Exploring the link between organized crime groups and homicide in England

ACCEPTED FOR HOMICIDE STUDIES

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Abstract

This paper reports results of a study identifying and analysing the 17 homicides (from a total 696 recorded non-terrorist homicides) committed as part of organised crime in England and Wales in 2005-06. Homicides related to organized crime were found to follow from inter group rivalries, tensions within the same organized crime group, or police/citizen resistance during armed robbery. The motivations of the homicides can be broadly categorized as instrumental or expressive. Suggestions are made for further research on the conditions surrounding such homicides and to the relative rarity of organised crime related homicides in Britain.

Key words: organized crime, homicide, sources of conflict, instrumental motives, expressive motives.

Introduction

Despite the widespread view that organized crime and violence are commonly associated, little academic research has considered the extent to which homicides are linked to organized crime groups and how the incidents are generated. Previous research has noted that those involved in organized crime often do commit violent crimes (Bullock & Tilley 2002; Schneider & Tilley, 2004) and it is widely accepted that, 'violence is an important means by which they [organized crime gangs] protect themselves or their members' (Wright, 2006, p. 42). Moreover, Maltz (1976) identifies violence as one of the four key characteristics of organized crime; the others being corruption, continuity, and variety in the types of crime engaged in. The UK Threat Assessment, which informs

the UK control strategy on organized crime, also states that 'violence and intimidation remains a feature of most organised crime' (SOCA, 2010a, p. 4).

This paper examines the relationship between organized crime and fatal violence (homicide) in England. The findings are based on fieldwork conducted for a study commissioned by the UK Home Office. The aim was to estimate the proportion of homicides recorded in 2005-06 that were linked to the activities of organized crime groups and to gauge the nature of the links. The research faced a number of methodological problems, which are discussed in the first section of the paper. The second section outlines the approach that was adopted and notes some remaining methodological concerns. The main body of the paper describes the contexts, event process and motivations for fatal violence in relation to the subset of cases that could be linked to structured organized crime groups. Finally, some conclusions are drawn.

Organized crime and the use of violence

The term 'organized crime' is highly ambiguous (Cohen, 1977; Wright 2006; Edwards & Levi, 2008; Levi, 2012). Two broad themes, which can be traced back to Cohen's highly influential work on the concept of criminal organization, have emerged (Cohen, 1977). One stresses structures of association and the other structures of activity. Structures of association refer to group organization or, as Cohen states, 'the hierarchy, centralisation, discipline, unity and power' of groups (Cohen, 1977, p. 99). Structures of activity refer to the types of crime activities that organized crime groups engage in or, essentially, the types of crime delivered through organized crime networks.

Much research has focused upon structures of association within organized crime groups, the operation of criminal networks, the geographical reach of such groups and the power organized criminals are able to exert. Several studies suggest that many organized crime groups have complex hierarchical structures, operate across transnational networks and often have political influence (see for example, Cressey's (1969) description of the structure of the Cosa Nostra in New York, Gambetta (1994) on the Sicilian Mafia and both Shelly (1995) and Mallory (2012) in relation to Columbian

crime groups)¹. However, the picture that emerges of the structure and influence of organized crime in the UK is somewhat different. The Mafia style gangs found in Italy, Columbia and in parts of the USA have never taken hold in the UK (Levi, 2007; Tilley & Hopkins, 2008). Hobbs's (1995) description of the development of gangs in the East End of London sheds light on the development of organized crime enterprises in the UK and on how they differ from the Mafia type organizations. He suggests that from the 1930's to the late 1960's crime gangs exerted influence over the local economy through the supply of desired but rare goods during wartime and post-war rationing. Later, in the 1960's, notorious gangsters, such as the Krays, built and ran protection rackets. Hobbs goes on to suggest that the contemporary structures of crime gangs in the UK have been animated by an 'entrepreneurial trading culture driven by highly localised interpretations of global markets' (Hobbs, 1995, p. 115). These locally based crime groups have now become increasingly sophisticated in their organization as modern communication and transport links allow transnational networks to develop. Therefore, though continuing to act locally many organized crime groups are now connected globally and in this sense embody what is sometimes referred to as the 'glocal' (Hobbs, 1995).

