

## **Exploring the currency of violence in Serious Organised Crime (SOC)**

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### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the reasons why organised crime offenders use violence. Using a multi-faceted framework, it examines the phenomenon from macro and micro perspectives across levels of formality and fluidity. Utilising theories of violence which map across psychological, sociological and cultural perspectives as well as instrumental and expressive explanations, it examines international empirical evidence associated with longstanding hierarchical groups, such as the Costra Nostra and Yakuza. From then on, the chapter examines 4109 UK based organised crime offenders, comparing them with cohorts of both serious and general offenders. It examines residential community dynamics as well as the early experiences and behaviour of young men thought to be on the periphery of organised crime. As the studies become more detailed and illuminating, the chapter concludes that a 'one-size fits all' approach cannot explain the diversity of violence found within Organised Crime Groups.

### **Introduction**

Although a myriad of definitions exist for Serious Organised Crime (SOC), Albanese (2007) found the four most frequent characteristics to be: a continuing organizational hierarchy; the corruption of public officials to maintain immunity; obtaining rational profit through crime; and the use of force or threat. This chapter explores the latter, specifically focusing upon the currency of violence for those engaged in this environment. To do so this chapter will examine the role of violence across a spectrum of organised crime groups (OCG), starting with the earlier studies on more formal hierarchical groups, such as the Costra Nostra and Yakuza. It will then turn to the UK, initially looking at a study of 4109 offenders, before looking in more depth at Organised Crime Group (OCG) dynamics and the views of the community. Finally, the chapter examines the characteristics of a cohort of young men, identified as being on the periphery of organised crime to establish early experiences. During this process psychological,

sociological and cultural perspectives will be considered, together with an analysis of instrumental and expressive explanations. In doing so it will ultimately argue that a multitude of explanations for violence are necessary to account for the diversity found within OCGs.

At the outset some foundations need to be laid. It is widely agreed that SOC creates a significant level of negative impact to society. This is observed at a macro level, with high level corruption associated with failed states and severe financial cost (Home Office, 2018), and also at a micro level, where widespread community fear and harm can be generated (Bullock *et al.*, 2009). Unfortunately, defining its form has proved difficult, being reported as “one of the most contested terms in academic criminology” (Sheptyki, 2003, p. 490). Much of the reason behind this has rested on the methodology used to identify and understand organised crime. There are distinct challenges associated with researching this type of violent and covert crime, which often means that academics rely upon law enforcement organisations to generate data. The quality of this may be influenced by the capacity and capability of the agencies themselves, as some offenders will be noticed whilst others remain invisible (Kirby, 2013). Further, as no country routinely categorises information on organised crime offences or its offenders, no international comparative data is available. This limits the data in terms of representativeness and objectivity, leading to the criticism that the frequency and content of organised crime is poorly understood (von Lampe, 2012).

Nonetheless, it is important to have a definition to guide this chapter. In the UK, where the definition has evolved over recent years, it is explained as, “individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individuals, in groups and / or as part of transnational networks” (Home Office, 2018, p. 11). Meanwhile, the United Nations defined OCGs as a “structured group of three or more persons existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more serious crimes or offences in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit” (United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, 2000, pp. 48-49).

Research on the structure of Organised Crime Groups also generates diverse findings. Whilst some view “...crimes as very well organised” there are others who “see crimes as intermittently or more regularly networked, but not in any stable hierarchy” (Levi, 2012, p.

