providing them. Further the residents often observed overt antisocial behaviour by OCG members, such as speeding, ‘wheelying’ motorcycles, burning wire to extract copper, and illegal tipping.

Summarizing the respondents’ views it appeared the new level of transparency, engagement, and increased activity from the police had galvanized community spirit, leading to a self disclosed rise in public confidence. The majority of participants

argued that previously, the police were ineffective at reducing crime and disorder because of their reluctance to act; poor communication, lack of community consultation; and their reliance on crime statistics prior to taking action (when most of the OCG crimes went unreported). The community representatives felt this new approach had completely reversed the overall management of the area. The majority of participants also perceived the police operation had been a success in terms of reducing the criminality of the OCG and the fear among the community. Indeed as police actions increased members of the community also started taking a more prominent role, even engaging in civil law to reduce the noise caused by some of the OCG members. A community representative also stated an unintended benefit was the improved behaviour of younger people from the village, as they saw the poor behaviour of the OCG being confronted.

DISCUSSION

Although this study has generated many discussion points, three particular areas will be concentrated upon: the characteristics of the organized crime group; the effectiveness of the strategy and interventions; and community perceptions.

As discussed the OCG in this study exhibit many of the central characteristics highlighted by academic commentators (de Heijden, 2008), and the UK definition used for this study. It was interesting to note throughout the group were epitomized by their use of intimidation against those they came in conflict with, including local government officials. However OCG's are not a homogenous group and will operate at different levels, therefore although these individuals were mobile and moved across regional borders, they remained based in the UK and did not appear to engage in transnational crime. Further, the OCG appeared to follow a hybrid model, using both a traditional family structure (Hobbs, 1998), as well as engaging in a fluid network of other known criminals (Galeotti, 2005). A further distinctive characteristic of this group was that it enjoyed a clear hierarchy. In this way there was a clear leader with different individuals performing different roles; something

particularly noticeable in individuals used predominantly as 'enforcers', who collected the most criminal convictions. A further finding was the group appeared to constantly diversify into different types of crime, appearing to seize available opportunity in terms of making money illegally. It therefore appeared that the OCG presented itself as a close-knit group of individuals defined only by their motivation to make significant amounts of money through illegal means. Whether they did this through extortion, organized fraud or illegal tipping appeared immaterial.

At this stage it is also useful to comment upon the impact of the operation in terms of the OCG offending behaviour. The 13 core members of the group had 90 criminal convictions, which extended over a 30 year period, prior to the operation commencing. In the two years following commencement of the operation a further 6 convictions were recorded together with 21 pending prosecutions. Knowing how to interpret these statistics is problematic. It is clear offending behaviour had not stopped, however it also appeared probable that as much organized crime is hidden (Maguire, 2007), this increased police scrutiny merely highlighted what was already there. There was a further major change; prior to the operation commencing the OCG members were typically convicted of overt crimes involving identifiable victims such as theft, burglary, assault, and public disorder. However the crimes pending prosecution two years later, such as extensive illegal tipping and large-scale insurance fraud, were considerably more covert and could be labeled as organized crime. Again interpretation is difficult; advocates of crime displacement theory argue that reducing the opportunity for crime will merely encourage offenders to alter their criminality by geography, time, target or crime type (Weisburd, et al., 2006). Conversely it could also be argued that the OCG have always engaged in this type of offence but have gone undetected. The view of the interviewed police officers, supported by the local community, was the true scale of criminality only became apparent after the operation commenced, and evidence was uncovered to support the prosecution of 'organized crime'. Prior to that members of the OCG had only been prosecuted for peripheral offences, when their behavior was visible.

Turning to the effectiveness of the strategy, whilst the Police were faced with the rigours of the operation the researchers had the time to be more reflective, looking for the meaning, understanding and the impact of the operational tactics. The use of the Cornish & Clarke (1986) model to consider how offenders can be deterred from organized crime served as a useful tool for this analysis and can also provide a more creative framework for the police when considering interventions in the future. However in relation to the police operation the strategy of using a multi agency approach to create a hostile environment for the OCG was a significant change from the usual operating procedure. The enormity of this change is only apparent when it is realized that the normal enforcement approach to organized crime relies on a team of specialist detectives who work covertly in an effort to gather sufficient evidence to deliver a successful prosecution against the offenders. This approach normally relies on secrecy and painstaking observations, concentrating on a particular crime. However this traditional approach was completely inverted in this project as, rather than keeping the operation secret, it was publicized to the community, partner agencies, and even the OCG themselves. This is because the objective had changed – no longer was prosecution the main aim but the reduction of organized crime. This allowed the informing of others and a pooling of information; fundamental elements in making sure a much wider audience owned the OCG problem.

