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PUTTING THE ‘STREET’ IN GANG: PLACE AND SPACE IN THE ORGANIZATION OF SCOTLAND’S DRUG-SELLING GANGS

Robert McLean*, Ross Deuchar, Simon Harding and James Densley

Street gangs, by definition, enjoy a special relationship with the street. Prior research shows that some communities are synonymous with gangs and that turf holds a combination of expressive and instrumental value for gang members. As gangs evolve over time and through different levels of organization, however, gangs’ relationship with the street changes. This shifting street dynamic is underexplored in prior research, thus, drawing on qualitative data from Scotland and Bourdieu’s theory of social field, the current study presents three cases of gangs at different stages of evolution and examines how levels of gang organization affect spatial relationships. As gangs accumulate sufficient street capital to evolve, we find territory is defined less physically and more relationally, with implications for gang research and practice.

Key Words: street gangs, neighbourhoods, territoriality, organized crime, Scotland

Introduction

Place is a fundamental context in criminology (Sampson 2013) and for a century, criminological research has examined how social networks and neighbourhood ecology work in concert to influence social behaviour, including criminal offending (e.g. Bursik and Grasmick 1993; Sampson *et al.* 1997; Tita and Greenbaum 2009; Papachristos *et al.* 2013). Insights into how spatial boundaries and conflicts contribute to gang offending date back to, and continue to be influenced by, the Chicago School (Thrasher 1927; Shaw and McKay 1942; Katz and Schnebly 2011; Huebner *et al.* 2016). Studies show gang members physically defend ‘set space’ (Tita *et al.* 2005) and that gang violence can be highest at the boundaries of designated gang turf (Tita and Greenbaum 2009; Brantingham *et al.* 2012; Papachristos *et al.* 2013), or where the ‘social fields’ are adjacent (Harding 2014). But gangs shape community life not only through violence (Suttles 1968), but also through drug dealing and the underground economy (Venkatesh 2000). As a result, gang territories have both *symbolic* value, in terms of collective experience and memory (Vigil 1988; Garot 2007), and *instrumental* value, in terms of economic activity (Levitt and Venkatesh 2000).

Despite a long tradition of research demonstrating the importance of gangs in ‘neighbourhood social organization and urban violence’ (for a review, see Huebner *et al.* [2016]:

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837), there remains a limited understanding about how levels of gang organization affect (1) levels and types of group offending within particular geographical settings, and (2) the evolution of gangs' relationship with territory over time. This is especially true in the United Kingdom, which initially resisted examining youth group dynamics in terms of 'gangs' (see [Campbell and Muncer 1989](#)). Drawing upon our previous work in Scotland ([McLean *et al.* 2018](#)), the current study explores how gang territory evolves over time; the shifts in social relationships, visibility and forms of social control in neighbourhood settings; and how this is influenced by emergent local drug economies. We ask whether gang members' perceptions of territory change from bounded physicality to interpersonal, abstract, or relational as the gang evolves, and (in relation to Bourdieu's theories) how habitus, social field and street capital interact in relation to neighbourhood 'turf'. We present a typology of gangs that challenges previously held assumptions about how Glasgow gangs relate to or are synonymous with the physicality of the street.

The current study presents findings from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 42 self-nominated gang members. We outline insights from this purposive, snowball sample, through case studies that illustrate how over time, evolving gang types adapt to changing territorial priorities and constraints. In so doing, gang members alter their perceptions of, and relationships with, local settings and the people within them, accommodating new forms of social control or 'governance' that use exploitative mechanisms to achieve gang goals. We discuss these findings in terms of their potential impact on future research, policy, and practice.

Gangs and territoriality

That a 'sense of ownership over place' provides means for youth to generate respect and recognition is a recurring theme in youth offending studies (e.g. [Kintrea *et al.* 2008](#)). In the United Kingdom's first study of 'gangs', [Patrick \(1973: 94\)](#) found that violent group offending often centred around territorial disputes, motivated by a 'desire for status of any kind, won at any price'. British scholars can be hesitant to examine group offending in terms of 'gangs' and some question the utility of the term altogether (e.g. [Hallsworth and Young 2008](#)). However, the links between gangs, claims over geographical space, the salience of 'insiders' and 'outsiders' and the active defence of turf are now well established in the United Kingdom ([Pitts 2008](#); [Densley 2013](#); [Harding 2014](#)). Outside the UK, moreover, a wide body of literature has repeatedly asserted the importance of neighbourhood space, and the way in which knowledge and use of that space within the context of gangs is crucial for young men to build economic and social capital (for a review, see [Valasik and Tita 2018](#)).

Also well documented is gang members' involvement in criminal offending (e.g. [Pyrooz *et al.* 2016](#)) and in local drug markets (e.g. [Decker *et al.* 2008](#)). Gangs may or may not control drug markets, but gang members certainly participate in them and can benefit greatly from their gang's territorial control of a marketplace ([Levitt and Venkatesh 2000](#); [Tita and Ridgeway 2007](#); [Decker *et al.* 2008](#); [Bjerregaard 2010](#); [Taniguchi *et al.* 2011](#); [Densley 2013](#)). As we have argued elsewhere ([McLean *et al.* 2018](#)), however, there is a continuing lack of understanding about how varying levels of gang organization affect levels and types of gang offending, including drug dealing, within particular geographical settings, and how this, in turn, informs gang members' relationship with

physical space. Nowhere is this gap more salient than within the Scottish context, where ‘gangs’ have historically been viewed solely through the lens of recreational violence guided by a strong sense of tangible, physical territorial space (Fraser 2015).