598). Indeed, the United Nations sought to describe Organised Crime Groups through five typologies. The “standard hierarchy” (UNCIP, 2000, p. 75), also referred to as type 1, is aligned with Cressey’s (1969) work on La Cosa Nostra in the USA (Finckenauer, 2005). This type of OCG is characterized by the reliance on violence, to achieve criminal goals and maintain internal discipline (UNCIP, 2000). Their aims are facilitated through: a rigid leadership; hierarchical structure; a strong group identity; governance of identifiable territory; and the use of corruption, racketeering and violence. However, whilst Sheptycki *et al.* (2011) points to an apparent increase in type 1 OCGs across Mexico and South America, this model appears less common than the ‘enterprise model’ (Smith, 1991), where profit is obtained through a series of linked criminal acts forged through the ability to engender fresh contacts. In this latter model, Standing (2003) and Sheptycki *et al.* (2011, p. 12) explain “the practices are more linked with local opportunities, deregulation or change of laws than with a strong organization...challenging the state”. Finckenauer (2005, p. 65), further explains, “what we more commonly see are loosely affiliated networks of criminals who coalesce around certain criminal opportunities. The structure of these groups is much more amorphous, free floating, and flatter, and thus lacking in a rigid hierarchy”. Hobbs (1998), concurs pointing out that transnational organized crime merely comprises local groups who interact to engage in serious crime across borders. This leaves us with a varied understanding of Organised Crime, facilitated through a diverse range of structures. At one end of the continuum the boundaries are blurred, epitomised by shady business practice, whilst at the other end they morph into more locally based street gangs, who traffic drugs and other commodities, across regional boundaries. However, notwithstanding these definitional challenges a general view exists that SOC is increasing (Brocklesby, 2012); a premise that has been objectively verified in the UK’s Organised Crime Group mapping project - an initiative that will be described later (National Crime Agency, 2018).

It is also pertinent to point out that a definition of violence is also contested. Iadicola and Shupe (2003, p. 23) explain, “violence is any action or structural arrangement that results in physical or nonphysical harm to one or more persons”. This wide definition includes all levels of interpersonal, institutional and structural harm generated by individuals and the society they inhabit. Hawdon (2014) disregards this wider interpretation and (as we do in this chapter) focuses on physical force, including threats and attempts. However, the

discussion continues to be nuanced with some questioning whether the violence used by a member of an organised crime group should be labelled as interpersonal or collective violence. Senechal de la Roche (2001) argues that collective violence can only be reported when one of the parties can attract allies, and these allies are socially close to their own group and socially distant from the other group. This process is enhanced when the groups enjoy solidarity, intimacy, cultural homogeneity, and interdependence (ibid). It is only when the violence involves members of the group, for the furtherance of the group, should it be considered collective. Finally, in this section, it is also useful to set out the distinction between instrumental and expressive violence. The former relates to violence instigated to deliver a specific purpose, whilst the latter is less goal oriented and more likely to deliver greater physical injury, as it is conducted for intrinsic pleasure or gratification (McDevitt *et al.*, 2002). Topali (2006) interviewing violent offenders highlighted the positive emotions gleaned from this aggressive behaviour. This understanding is supported by cultural criminologists, who assert that some individuals living mundane and risk averse lives, engage in crime and violence for the pleasure it delivers (Katz 1988; Lyng, 1990).

Having outlined some theoretical perspectives, the chapter will now explore the currency of violence, concentrating on the three specific areas mentioned earlier. The section on the Costra Nostra and Yakuza comes from archived data whilst information in relation to UK Organised Crime Groups emanates from previous research studies conducted by the authors. Readers will also observe that the information relating to each example becomes progressively more detailed, as the groups themselves run from structured hierarchies to more enterprise based and less organised networks.

### **Hierarchical organised crime groups: The Costra Nostra and Yakuza**

Structured, hierarchical and mass criminal organisations have been found across the globe, including *La Eme* in Mexico, the *triad* in China, and the Russian *Mafia*. These groups form for the purpose of making money illegally (Maran, 2008), and are sustained through their ability to adapt to new opportunities in illegal markets (Hill, 2004). This particular section will focus on the Costra Nostra and Yakuza.

The emergence of mafias have often been explained using a sociological backdrop as they are said to “.. emerge in societies that are undergoing a sudden and late transition to the market economy, lack[ing] a legal structure that reliably protects... disputes” (Varese, 2011, p. 193), and this can be seen in the Costra Nostra and the Yakuza. The former can be traced back to 1838 (Paoli, 2003) and “was not created with criminal intent in mind. It started as an ‘alternative’ form of local government” (Maran, 2008, p. 31), although evolved into the murderous / sophisticated organisation apparent today (Dickie, 2004). The Costra Nostra, was built on close bonds, often bound by family, where members are “strongly bonded and secretly orientated” (Cayli, 2010, p. 387), and where betrayal was deemed unforgivable (Bolzoni, 2008). The organisation had a strict and hierarchical structure. Soldiers exist at the base of the pyramid, each of whom belong to a family (Jamieson, 2000). These small families are coordinated by a *capodecina*, who in turn are led by an elected *capo* (ibid, 2000). Violence is reported as a critical element of the operation as it deters members who consider disloyalty, whilst also generate compliance from those who are being extorted.