What this also meant was that the policing strategy sought to impact on the individual offender rather than a specific crime event, product or market. In essence the focus was widened to enforce any type of offence committed within the offenders lifestyle. This meant in practice that officers did not try and prevent a specific crime being committed (for example the organized theft of metal from railway lines) but sought to deter the organized criminal committing any offence by prosecuting them for any misdemeanor. This strategy would fall into what Kirby & Penna (2011) refer to as disruption, rather than prevention, with the majority of interventions falling under 'increasing the risk of detection'. It joined up other agencies in this endeavor with *policing* seen as a wider concept and not just seen as the responsibility of the police institution. Secondly it increases the opportunity to

prosecute the offenders involved for a wide variety of behaviors and in doing so disrupt the offenders network and lifestyle. Third, unlike a conventional enforcement approach there was no clear start and end date. The police approach was to constantly exploit disruption opportunities rather than focus on one particular prosecution for one particular crime.

Although a layperson may assume OCG members would improve their behavior whilst targeted by the police this phenomenon did not occur. Similarly it appeared individuals could not separate their offending behaviour from their everyday lives. Academics involved in offender behaviour based research argue an individuals' personality is often associated with their offending. So, for example, an inherently violent individual would use the threat of force to subdue a victim, rather than attempt to deceive them (Canter & Kirby 1995; Canter & Youngs, 2009). Similarly Dean et al. (2010) argue that although criminal entrepreneurship is driven by profit, achieving profitable illegitimacy can materialize in many forms including the exhibition of socio-pathology. Using these concepts the study found that personal characteristics of the OCG members could emerge in pre-cursor or post event offences, as well as peripheral behaviour emanating from their daily lives. In this way showing disrespect for the law (ignoring planning permission, driving offences), or disrespect for other citizens (making threats, generating noise nuisance), were often observed. This is important as it makes the OCG members visible and vulnerable to intervention on a wide variety of matters, thereby making the disruption strategy viable.

In terms of the effectiveness of the approach all individuals interviewed during the operation felt that the criminality emanating from the OCG had reduced. This was even though statistically the impending prosecutions showed this was not the case. Exploring this conflict it appeared that all those involved felt much more knowledgeable about the previously hidden offending rate of the group. As such they genuinely believed the OCG posed less of a threat and this was supported when the group was assessed using the national threat matrix mentioned in the introduction. These objective criteria, based on verifiable intelligence, showed that

the offending behavior had significantly reduced. It was felt this trend accelerated as the operation continued.

Similarly the zero tolerance approach also appeared popular with participants and observers alike. It appeared from the interviews one of the unintended consequences of an intelligence led approach has been to distance some police officers from the community, relying on back-office processes of intelligence collection and analysis to target offenders in a covert fashion. The prevention/ disruption process has inverted this previous approach. The adoption of a multi agency approach has been achieved through a variety of strategies including, a) enhancing the awareness of other agencies roles and powers; b) holding specific meetings for police, partner agencies, and the community; c) increasing community contact and consultation to improve confidence. In essence this was a very public and transparent approach in which the balance of power transferred from the OCG to the community.

Similarly this approach can improve satisfaction and confidence in the police. An intelligence led approach relies heavily on recorded crime statistics to target intelligence led approaches (Ratcliffe, 2008). However as Maltz (1979) argued the overall nature of organised crime makes it highly problematic for the police and other law enforcement agencies due to its covert nature. The OCG was concentrated in a small geographic area and this increased their solidarity and reputation. As the years progressed they had become emboldened, manipulating civil laws such as planning permission, and minor road traffic laws such as speeding. When challenged by residents, local government representatives or police officers they would respond aggressively resulting in them living relatively unchecked. This study showed community members felt intimidated and fearful of the OCG, which prevented them from reporting criminal activity. Crime statistics showed that there was no crime problem in the area and, therefore, policing was minimal. Participants stated, "crime was not tackled at an earlier stage because there was a significant lack of awareness and visible policing" (Participant 12). Once the agencies came together they all articulated similar problems concerning OCG members, being able to share their

suspicious and ultimately generating a much fuller picture regarding their criminality. A further benefit from this approach appeared to be much stronger police-community relationship, with more active citizenship. Community representatives were honest in their appreciation of being intimidated, making comments such as “they think we won’t react and will just let them continue” (participant 15). However when the operation commenced it led to some of the community playing a more active role, reporting crimes and being prepared to progress private prosecutions. Members of the community expressed that they “didn’t necessarily want to take them [the OCG] to court [...] it is costing me a lot too [...] we simply want them to apologise and stop causing the problem” (participant 15).