In Scotland, as in other geographical areas, the term ‘gang’ has often been used loosely when discussing the activities of both recreational and criminal groupings (McLean 2018). Police Scotland have voiced concern about the growth in Serious Organized Crime Groups (SOCGs), but their activities are ill-defined and apparent links between street gangs and SOCGs remain largely overlooked (Scottish Government 2015). Glasgow, Scotland’s largest city, has a long and storied history of gangs and organized crime (OC) (see Patrick 1973; Deuchar 2009; Deuchar and Holligan 2010; Davies 2013). Young men’s strong territorial identification in Glasgow is seen as a symptom of the ‘decline of industrialism’ and erosion of traditional urban leisure space (Fraser 2015: 109; see also Deuchar [2009; 2010; 2013]), but also a reaction to historical and early trauma in homes and communities (Holligan and Deuchar 2015).

Gangs, OC and governance

Like the gang, OC can be a nebulous concept (von Lampe 2016), but in recent years scholars have settled on a definition of OC as a productive activity, involving the provision of illicit goods and services (Varese 2010). OC *produces* and *trades* illegal drugs, for example. Generally speaking, gangs lack the instrumental orientation, organizational structure and special resources necessary to qualify as OC (Decker *et al.* 1998, 2008; Decker and Pyrooz 2013). However, many gangs do still produce and trade illicit goods and services, demonstrating either that different gang *types* exist or that gang organization exists on a continuum (Klein and Maxson 2006). In Scotland, Mclean (2018) finds evidence for ‘recreational’ gangs, ‘criminal’ gangs and ‘enterprise’ gangs, the latter of which qualify as OC. McLean’s model aligns closely with Densley’s (2014) model of gang evolution from recreation to crime to enterprise to governance.

Regarding ‘governance’, another aspect of OC is the *regulation* of illicit production and exchange. In this view, OC attempts to regulate and control the production and distribution of a given commodity or service unlawfully (Varese 2010). The supply of private protection is one example (Nozick 1974; Tilly 1985; Gambetta 1993), whereby OC seeks to bring order to the underworld (Schelling 1971; Skarbek 2014). The illegal governance of communities has been extensively documented in relation to traditional mafia organizations in Italy and Sicily (Gambetta 1993; Paoli 2003; Campana 2011; Varese 2011), the United States (Reuter 1983), Russia (Varese 2001), Hong Kong (Chu 2000) and Japan (Hill 2003). However, governance-related activities have also been identified among cartels in Latin America (Brophy 2008) and, of interest to the current study, street gangs—both in the United States (Levitt and Venkatesh 2000) and the United Kingdom (Densley 2013, 2014).

Campana and Varese (2018) recently operationalized extralegal governance based on three (indirect) measures: (1) the ability of an OC group to generate fear in a community; (2) its ability to coerce legal businesses; and (3) its ability to influence official figures. On the basis of qualitative research in Greater Manchester and Derbyshire, they found most OC activities were conducted in the absence of governance-type OC, but illegal governance did still exist; a finding consistent with other studies in high-crime

areas in the United Kingdom (Walklate and Evans 1999). Campana and Varese (2018: 15) note, 'governance is less likely to emerge when it is harder to control the territory in which transactions take place'. For this reason, illegal governance is 'likely to be clustered in less affluent, deprived areas and neighbourhoods' characterized by a 'lack of trust in legitimate institutions'. Precisely the type of areas and neighbourhoods in which the fieldwork for this study was conducted.

The Current Study

Do Glasgow gangs actually *govern* territories? Are gangs mainly businesses that trade certain commodities that they do not produce (e.g. drugs), or do gangs aspire to govern various aspects of the local economy? To answer this question, a more granular analysis of the differential meanings and conceptualizations of territoriality within the broad sphere of gang activity and across the wider landscape of gang types in Glasgow is needed. To this end, the current study examines three identifiable iterations of criminally-oriented group offending: the Young Street Gang (YSG), the Young Crime Gang (YCG) and SOCG. Each case study identifies how each grouping is situated within its territory, how it operates, its group dynamics, and interactions within and without neighbourhood space(s). Each case study similarly illustrates an evolutionary or progressive developmental stage in criminal activity, which in some cases is matched by the age of those involved (Densley 2012) and in other cases by social skill or adoptive strategy within the 'social field' (Harding 2014). Essentially, we identify an evolution of relationships between the gang and the street, which can be summarized as a series of tied and bonded relationships moving from social to business to governance.

Each case study highlights differential engagement with territory that has profound implications for group visibility, intra/inter-group social networking, levels of social control and social engagement with the local community. To make sense of these concepts, we engage with the interpretative framework of Pierre Bourdieu (1969, 1984) and his concepts of habitus and social field (for a comparable approach, see Moyle and Coomber [2017]), which provide the greatest explanatory value for understanding how territory is conceived, perceived and received by the various actors in the case study neighbourhoods.

Bourdieu interpreted different social domains as social fields of action, each operating with its own set logic and governed by rules understood by all actors in the field. These implicit and explicit rules dictate the goals for which actors in the field all strive. The social field also retains an identifiable hierarchy through which actors strive to advance, ensuring all social fields are structured by highly competitive social relationships and power imbalances. Here a social field can be interpreted as an entire neighbourhood, a division of a neighbourhood or even the gang itself.

Crucially, the boundaries of social fields are not physical but abstract and relational. The boundary of the social field is the point at which its influence ends and its rules and logic no longer apply. Beyond this, the influence is contested, the rules may change, alter, or be unknown; they might even belong to another social field (e.g. a rival gang or different neighbourhood). It is an individual's relationship with the gang over time that determines his or her personal boundaries, and while they might appear fixed as physical boundaries, they are, in reality, in a constant state of flux.