The *Yakuza* emerged slightly later, in the 1920s and 30s, although appeared less concerned with secrecy (Kaplan & Dubro, 2003). They were said to celebrate their success and endorse films that depicted, “Japanese crime bosses as benevolent patriarchs and a positive force in society” (Sheptycki, 2008, p. 24). Indeed, “after gang wars, feuding leaders have [apologized] to the public for any inconvenience caused” (Kaplan & Dubro, 2003, p. xviii). They comprise “more than 80,000 regular or associate Yakuza gang members” (Shikata, 2006, p. 416; Calderon, 2012), being based on a family structure incorporating a “unique Japanese relationship known as *oyabun-kobun* [father-son],... providing advice, protection, and help in return receiving unswerving loyalty” (Kaplan & Dubro, 2003, p. 8). At the top of the Yamaguchi pyramid is the godfather (syndicate leader), followed by four *shatei* (younger brothers), and eight *wakashira-hosa* (assistant young leaders). Under them can be found other tiers including one executive, eighty three *wakashu* (young men), each of whom commanded his own legion of *kobun* (children) (2003). Kaplan and Dubro highlight the “remarkable strength and cohesion, leading at times to a fanatic devotion to the boss” (2003, p. 8).

Both the Costra Nostra and Yakuza have been known to infiltrate public and private organisations, in particular the judiciary, politicians and law enforcement, to extend their

social influence and offer wider protection (Dickie, 2004), under the “protective umbrella of the state bureaucrats and politicians” (Cayli, 2010, p. 402). Indeed, the *Yakuza* are said to fund and support political candidates who reciprocate with political favours (Adelstein, 2010). More relevant to this chapter is that both organisations are infamous for their use of violence (Maran, 2008). The *Cosa Nostra*, for example, “....survived and prospered because it intimidated witnesses, and confounded or corrupted the police and courts” (Dickie, 2004, p. 3). Further, this reputation for violence generate significant income streams for the *Costra Nostra* through ‘protection money’ (Dickie, 2004). This approach was replicated by the *Yakuza*, who focused especially on the entertainment sector (Iwai, 1963), receiving protection money from, “restaurants, bars, night-clubs, and sex industry” (Hill, 2003, p. 95). Interestingly although extremely effective in their homelands both the *Cosa Nostra* and *Yakuza* failed to significantly extend their influence outside their native states (Hill, 2002).

Early research on hierarchical groups, like the *Costra Nostra* and *Yakuza*, emphasized the organization and discipline between the tiers of management. Violence was therefore legitimized through a logical process and viewed as instrumental, as it served a tangible purpose in delivering group aims. Unlike shady, but legitimate, business practice, organised crime offenders are unable to avail themselves of legal protection, nor do they have a supporting pension plan. This means violence and intimidation can be interpreted as a means to achieve a specific goal (Wieviorka, 2009), such as obtaining money through the use of threats. In this context it is often depicted as an instrumental and impersonal act, understood within the social norms of the actors involved (both perpetrators and victims).

### **The UK position**

From here the chapter will explore the situation in the UK, through previous research findings of the authors. It should be highlighted that UK Organised Crime Groups are generally reported to be less structured and hierarchical than the *Costra Nostra* and *Yakuza*. Of course, as mentioned earlier, a significant methodological challenge exists in the ability to identify organised crime offenders, as no country maintains a criminal database, that captures all SOC offenders. In an attempt to rectify this gap, the Home Office commissioned a study (see Francis *et al.* 2013; Kirby *et al.*, 2016), to extract a population of SOC offenders from the UK

offender database (Police National Computer), over a three-year period. To separate SOC offenders from others in the database three criteria were used: first, the individual had committed a specific organised crime (suitable offences were designated through a peer assessed process); second, the crime was committed with a co-offender; and third, it was viewed a serious crime – depicted by a custodial sentence of three years or more. A sample of 4109 organised crime offenders were extracted, together with two comparison groups: a *general crime* group ( $n = 4090$ ), who were aligned with none of the criteria; and a *serious crime* offender group ( $n = 4109$ ), who had previously received a custodial sentence of three years or more, but were not convicted with a co-offender nor for a specified organised crime offence.