It appears that a disruption strategy, as outlined in this study, has much to commend it in relation to addressing ‘lifestyle criminals’, an aim highlighted by the UK Serious Organized Crime Agency (SOCA, 2011). It was highlighted by the police that a large, highly trained covert investigative team was not always needed to generate significant results against organized crime. In this project a team approach, utilizing uniform and detective staff, allowing flexible and diverse interventions under a general framework of disruption, can serve as a strong deterrent on the motivation of offenders. Further whilst aligned to a preventative framework these disruption tactics are more allied to enforcement than prevention, making it culturally acceptable to the police. The approach is action oriented and confrontational, making it popular with community residents who see a tangible police /partner response. This appeared to embolden the neighborhood who started to challenge inappropriate behavior themselves, increasing community efficacy (Sampson et al. 1997). This approach was also well received by partner agencies who also appeared to enjoy the team approach and the benefits it brought. However a critical question is whether this approach is transferable to other police jurisdictions and whether it is sustainable? A pertinent point was made by a member of the community who stated, “complete success within policing operations is driven by the enthusiasm, dedication and leadership of the police as a team” (participant 15). Further, although the police stated this approach consumed fewer resources than a conventional prosecution, disruption tactics do rely on police officers and equipment being

available over time. In this study it must be acknowledged that the operation was sustained with commitment and persistence over a significant period of time, elements which appeared key to its success. Therefore questions will always arise as to the effectiveness of this approach if the appropriate leadership or resources are unavailable.

CONCLUSION

With the increased capacity and capability of organized crime groups to create significant harm at a transnational, national, and local level, enforcement is becoming an expensive and often ineffective tool. This study has examined a policing operation, which has identified and intervened against OCG using a more innovative approach. The interventions, more aligned to disruption than prevention, appeared effective in reducing the capacity and capability of the OCG as well as increasing the number of prosecutions. The approach appeared popular with the police, possibly because the tactics were more aligned with enforcement, which are culturally more acceptable than prevention. Similarly the approach was popular with the partner agencies as well as the public, the latter seeing a tangible difference in their community. The use of the Cornish & Clarke (1986) 'Rational Choice' model provides a creative framework to generate and analyse future interventions as well as provide a structure to disrupt lifestyle criminals involved in organized crime. However although in theory this policing style can be transferred to any police jurisdiction (indeed across jurisdictions), it does rely on effective police leadership to: enthuse operational staff to use this approach; ensure tactics are lawful and proportional; and generate strong external partnerships. However as many commentators have observed research in this area is severely limited (von Lampe, 2011) and more is required to ultimately test the efficacy of this approach in different locations and on different Organized Crime Groups.

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Table I (below) showing the age and offending history for the OCG, prior to the police operation commencing.

Variable	Range	Mean	S.D.
Age (years)	23 – 56	39.08	10.81
Number of offences (per person)	0 – 35	6.92	9.11
Number of convictions (per person)	0 – 15	4.31	4.05

Increase effort	Increase risk	Reduce rewards	Remove Excuses
<p>1. Traffic calming measures to reduce speeding along the main street.</p> <p>2. Increased police visibility in area of OCG residences to challenge low level criminal behaviour</p>	<p>1. Use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) on all OCG vehicles. Providing information as to movement of OCG related vehicles.</p> <p>2. Monitor OCG's TV licence, mortgages, bank accounts, mobile phones, travel documents etc. to identify any wider offending.</p> <p>3. Implementation of CCTV throughout the village</p> <p>4. Zero tolerance of traffic violations by OCG members.</p> <p>5. Increasing resources and focus in relation to gathering of intelligence regarding OCG members, to establish the parameters of offending.</p> <p>6. Using plain clothed officers to patrol the area.</p> <p>7. Supply photos and information regarding OCG members to partner agencies, to assist identification of OCG in wider offences</p>	<p>1. Use of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to seize and confiscate money obtained from crime by OCG members</p> <p>2. Preventing the development of houses and removal of unlawful buildings through the enforcement of planning regulations (no response results in demolition).</p> <p>3. Proactively Investigate insurance related applications.</p> <p>4. Take legal action against unlawfully constructed buildings.</p>	<p>1. Traffic calming measures and notices</p> <p>2. Notices issued by County Council to all residents of the village relating to anti social behaviour (noise nuisance). These establish what is and what is not appropriate.</p>

Table II showing the interventions used against OCG members, categorized in accordance with Cornish & Clarke (1986) Rational Choice Theory.