Actions within the field are governed by ‘habitus’, a set of bodily, physical and mental dispositions operating subconsciously as a blueprint for habitual thought, behaviour and action (Bourdieu 1984). Habitus operates as an instinctive understanding of credible or permissible action within one’s environment or social field. Within each social field, moreover, actors employ strategies of capital accumulation to gain advancement up the field hierarchy.

Harding’s (2014) ethnographic research in London and Deuchar’s (2009) fieldwork in Glasgow both apply Bourdieu’s principles to gangs, from social field analysis and habitus, to the centrality of ‘street capital’ accumulation (see also, Sandberg and Pederson [2011]). These same concepts are employed here to interrogate several research questions: (1) How does the gang’s relationship with territory evolve over time? (2) How, if at all, do gang members’ perceptions of territory change as the gang evolves? (3) Do gangs evolve to govern illicit markets or merely trade specific illicit commodities? (4) How do habitus, social field and street capital interact in relation to neighbourhood turf?

Method

Data were gathered between 2012 and 2016 as part of the first author’s qualitative study of gang- and group-offending in Glasgow. Our elected case study areas exhibit limited housing churn, ethnic homogeneity and a degree of neighbourhood stasis. Some might view this as a limitation of the study; however, we have unique access to 42 interviewees from the lowest to the highest echelons of criminal offending in these areas, and this is unique.

Participant criteria was defined as (1) previous experience of gang/group offending, (2) previous engagement in practices identified by Police Scotland as serious and organized crime (SOC) (Scottish Government 2015) and (3) over 16 years of age. Initially participants were accessed via outreach projects with frontline practitioners acting as gatekeepers. Those gatekeepers were also interviewed. Difficulties accessing ‘hard-to-reach populations’ and related biases (Bhopal and Deuchar 2016) necessitated subsequent ‘snowball sampling’ wherein initial interviewees recommended known (ex)-offenders who met the inclusion criteria. This combined purposive and snowball technique, common in studies of gangs and OC (e.g. Densley [2013]), yielded 47 interviewees ($n=5$ practitioners, $n=42$ offenders).

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 34 men and 8 women aged between 16 and 35. All were raised in Glasgow housing ‘schemes’ (see Miller 2015), characterized by high levels of deprivation (see Scottish Government 2012). Data were triangulated via discussion with other interviewees and gatekeepers. On occasion, interviewees voluntarily provided corroborating evidence (i.e. media articles, criminal records, etc.). Interviews were digitally transcribed and analysed thematically (Creswell 1994). Ethical approval was granted by the researcher’s home institution. All names are pseudonyms.

Findings

Findings are presented in the form of three case studies. Each study is relevant to a specific level of gang organization in accordance with McLean’s (2018) evolving gang

model. The first case study is drawn from participants interviewed individually. The interviewees had all grown up on one particularly large Glasgow housing estate, but they had lived in different schemes and affiliated with different YSGs. The second case study is drawn from a group interview ($n=5$) with a YCG in its early stages of development. The third case study features data from another group interview ($n=4$) with members of an SOCG that had recently evolved from a YCG.

Case study A: YSG

The estate in question was initially designed to be a leafy suburb, dominated by cottage-style housing. Following the end of the Second World War, however, the need arose for large-scale social housing. This situation was worsened by the fact that much of Glasgow's inner-city housing at that time was in a dire state of dilapidation. Thus, Glasgow City Council adopted an 'overspill policy' whereby much of the inner-city housing would be demolished and its residents relocated to either newly developed towns or large peripheral housing estates within the city limits. As a result, the once 'leafy suburb' under development was redesigned. The second half of the estate was built quickly, and cheaply, to provide affordable homes for a large migrating population. Much of the remaining land on the estate was developed to make way for three- and four-storey post-war tenements. The estate today is made up of six smaller 'schemes' (Miller 2015), which locals unofficially divide further. At its height, the estate population was estimated at over 30,000, but it is less now owing to new private housing that has replaced the dilapidated post-war tenements. The area today is characterized by gentrification and greater ethnic diversity.

The estate in general, and the newer-built schemes in particular, are synonymous with gang activity. Our interviewees either previously belonged to YSGs on the estate or rival groups that had 'run ins' with those from the area. Following McLean's (2018) evolving gang model, such groups were primarily recreational groups that drew membership via wider processes akin to 'street socialization' (Vigil 1988). They were reasonably disorganized, reminiscent of Harding's (2014) elementary group of 'Youngers' or Densley's (2014) 'recreational' gang.

For YSGs, territorial fighting was a by-product of issues of status recognition, masculinity and boredom:

There wasn't much to get up to when [growing up]. Nothing to do but get into trouble I suppose. Most of the daft gang fights I was involved in was more to do way breaking boredom than anything else. – Grant

Younger actors in the social field of the gang had little if any 'street capital'. They sought to build their reputations through expressive forms of criminal activity. Taking on the 'defence' of the scheme permitted deployment of skills that were visible to others, approved and lauded. Gee explains:

The [housing estate] I grew up in didn't have one [YSG, but two]. We used to all fight but then all started hanging out together (socialising) till one of the guys from the [YSG A] got jumped by the [YSG B]. After that we all started fighting again.... was good no' having to worry about getting jumped in your own [scheme]... while it lasted. But too many dodgy (dangerously unpredictable) cunts pure thinking they're [hard men] and always starting [conflict].

For members of YSGs, the social field was conceptualized basically in terms of physical entities of 'doing', rather than the more sophisticated power relationships behind the social field, discussed later, which focus on 'being' and 'knowing'. Thus, 'doing' for these younger gang members involved identifying territorial boundaries and 'defending the turf'. Turf defence provided a sense of agency and gave purpose to perceived masculine duty.