The subsequent analysis generated a number of insights. The organised crime offenders comprised a tiny proportion of the overall offender database (0.2%), with a mean prior conviction rate of 22 sanctions. This placed them as a more recidivist group than the general crime offenders, but less than the serious crime offenders (mean 27 sanctions). The SOC and serious crime offenders were also more likely to be male (95%) than general offenders (78%) ( $\chi^2, p < 0.001$ ), and older. Whilst the modal age at the time of the inclusion offence was 27 years, for organised crime offenders, the modal age for 'serious crime' and 'general' offenders was 21 and 20 years respectively. The sample also included more non-UK nationals (14%) than the serious (9%) and general (10%) categories ( $\chi^2 p < 0.001$ ), which is higher than the 11.4% level of foreign-born individuals within the UK population at that time (Rienzo & Vargas-Silva, 2013).

As such, the UK organised crime offender is predominantly a non-adolescent male, a significant number of whom are early onset and persistent offenders, with a prior conviction history dominated by drug offences (73%), (serious crime offenders showed 19% and general crime offenders 10% drug sanctions). In fact, convictions for violence was more common with serious (26%) and general crime (34%) groups, than SOC offenders (9%), as were acquisitive crimes (robbery, burglary and theft), which featured much less in organised crime offender history. The finding that SOC offenders have fewer convictions for violence is worthy of further exploration.

Answering this question is assisted by two other supplementary studies both of which were assisted by the Organised Crime Group Mapping (OCGM) project. This initiative requests all police agencies in England and Wales to identify and calculate a threat score for OCGs resident in their local area (Tusikov, 2012). Over the past decade this has allowed the UK to provide a more accurate analysis on approximately 5,800 OCGs containing 40,000 active offenders (Home Office, 2013). Using data from one police force, Kirby and Snow (2016) examined the characteristics of 15 OCGs, each containing between three and fifteen members ( $n = 99$ ). The OCGM requests police forces categorise offenders into three groups: principal members (who direct the group); significant members (who perform a critical role in implementing the crime and are closely linked to the principal members); and peripheral members (who are supplementary and transitory members, not involved in the planning). In this sample there were 20 principal, 42 significant, and 37 peripheral members and further analysis highlighted two specific findings. First, even within these less established enterprise models of offending it is possible to distinguish tiers of influence or hierarchy within the OCG. Secondly, even though the vast majority of offenders had prior convictions it was the peripheral members who were most aligned with violence. In subsequent practitioner interviews it was thought peripheral members were more dispensable and could be hired to conduct enforcement duties due to their reputation for violence. Baumeister (1999) argues some groups designate specific individuals as responsible for the violence, which separates them from the groups decision makers, and this process was apparent here.

The other study highlights the aura of intimidation that a reputation for violence can bring. Again using the OCGM, Kirby *et al.* (2017) completed the first survey of citizens who reside in areas where Organized Crime Groups (OCGs) are known to proliferate, and compare these with a control group ( $n = 431$ ). There were few demographic differences across the communities (i.e. age, number in household, settled residence, deprivation scores). However, those living in the 'OCG' locations were more likely to report low collective efficacy and generally thought their neighbours were least likely to intervene when faced with a crime in action. In contrast, those within the control site showed higher indicators of collective efficacy (trust, engagement with other residents) and also reported their fellow residents to be more likely to take action and inform the police about minor incidents of crime and disorder. However when asked about drug dealing and offences involving SOC, the control group

respondents no longer reported their residents as more likely to intervene. Whilst the survey did not glean an explanation for the change in behaviour when facing SOC as opposed to low level crime, other commentators' have previously highlighted the impact of explicit and implicit OCG intimidation on the community (Crocker *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, this research shows that some locations (where OCGs proliferate), are consistently less likely to contact public authority figures, or challenge crime - what Corkrean (2013) referred to as a conflict community. As such, the ability of the police to obtain information or gain cooperation from the public in reducing organised crime and violence may be in part dependent on the location.