YSGs were extremely territorial. Perceived physical boundaries were drawn up (often according to local authority boundaries) and 'patrolled', and often marked by signposts and 'menchies'(graffiti). Communal spaces such as recreational centres, swimming pools, parks, shopping parades and chip shops, in turn, were identified by association with a specific group, 'claimed' by one group or disputed between groups. Such landmarks served as territorial markers, boundaries or definers. It was not uncommon for 'official' names to differ from the names used by our interviewees. The construction of such boundaries was made easier by juvenile understandings of school catchment areas, bus routes, housing types, etc. Social field boundaries for non-gang youth differed, of course, but the perceived or imaginary territorial boundaries identified by our interviewees appeared 'real' because habitus was shared.

As Gee explained, a single estate could be disaggregated into a number of different schemes that fought against one another. Contrary to existing Scottish gang literature (e.g. Fraser[2015]), however, YSGs also merged to create single units and/or crossed scheme boundaries when desired. Al-G elaborated:

I came from [Scheme A] We called ourselves [X], but my cousins were all from the [Y] We started hanging out, aye, for a bit back then.... That's how the [Y] started putting [the] menchies (graffiti) saying [Y-X], mate.

At this elemental stage, YSG members perceived their social field (both their gang, and their scheme) as a physical landscape with tangible physical boundaries. However, their extended family network precipitated 'bridging social capital'(Putnam 2000) that redefined imagined social field boundaries, resulting in the merger of two YSGs. Mergers such as this often were reliant upon bounded interpersonal relationships between key individuals, meaning they could be either fragile or enduring. Steggy observed:

Called [A-B] bud cause the [A] boys use to kick about way [B]. [Former A-B members A and X] were the ones that met [A-B] over at the pitches (football parks), and started kicking about, know.... [A] hate all [B] now.... Still called [A-B] but.

Sometimes, the gang's territorial claims outlived the territory itself:

There was no [former name of a demolished scheme] anymore. Last of the flats on [street X] got pulled down [years ago]. Me and [my friends] that used to live there got moved all over Glasgow by the council.... I ended up over in [B] [but] we still always met back up on the weekends at the shops (which remain) [Still labelled] ourselves [turf name]—James

James was relocated to the housing estate discussed in this case, yet he still affiliated with his previous YSG as opposed to assimilating with the local option. In other words, James still inhabited the social field of his previous scheme and its YSG and was not ready to affirm allegiance to his new social field.

Ultimately, it appears that a YSG's relationship with territory is complex at least. While it is commonly assumed that YSGs are a product of street socialization, whereby members are local residents who adhere to invisible boundaries, the findings presented

here would suggest it is not so straightforward. While most YSGs retain labelling properties affiliated with the housing estate, they change depending upon the scheme they are in. In some cases, YSGs will merge, call truce, adopt aspects of each other's names, or affiliate with former estates or areas where they meet. As one participant stated, his group named themselves 'The Chipshop Boys' because they had come from all over the Glasgow conurbation to a newly built area, and typically socialized at the chip shop within this area.

Yet the ability of YSGs to call a truce, merge and/or adopt hyphenated gang names back and forth is primarily determined that at this stage of development, the gang makes little attempt to govern or control an area beyond issues relating to territorial rivalry among other youth groups. The lack of intent, or interest, to pull together resources to engage in acquisitive crimes is largely reflective of the YSG's mean age of 16. Most YSG members will happily engage in gang fights, but have little interest in purposeful criminal careers. Rather, when a YSG does commit acquisitive crime, typically it is low-level drug dealing or 'social supply' (Coomber and Moyle 2014) conducted by a few select individuals at the heart of the group (see McLean [2018]):

[Local youths] usually get their drugs from one or two of the [YSG core] members. We find these boys [in turn] get them from their family... it's normal behaviour in their own households.—Clair

At the YSG stage, gangs are essentially composed of young teenagers. Thus YSGs lack the cohesion and unanimous group identity needed to govern or exert real influence over their physical territory. Likewise, even the more criminally intent youths belonging to core of the group, who do go on to become career criminals, at this stage lack the resources, experience, and physical and intellectual maturity needed to challenge older adult criminals already established in the vicinity. Therefore, the YSG realm is characterized by recreational fighting, where reputations can be built on the street; whereas the older criminal groups who have previously undergone this same process, now use these gained reputations, and prior criminal connections and networks (their 'street capital'), for financial gain.

Case study B: Youth crime gang

Our second case study features a large estate in a neighbouring Glasgow overspill township that since deindustrialization in the 1970s and 80s has been characterized by intergenerational unemployment and poverty. The estate is densely populated and is composed of four-in-a-stair blocks and tenements. Part demolition and part regeneration has created newly perceived physical boundaries on the estate and a rivalry between its two separate ends.

Resident on the estate was what McLean (2018) described as a YCG, born out of the 'core' members or 'usual' suspects of two older YSGs. Criminal justice practitioner Jonathan explained:

It's usually only 3 or 4 individuals among [the YSG] who are like the right bad ones you [will] read about in the papers. That's the ones that go on to become like career criminals.

Evident in this case study was a shift from expressive to instrumental criminal activity, a decline in association with physical territory and wider engagement with the social

field. This was coupled with increased personal responsibility and the pursuit of material wealth. Allan, Bobby, Del, Mark, and Paul, explained how their group evolved from two separate YSGs into one YCG and how their emphasis shifted from territorial disputes to drug sales:

A: 'I only knew of Paul and Mark through Del, I didn't know [them] from like school or nothing.... Paul had actually slashed [a Bottom End YSG associate] when we fought wi' their [Top End YSG] up the park, remember?

P: Aye (laughs), well wasn't really a slashing fuck sake

A: I always thought you were sound No issues They're from Top End

B: We were at a house party and Del came in [to the house] wi' [Paul and Mark] ... just clicked, didn't we, aye?

M: Aye. Saying that you're a dick though (laughs)....

A: Every cunt was just closure (likable) mate, know.... They had a good wee thing going up the [Top End area]

P: was alright...

A: Couldn't tell you what they made (earned), but (looking at Paul) [they] were jumping about with [a known SOCG member] basically, [a family member] (of Allan) was selling directly to [SOCG member] and Paul and Mark just asked if I could get them [illegal Class A drug]¹....

B: That was that mate... [been] hanging about way these fannies since (laughs)

P: Unfortunately for me, you fanny. Know what I mean mate?

A: We don't get in like huge [supplies], no' now, no since my [family member] was stabbed for [non-drug related issues] ... me and Mark usually get [specified weight] from [a more evolved YCG].... Paul here, gets a good deal every now and then off [Glasgow based SOCG], eh? Brings in a fair degree.

While the gang acknowledged that they traded illegal drugs they did not produce as a cohesive unit, they also socialized and co-offended with trusted individuals outside of the group, contingent on opportunity, availability and activity. Members purchased drugs opportunistically and from various sources depending on who had supply connections at the time. Interviewees self-reported additional engagement in violence, theft, robbery and debt collection. As outlined above by Allan, therefore, the gang had no set leader or defined goals, which, in turn, affected how the gang was perceived by others:

We are a gang, but we wouldn't call ourselves Young Teams mate. That's for wee guys ... no cunt would take you serious [We] are mates that ... [Deal drugs together] Don't have like a gang name, know.—Mark

Practitioner Jonathan added further clarity:

The boys.... don't label themselves by gang names.... like The Panthers ... It's not like that.... I hear them refer to their [gangs], or other [YCGs] by.... the name of a guy they know in the gang ...[for example, they] might say something like [I] 'get [my drugs] off of Boab', or '[phone] Steg's team' [for drugs].

As the YCG expanded and increased its operational network, moreover, it became increasingly necessary to transcend the territorial boundaries of the estate now viewed as flexible and fluid. A few years older, members could now drive their own cars. Some had legitimate jobs and more disposable income. Others had greater family responsibilities. Increased maturity similarly created a desire to separate from YSGs and socialize outside of the estate in city centre venues. Allan, Paul and Mark explained:

¹The Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is the main law regulating drug use in the United Kingdom. It divides controlled substances into three classes (A, B and C). Class A, including heroin, cocaine and ecstasy, is the category that attracts the most severe penalties for possession, supply and trafficking.

A: 'When you're young you just fight cunts don't you?... like wee guy shit....[Top End] used to fight the [Bottom End].... I'm no[t] going to start scrapping way guys from the [Top End] now but....

P: Cause, you'd get done in (laughs).

A: Fuck up Just cause they are from another scheme. That's daft.

M: Pure matters but when you're young aye....

A: Aye mate, daft but. Fuck, my misses stays the Top End, so if I move in with her I would be living there. Doesn't make sense when you're older.

P: You go to the dancing and shit, meet cunts from everywhere that are pure sound.

M: Would be fucked up fighting people for that....

A: See when you're driving as well, [territory is no longer a confinement].

Prior territoriality had enabled Allan, Paul and Mark to build reputations, express themselves and break from mundane lifestyles. But spatial boundaries, real and perceived, also hemmed them in. And, as Allan points out, they now proved counterproductive to the provision of illegal goods and services:

[My family member] was heavy moving (supplying significant amounts of drugs) He was working way cunts from all over Glasgow.... [even] Ireland, going over to [Irish city].... If he wasn't wanting to deal wi' cunts just cause they didn't come from his scheme he would have got nowhere.

As the group evolved, therefore, the gang grew to understand territory differently. They had to remove prior constraints regarding whom they would associate with and work alongside. While the YCG members were still aware of the internal scheme dynamics, they no longer adhered to them in the same manner, as Allan states:

The guys we mostly [purchase class A drugs] from stay in [Glasgow conurbation area A].... Me and Mark usually [collect]... take it back to [store houses A and B].... Just work it from there really... sometimes Mark drops a package of [Class B drugs] into [X], just do the pick-up for her as a favour, know.

As indicated by Allan, the gang now operates outside of the physical territory from which its members originally grew up in, and still hold residence in. A regular supplier who acted as a wholesaler sold smaller bulks of drugs to the YCG. This was typically a specific drug type. The drugs were then taken back to two different houses where the YCG operated. These houses were within the estate in question. One house was a store house. The other was both a store house and a centre for distribution to other independent dealers, YSGs and YCGs operating on the scheme, and a few dealers on neighbouring schemes. Allan indicated that packages of drugs were also picked up and dropped off by female dealers. Allan did not specify why or what the relationship was. Mar stated, however, 'we only sell [class A's], too much fucking about with [the class B]'.

The gang's supply network had been established and reinforced over a considerable time. As a result, the YCG essentially operated in a closed market. Yet, Bobby and Allan mentioned the open-market policy practiced in certain streets, typically cul-de-sacs, on the estate, thus highlighting a form of market differentiation:

B: 'The drop [we do] to [independent dealers and local YSG] down [an area on the housing estate] gets sold rapid as fuck mate....

A: We do alright from there....

B: Anyone can buy down there, it's always been like that there.

A: You could go there the now and pick up shit we just dropped, literally....

B: Dodgy but...

A: Aye, asking to get busted (arrested).

B: Smack heads (drug addicts) don't care but....