### **Young men on the periphery of organised crime**

In completing this picture, the chapter now investigates the characteristics of young people who practitioners believe have the potential to become the next generation of SOC offenders. It is hoped analysis at this early stage will provide insights not noticed in more mature offenders. As these young men were found to predominantly socialise and offend within groups, it is useful to consider the term 'gang' in more detail.

Whilst some see gang membership as an evolutionary process into SOC, others view it as a completely different concept (Esbensen *et al.*, 2001). Again, 'gang' definitions are contested. The Eurogang Network stated that 'a street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity' (see Wood and Alleyne, 2010). In the UK, Hales *et al.* (2006) demonstrated different types of gang or crew. The first are close friendship groups, which offer safety in numbers. Secondly, there are associates who are all known to each other, live in close proximity and engage in criminality together. Finally, there is the criminal crew and the organised crime network, which both engage in more serious criminality including local and national drug markets. Sharp *et al.* (2006) prefer the term delinquent youth groups. These involve young people who spend a lot of time in public places in groups of three or more and have engaged in delinquent or criminal behaviour over the last 12 months. They are also said to have at least one structural feature (either a name, an area, a leader, or rules). There appear tangible differences between US and UK gang forms, with the former being more endemic and organised. However, like the UK, street gangs appear more

territorial, dominated by working class males, focusing their violence on rival gang members. Gang members also have more autonomy, either acting alone to commit crime, or offending in groups when further numbers are needed.

Explanations for the formation of street gangs have often been associated with changes in wider society, such as increased competition for employment, economic contraction and immigration, social exclusion, poor education, and fragmentation of communities (see Klein and Maxson, 2006). Extending this perspective, cultural criminologists also highlight the need for kinship and purpose supported by rituals and symbols in the form of gang colours, tattoos, and graffiti. These sociological explanations are underpinned by psychological perspectives. The research by Tajfel and Turner (Tajfel *et al.*, 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2010), on *social identity theory*, argued people identify themselves with those they feel similar, whilst distancing themselves from those they feel dissimilar. They attribute their own group (in-group) with positive attributes whilst bestowing less positive attributes to others (out-group) to maintain self-esteem. This emotional connection within the in-group can mitigate individual responsibility and influence conformity to group norms. It can also generate discordance and prejudice against out-groups, whose members become depersonalized (Tajfel, 1974; 1981).

Kennedy observes that gang members are disproportionately violent when compared to other types of offenders. The dynamic of a gang inherently means allegiance to one group and hostility to others. However, he points out that the most serious violence is only associated with a small number of gang members. His study of gun related homicide in Boston found 61 groups accounted for 60% of homicides relating to those under 21 years – just 0.3% of the city's population (Kennedy *et al.*, 1996; Kennedy *et al.*, 2001), and points out this is similar in Cincinnati and Los Angeles. However, he argues that in each gang the members who are most likely to instigate and facilitate the most extreme violence account for 0.04%, or less of the population (Kennedy, 2001). Unfortunately, being associated in areas where violence is so prevalent creates a downward spiral. Papachristos (2011), highlights the risk by pointing out that at one period, whilst the US homicide rate was 5 per 100,000 in some parts of Chicago, it was 3,000 in every 100,000. He argued this meant walking around certain US neighbourhoods was statistically riskier than activating a

landmine in an Afghanistan war zone. Faced with this reality, gang membership brings a multitude of benefits, such as: credibility, protection, kinship and lifestyle. This sense of belonging is sustained by tattoos, initiation ceremonies, symbols and kinship. However the cost of maintaining street credibility is violently confronting signs of disrespect, which in turn leads to reoccurring retaliatory action.

Having set out this context we can turn to our UK cohort of 'at risk' young men. The project was located in the conurbations of a large UK city and supported by data from the OCGM project and information from the police, local authority and schools. The purpose of the project was to engage with these young people in an attempt to divert them into a more legitimate lifestyle. They were initially identified through familial, or other close relationships with OCGs, albeit this was later supplemented by the use of other risk factors. Initially, many of the young people refused to engage with the process, although the eventual cohort involved 22 young people between 13 and 18 years (mean 15.18 years), of which 15 (68.2%) of these were recorded as previous crime victims. All individuals were highlighted on police databases as being on the periphery of organised crime, having between 0-7 prior convictions. Their criminal histories encompassed various offending behaviour, although mostly for violence. Sanctions included: assault (77%,  $n = 24$ ), burglary (67%,  $n = 21$ ), and criminal damage (51%,  $n = 16$ ), with one case of murder and three cases of sexual assault. Once agreeing to take part, all of the individuals were paired with a lead professional (often a specialist youth worker) who provided them with tailored advice in an effort to assist them into education or employment. All the young males often socialised with other troublesome youths and engaged in a wide level of aggressive behaviour in their locality. The practitioners who worked alongside them highlighted both sociological and psychological factors, facilitating their pathway into SOC.