Accordingly, the YCG transcended traditional scheme boundaries, insomuch that they purchased drugs from larger wholesalers residing elsewhere in the country. However, most of the drugs purchased were then resold within traditional estate or scheme boundaries that gang members grew up in and were familiar with. The implication was that the gang could trade off their established reputations from prior YSG involvement, including reputations for violence, and could leverage community standing to operate with a degree of impunity. As such, while the YCG did not seek to govern markets, the potential to do so existed.

Case study C: SOCG

The third case study refers to a large peripheral estate with a declining population but sustained levels of deprivation. The area is characterized by limited local regeneration, limited housing refurbishment, closed retail outlets and school amalgamation. On the estate is a YCG that has evolved to become an SOCG in its own right by focusing on the provision of illegal drugs. The group initially sold both Class A and Class B drugs, but now almost exclusively sells Class A drugs because it is 'the most profitable' and it 'makes things easy'. Interviewees said other drug types were generally 'not worth the risk' or 'worthwhile' financially, yet owing to their control and influence in the market, they still used established networks to connect distributors and buyers. Ewan explained:

We take nothing to do with it, really... like, say, I don't know, Mr Jones, just say, has say ten thousand pounds worth of E's (ecstasy), I would just say "hold on mate, I know a guy that might be interested" and then phone [criminal associate], cause that's his field man, he deals with that.... Course I take a cut but for doing that, don't work for fuck all... and basically making sure [Mr Jones] doesn't get bumped [by the criminal associate].

For Ewan, a focus on one or two specific illegal goods allowed his group to operate more efficiently and retain a clear trail of thought and action. Diversification resulted in 'getting sloppy and fucking up'. The fact that Ewan stated, 'I take a cut', as opposed to 'we take a cut', indicated that while Ewan drew upon the group's reputation to facilitate his business, he exploited this reputation to earn profit for himself, something well documented in studies of mafia groups (e.g. [Gambetta \[1993\]](#)). This may indicate a change in how group relationships work once they become more entrepreneurial.

Adult SOCGs had a far more strategic relationship with territory than their juvenile YSC counterparts. Knowledge of the social field of the surrounding community was much more sophisticated, more intimate and nuanced, and now based on years of experience. Street capital had been generated and reputations won. There was now no need to 'do gang' in public ([Garot 2007](#)). Business deals extended beyond the confines of the scheme and interpersonal relationships were based much more widely, even city wide or county wide. The SOCG in this study even worked extensively with others from 'South of the Border', including ethnically non-white gangs in England.

Thus, territory can be considered as fluid in terms of working with, and securing products from, those outside of estate boundaries. In other words, the SOCG played in a wider, redefined social field. They fully understood the rules of the game and logic of their original social field and could now leverage fear in the community by employing coercion

tactics to begin to govern aspects of local life. For example, 'pressuring' vulnerable individuals to store drugs, money or goods in safe houses. Group member Peter states:

We've [store houses] all over. No[t] in just one place... on the estate, cause no' wanting them too far [away] in case shit goes down.

Bourdieu would term this a 'conservation strategy' aimed at retaining the benefits of power and privilege (Swartz 1997). Having reached the apex of local (criminal) power and while retaining intimate personal knowledge of local relationships and criminal networks, the SOCG were now in a position to define, or redefine, the rules of the social field to their advantage. In this way they began to acquire authority and then governance of the territory. To maintain their privilege, the SOCG ensured a covert presence supported by clear lines of intelligence and information. Adapted rules were learnt quickly by the local community who had witnessed sanctions taken out against those who infringe the new rules of the social field, or who benefited by largesse, favours and gifting.

Adaptation of territory further included identifying and utilizing properties as 'store houses'. Often located in tower blocks, and deemed as less desirable due to high turnover of tenants, they offered anonymity and possible multiple drop points within communal storage areas. Drugs were hidden in vents that ran throughout the buildings on various levels. Marginalized and poor residents who were in many cases vulnerable owing to age, gender or drug and alcohol addiction were easily exploited or enticed with 'extra income' to act as lookouts. Concierge staff were equally bribed or on the SOCG's payroll to manage access points and inform on movements.

While the SOCG did not view territory in the same restrictive way that YSGs viewed it, they still largely operated out of familiar surroundings. The traditional three-storey tenements and closed backyards were seen to provide space in which illicit trade could thrive. Growing up on an estate with high levels of social deprivation and a lack of material goods or expendable finances meant many children spent their leisure time on the streets and in backcourts, thus in loose contact with the SOCG. The constant interaction and familiarization of individuals allowed a social hierarchy to be established in the community, built from childhood, that ensured the local population would happily protect gang members from rivals, law enforcement and other threats. As Ewan explains:

I knew everyone in my scheme [growing up]. Even now, helps out.

The SOGC's reputation was enhanced by demonstrating their influence over the territory or environment (e.g. opening new bars, shops or premises; multiple ownership of property). By investing capital acquired via crime into legitimate, localized, businesses, criminals secured 'legitimate' reputations as 'business men' and 'not thugs'. Ewan and Stew explained:

E: 'After I got out, I didn't want to go back. You miss so much inside, it's a canter but still... [I] don't want to be doing this shit my whole life, know? I don't think any of us do. Want to go legit....

S: 'Right mate, too fucking right. Too old to be in and out of prison. Fucking shame.

E: No good for the kids....

S: We had owned the wee car wash up the road off of [street name], but looking to get the wee ice-cream shop up and running soon.

E: Still getting work done on it. Needs the lights fixed, some other shit with the electrics...

Reputations were further enhanced when SOCG members lived off the scheme in more upmarket housing. They were now perceived as local investors, giving back to the community.

Engagement with territory, therefore, had again altered. Now the SOCG began to operate as a clear but covert authority with the ability to reset the rules of the social field as they wished. The concept of 'territory', no longer bounded by physical margins, morphed into the more abstract concepts of spheres of influence and control. New territories were being built, owned or manipulated, through the acquisition or purchase of local premises (e.g. beauty salons, tanning shops, nail bars). Such premises offered partial legitimacy, opportunities for money laundering, even a future pension. Acting as a legitimate front, such premises conferred business status on members while opening up further criminal opportunities and acting as outposts or fortifiers of the new rules of the social field. Interactions with the community as an employer conferred new power relations: the ability to hire and fire, raise revenue and lend money. Social interaction in such venues generated income and fed the informal information economy where updated intelligence on the movements of people and goods was exchanged (Harding 2014). This further enhanced the ability of the group to generate fear in a community, coerce legal businesses and influence official figures—all signs of extra-legal governance (Campana and Varese 2018).

This 'help[ing] out', moreover, proved to be important when operating business out of, and owning legitimate premises within, the local neighbourhood. This proved to be an astute move from a business perspective, as did 'hanging out' in the area. Local property and business premises would be protected by associates, childhood friends and even others in the local population who retained a sense of loyalty to the group members who viewed them as their own. Thus, there was a reduced threat of vandalism to the property. Likewise, being well known as criminals who would issue reprisals helped maintain a complicit environment.

Group member Steve, who transcends group boundaries in regards to the SOCG in this case study and also affiliates with another well-known SOCG, reminisced about errors made in prior purchasing of legitimate premises outside the local territory:

I tried to leave all that rubbish (OC) a few times. I had a good thing going with a couple of tanning salons I bought, well co-owned wi' others Enemies get jealous but.... [the] premises ended up being vandalised.—Steve

Having co-owned businesses in other areas of the Glasgow conurbation, Steve was unable to call upon the local community for protection when he was not present. In hindsight, had these tanning salons been locally based, Steve acknowledges they likely would not have been vandalized: particularly if located within 'The Jungle', where loyalties were strongest. Thus, arguably the wider housing estate acted like a barrier, much like Cold War Russia used satellite countries as a buffer zone protection to the main hub of activity. It is important to note that the group in question are by no means the only SOCG working on the estate. But they do govern the market in terms of allowing, or not, other criminal groups to operate. A less physical view of territory, however, avoids violent territorial disputes.

Discussion

The current study used social field theory to examine how gangs in different evolutionary stages interact with their local surroundings. In areas of multiple deprivation (i.e. the case study locations), family and extended family remain on, or close to, gang territory, forming intimately dense social networks. Housing churn in such areas can be slow or minimal, ensuring families live in such estates for decades. Intergenerational poverty and deprivation coupled with reduced employment or social opportunities generate a poverty of aspiration and entrenched embeddedness in this social field. This brings a reluctance to move beyond the social field or to accept or embrace things considered 'beyond our Ken' (knowledge and experience). This too, overtime, becomes physically and mentally embodied by the habitus. Early transmission of this to children by parents and guardians is reinforced by 'street socialization' (Vigil 1988) and early adoption of 'street codes' (Anderson 1999) that promote violence as a means of dispute resolution and status acquisition.

Dealing illegal drugs, however, broadens the social field and changes its rules. By the YCG stage, the imperative of earning and creating 'street capital' has started to wane, or is at least moderated to be generated in other ways, and instead interpersonal relationships that bring benefit and advancement are being pursued. In this way, gang territory starts to be viewed in terms of a 'field of relationships' rather than 'tangible physical boundaries'. Gang members with greater 'bridging social capital' (Putnam 2000) will advance more quickly and develop more entrepreneurial relationships that traverse the perceived physical territory.

For SOCGs, territory ultimately becomes viewed as abstract, offering endless opportunity for expansion of their authority into governance. Relationships with territory now involve, and benefit from, more subtle forms of social control. Now as recognized 'business men' on the estate, tactics will change to 'manage' business and keep it 'under the radar', utilizing affirmative sanctions such as favouring and gifting, or negative sanctions such as bribing or coercion. Indeed, the SOCG not only understand that many families on the estate are hustling to survive (e.g. fiddling benefits, working in the grey economy, buying stolen goods), but they understand intimately the street code of this social field, which signifies that grassing will not be tolerated and the authorities cannot be trusted. This authoritative vacuum operating in the scheme provides opportunities for the SCOG, often designating authority upon them to act in this role. This supports Densley's (2014) fourth stage of gang evolution: governance.

Occasionally movement into alternate social fields can be misjudged (i.e. leading to the vandalizing of the tanning salons operating outside the estate). Transgressing field boundaries in this way can generate negative attention and retribution, bringing opportunities for either violence or possibly fresh business relationships, as Steve, in our third case study, explained. Hence, the SOCG utilizes its bridging social capital to nurture the 'upcomers' in the community. Inherent within this informal 'apprenticeship' arrangement is the risk that one of the 'upcomers' become a rival, which is why SOCGs revisit 'old haunts' and re-cement loyalties, reconnecting with the common bonded habitus and continually gathering intelligence and risk-assessing individuals, loyalties and shifting allegiances.

The ways in which gangs interact with territory is highly complex. YSGs may be rooted to the spot, whilst SOCGs will conduct their business near and far. But all gangs thrive when embedded in local communities and fed by family and friendship networks

rooted in childhood. Their internal locus of control, built on an established 'street capital', encourages the local population to carry out minor infringements, as sentinels or informants that sustain the provision of illegal goods and services. SOCGs operating at the higher echelons maintain and conserve market privilege by (1) having their own supply networks,(2) networking with those at the top of the supply chain and giving access to goods,(3) controlling upcoming groups and individuals and (4) perhaps most importantly, acting as a reputable firm through which suppliers can reach other suppliers, wholesalers, and customers of illicit drugs. In other words, SOCGs govern the market, not insomuch through product control, but rather in setting the rules of play and determining who may access and then play in the sandbox.