*"They all lived on the same estate. [...] Those estates are creating crime because you have the worst families from all over and putting them in the one estate. Multiple generations who have been on [welfare]benefits and smoked and drank and that is the only thing the young people have known."....."The only people they know who actually have anything are drug dealers. Everyone else is poor. They want more. They*

*see dealers in their Audi A3 and their Nikes. We all want it, but the only way they see to get it, is crime” (P7).*

*“Some kids don’t have any food in the house. There’s no electricity. So they rather hang around on the streets. Then they start selling bits and bobs. A bit of weed [cannabis]. Gets them enough money to buy some food from the chippy [fast food takeaway]. Where would you rather be? In a cold house, sleeping on a mattress or on the streets with the lads and you’ve had a portion of fish and chips. [...] The older ones will see that, see the vulnerability. He’ll do it. He’ll move that. He’ll hide the gun. [...] A £100 to you who has got a job and can see a future, is nothing. £100 to someone who has nothing, wow. Millionaire for a day” (P1).*

Of course, not all young men on these estates became involved in crime or gangs. Psychological explanations serve to explain the difference between these and other young people who lived in the area. Specifically, the youths in the cohort exhibited a higher preponderance of risk factors and lack of protective factors.

*“There was five that we worked with consistently. One had a dad in jail. one – dad passed away. Another – dad was street homeless in town. The other one’s dad was not there..” (P6).*

*“Things happen in their community. Stabbings. Shootings. In their street. It has become the norm in this city. No one knows how this will have affected them in later life yet. They could be traumatised. I think they will be” (P1).*

Further, a qualitative difference could be observed across the young people within the cohort. Whilst some played a leadership role others appeared content to be led. Similarly, as Kennedy observed, certain individuals were at the forefront of using gratuitous and extreme violence. One youth worker reported talking to one of the young people outside his house when the conversation turned to his parents. At this point he became very aggressive and lashed out at his father’s car, smashing windows, tail lights and tearing off the mirrors. Police intelligence

on the same individual showed his extreme unpredictability and his willingness to be at the forefront of any confrontation.

### **Discussion: The currency of violence**

In attempting to better understand the currency of violence in organised crime this chapter makes four specific points.

First, the obvious starting position for any discussion on this subject would be to set out the level of violence associated with SOC. However this cannot be done with any accuracy for a number of reasons. The concepts of both organised crime and violence are contested with no agreed definition for either. This issue is further hindered due to the reliance on law enforcement agencies to provide much of the data on which both concepts are measured. As such, significant elements of organised crime and violence remains invisible to the researcher. Whilst the introduction of the OCGM in the UK has assisted significantly it still remains the case that data surrounding OCGs, and the violence surrounding it, is incomplete. However, some information is available and it is on this basis that this discussion goes forward.

Second, whilst it is clear that violence plays a core role in organised crime it is more difficult to provide unambiguous theoretical perspectives which explains the phenomenon. Sociological perspectives are useful in that they turn our attention to the wider environment in which organised crime occurs. The Costra Nostra and Yakuza emerged from the social turmoil of their region, implementing a systematic and structured approach to secure power. Similarly, the UK OCGM project highlights organised crime is more likely to emerge in areas of deprivation, a finding also replicated in street gangs. Therefore most gang members tend to emerge from deprived and challenging urban environments where violence is used as a currency to generate respect, influence and credibility. Cultural approaches extend this understanding, explaining how OCGs and gangs generate kinship and a sense of purpose for their members. For socially excluded individuals, the social norms of the street become dominant and provide a sense of purpose that mainstream society cannot fulfil.