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of over a century's worth of evidence that has identified significant links between gangs, crime and territorial behaviour (Thrasher 1927), in this paper we have attempted to provide a more granular analysis of territoriality as it relates to Glasgow gangs. Cognisant of the significant gap in our understanding of how territory works within eclectic forms of gang culture, we have explored how young men's relationships to territory alter/change as both group and individual gang members change/evolve. Drawing on social field analysis, we have considered the way in which young men accumulate and use street capital as a means of becoming more skilful within the social field of the gang and in turn begin to transition from expressive to instrumental forms of criminal activity (Harding 2014). Building and extending upon, and in some ways refuting previous insights from, previous gang research in Glasgow (Deuchar 2009, 2013; Fraser 2015), we have identified the transitional and fluid nature of young gang members' activity within the city's housing estates and the way in which street gang membership can and does on occasions lead on to participating in OC. From having a strong focus on public performance of masculinity and the defence of physical turf as YSG members, through the gradual adopting of more business orientations and the viewing of territory as flexible and fluid as YCGs, to the ultimate manipulation of territorial knowledge and street capital to create entrepreneurial forms of social control as SOCGs, young men in Glasgow often adopt an evolving relationship with territory over time.

While we must be cautious about overgeneralizing the insights from our qualitative research, the findings could help to inform future policy and practice in Scotland regarding the policing of gangs and serious organized crime. Police Scotland (2016) has identified that its service faces 'significant demand' in respect of investigations into OC, and in its national strategy for reducing the harm caused by it the Scottish Government (2015) presents a four-pronged approach. The approach focuses on the need to: *divert* people from becoming involved in SOC; *deter* SOCGs by supporting private, public and third sector organizations to protect themselves and each other; *detect* and prosecute those involved in SOC; and *disrupt* SOCGs. The Serious Organised Crime Taskforce (SOCT), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and the Lord Advocate, oversees the work carried out to reduce the harm caused by OC in Scotland. It provides strategic direction and is supported through the Scottish Crime Campus, which works to enhance the 'investigative collaboration between key partner organisations' in the fight against OC (Scottish Government 2016b).

The insights from our research could provide more depth to the existing knowledgebase of the SOCT and the ongoing strategic policy discussions within the Scottish Government and practice-oriented debates among senior officers within Police Scotland and the wider partner agencies involved in tackling OC. The findings could hold the capacity to support Detectives and members of wider agencies with their ongoing vision to *divert, deter, detect* and *disrupt* members of SOCGs by providing them with a new evidencebase that suggests the need to target linchpin areas such as YCGs, while simultaneously avoiding the situation whereby minor offenders (who may be members of YSGs or reluctant associates) are brought into the fold, or criminalized (McLean *et al.* 2018).

However, we also believe that the applicability of our research goes beyond the implications for the official and rather pedestrian *divert/deter/detect/disrupt* policy discourse that tends to dominate the law enforcement landscape in Scotland as it relates to OC. Recognising the clearly established links between income and wealth inequality and criminal outcomes, the Scottish Government's (2017) wider *Justice in Scotland: Vision and Priorities* strategy highlights the need for 'addressing the root causes of disadvantage, enhancing [...] provision for the people and places experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage' (p.7). It draws attention to the links between income inequality and criminogenic outcomes while also highlighting the relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and future offending patterns within the overall context of prevention and early intervention. Tackling the root causes of gang culture and its implications for drug distribution thus involves moving beyond a reactive law enforcement perspective on diversion, deterrence, detection and disruption and the need to ensure that wider justice policy rhetoric focused on tackling inequality and childhood disadvantage hits the ground. Doing so will involve putting local people and communities at the heart of decision-making through a focus on co-production of ideas for addressing these issues (Scottish Government 2017).

Moreover, the way in which policies for tackling gangs and drug markets are conceptualized and applied needs to take cognizance of the nature and impact of gang activity in local settings. Thus, a local neighbourhood dominated by the presence of YSGs may require interventions designed to tackle ACEs combined with programmes focused on challenging young men's perspectives on the gravitas associated with street capital (Densley *et al.* 2017). Conversely, in areas where YCGs have begun to emerge the focus may be more on the need for preventing their evolution from expressive to instrumental violence and from an overarching focus on trading growing into enterprise and governance (Densley 2014). Finally, our insights also suggest that the undisputed allure of the drug market in stimulating gang evolution has implications for wider drug policy in Scotland. The view that prohibition and drug enforcement can be effective in preventing problem drug use is widespread across the western world, but it has been argued that drug laws—which tend to be driven by a moral view that valorizes the currency of abstinence—often cause more harm than good (Goode 2006; McPhee 2012, 2017). If preventing gang evolution (as we have defined it) is to become a reality, it may be that policy discourse in Scotland needs to transition from a focus on prohibition to one on drug harm reduction or (in some cases) decriminalization (McPhee 2012, 2017).

At the same time, we believe that further research is needed into the extent to and ways in which levels of group organization affect young men's engagement with territorial issues and how gradual accumulation of street capital can enable progression towards entrepreneurial, business-oriented, instrumental criminal activity. This type of

wider evidence base would help to enable the national police force and its partners and stakeholders in Scotland to identify the best means of intervening and preventing the further emergence of SOC and ultimately support the building of safer, stronger and flourishing Scottish communities (Scottish Government 2016a).

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