Nonetheless, these accounts cannot explain why some community members can resist criminal involvement, or why some offenders exert greater influence within their groups. Indeed, the research shows a certain level of hierarchy in all organised crime groups and this is most clearly illustrated in the Costra Nostra, Yakuza, Triads and Mafia (Arsovska & Craig, 2006). Here the structure is clear and pyramidal, with leaders at the top, followed by middle tier managers, and soldiers at the base. In contrast, whilst not as structured, distinct roles are also evident in the UK OCGs, labelled as principal, significant and peripheral members, with practitioners arguing the latter were the most likely to be used as enforcers. These differences are best explained by individual characteristics and learned experiences, which will be discussed further below. However, in essence sociological, psychological and cultural explanations all assist in providing a wider understanding as to why violent behaviour is core to SOC.

Third, this type of nuanced explanation assists when analyzing instrumental and expressive accounts of violence. Put simply, violence associated with organised crime has been previously reported as instrumental, and street gang violence as expressive (Hughes & Short 2005; Papachristos, 2009). However, others argue these terms are difficult to separate and often co-occur, as violence leading to tangible goals can also generate wider pleasures through the exercise of power and dominance (Levi & Maguire, 2004, p. 811). Similarly, expressive retaliatory actions (Anderson, 1990; Bourgois, 2003) may also be aligned to a more abstract purpose. For example, whilst simple actions of disrespect can be resolved without violence, doing so may be viewed as a sign of weakness within the norms of street culture and could possibly encourage further attacks. As gang members view themselves outside of mainstream society, they must organise their own protection, which may include pre-emptive action. Felson (2009), therefore argues that violence is always instrumental, as it is always instigated to achieve some level of gain. For example, if a member of the Costra Nostra or Yakuza face non-payment, would they view that behavior as a breach of a financial transaction or as a sign of disrespect? It is therefore difficult for the assailant, and even more so for the academic, to accurately identify all of the factors behind the assault. A disproportionate beating could be correctly categorised as expressive in one situation,

whilst in another context could be interpreted as a carefully planned action to act as a wider deterrent.

Fourth, we see from previous research, that violence (or credible threat) is central to the business of SOC. However, interestingly we saw in the UK study that whilst violence is present in the offending history of organised crime offenders, this is to a lesser degree than other offender groups. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that inappropriate use of violence can be bad for business. Violence, especially when it generates collateral harm, can bring unwanted scrutiny from law enforcement agencies. This enhanced surveillance brings increased risk of detection to both the organised crime offender and those they do business with. Business partners require predictability in those they engage with, therefore unpredictable and unwarranted violence can also illustrate irrational decision making. Taking the UK example, it appears offenders with a reputation for being excessively violent are less likely to be the principal and more likely to be peripheral members used specifically to enforce operations.

So where does this discussion leave us? The chapter argues that the reason both violence and organised crime are contested concepts is because they emerge in many different forms. Serious organised crime, whilst often referred to as a single crime genre, is in fact the culmination of many different crimes, conducted by many different types of people, in many different ways. Therefore if one definition cannot explain organised crime or violence, then it is perhaps unrealistic to expect we can fashion one explanation for the violence that exists within SOC. Nonetheless, these theoretical perspectives do not contradict each other, but assist in a more nuanced understanding. At a structural level, the social fabric, in terms of social change and deprivation, generate an environment from which violent organised crime offenders often emerge. The individual is then moulded by street level interactions through cultural norms and local contacts. In this developmental process, individuals forge more distinct characteristics and become less equal, having been born with different characteristics, which are advanced (positively or negatively) through life experiences. For a few of these adolescent 'troublesome youths' these experiential pathways will divert them into crime, and a few of these will become involved in organised crime, be they peripheral, significant, principal, soldier or capo members.

As such it is an amalgam of the environment they are born into, coupled with individual characteristics and learned experiences that influences an individual's decision to use (and how to use) violence. This decision making has ramifications as it is closely aligned to how they will be viewed by their peers. When a decision to use violence is made it is the culmination of many (often subconscious) factors: individual propensity to use violence; capability and experience of the assailant to use violence; the individual character, capability and experience of the victim in defending themselves; the current context (both relating to the individuals and the group); the longer term relationship between the assailant and victim (both at individual and group levels); the ramifications of conducting or not conducting the violent act (i.e. risk and severity of retaliation).

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