Organized crime can also be understood in relation to typical criminal activities, such as drugs and people trafficking, extortion, kidnap and fraud (SOCA, 2010a; SOCA, 2010b). Although there are many definitions, a common requirement in official documents (see for example; SOCA (2010a) and Europol, (2011)) is that these activities a) have to be conducted by two or more people in cooperation, b) are continual activities, and c) they are intended for-profit. These attributes help to distinguish 'organized' crime activities from 'non-organized' activities. However, they risk excluding some forms of organized criminal activity from any analysis: McIntosh (1975) and Levi (2012), for example, suggest that British organized crime is often marked by participants coming together for short-term or one-off projects such as an armed robbery

The research that has been conducted in relation to the connections between organized crime and violence suggests that gang-related homicide is often retaliatory in nature and triggered by conflict over issues of honour and disrespect, territorial battles and drug feuds (Howell & Decker, 1999; Brookman, 2005; Polk, 1994). However, the use of violence is a function of the contexts in which the organized criminal group operates and its specific activities. For example, Levi (2008) presents an account of fraudulent activity that is sustained over a long period, where skill and craft are seen as being more important than the ability to be violent. Silverstone and Hallsworth (2008) also usefully distinguish between 'on road' criminals who commonly operate on the street and professional criminals who 'avoid the street and mobilize their resources and acumen to subcontract out the retail end of the business' (Silverstone & Hallsworth, 2008, p.370). They argue that although the professional 'higher end' criminals are capable of and willing to use violence, they use violence sparingly due to fear of the impact on the business of law enforcement responses to it. At the other end of the spectrum, the use of guns by 'on road' criminals is both symbolic and allows conflict to be resolved in a world where 'problematic situations cannot be solved through legal channels' (Silverstone & Hallsworth, 2008, p. 367).

Several authors have noted that violent gang activity is often symbolic in character and that gaining a reputation for violence helps organized criminals to enforce their criminal activities (e.g. Falcone, 1993; Bourgois, 1995; Wright, 2006). Although gaining a reputation for toughness is necessary (Silverstone & Hallsworth, 2008), direct violence is also used for instrumental purposes. Wright (2006) suggests such violence can be either 'tactical' or 'strategic'. Tactical violence is used to achieve specific short term immediate goals that would not be achieved unless violence was threatened or actually used. This aims to ensure individuals conform to particular courses of action. Such violence might be used to extort money, obtain services or cooperation from other gang members, businesses, or to 'protect particular operations from predators' (Wright 2006: 44). Strategic violence is used to secure the longer-term goals of the group. Such goals might include

ensuring group survival, economic prosperity or protection from law enforcement officials who aim to destroy the group (Wright, 2006, p. 44).

Although a number of studies have associated organized crime with violence, little work has focused specifically on the relationship between organized crime and homicide in England. Homicide statistics are published annually in England and Wales, although these reveal little about the involvement of organized criminals. Despite this, a large body of literature has explored the ways in which fatal violence is most commonly generated. For example, Polk (1994) notes that a key feature of most serious and fatal violence is that both the victim and offender are male and this 'masculine' homicide is usually the result either of some sort of escalating confrontation or of a pre-planned revenge attack. Confrontational homicide is usually the result of a clear processual pattern or situated transaction in which the fatal outcome is not necessarily determined by the characteristics or initial goals of the participants (Wolfgang, 1958; Felson & Steadman, 1983; Luckenbill, 1977). These homicides commonly begin with a relatively trivial exchange between the victim and offender and have been attributed to contests of honour between males and their unwillingness to 'lose face' during aggressive encounters (Polk, 1994). Revenge homicides - those produced by the desire to resolve conflict or a 'grudge' through the use of fatal violence - have received considerably less attention in the research literature (Brookman, 2005). These attacks tend to be pre-planned: there is often no immediate altercation precipitating the event; rather, there may have been a history of conflict between the victim and offender (Brookman, 2005). This type of homicide has been associated with conflicts between street gangs where formal avenues of redress, such as the police and the criminal justice system are not readily available (Polk, 1994; Topalli, Wright, & Fornango, 2002). The distinction between confrontational and revenge homicide suggests hypotheses about major ways in which homicides might be generated within organized crime groups. However, there has been little empirical research to explore their relevance.

This brief overview shows that understanding the links between organized crime and homicide raises complex issues. Organized crime remains a contested concept, with a variety of alternative possible definitions. The types of organization included in any analysis will clearly affect the extent of violence that is observed. For example, if analysis includes road gangs of the sort identified by Silverstone and Hallsworth then the use of violence is likely to be more prevalent than would be the case if only higher end professional gangs were included.

Approach to the study

The data analysed in this paper relate to 17 homicides reported to the police in England & Wales in 2005-6². These were extracted from the 696³ non-terrorism related cases included in the Home Office Homicide Index⁴ of all recorded homicides in England and Wales.⁵ Each of the 696 cases was screened by the research team to establish if there was any discernible link to organized crime, using a relatively inclusive working definition of organized crime (*'any enterprise, or group of persons, engaged in continuing illegal activities in which one of its primary purposes is the generation of profit, irrespective of national boundaries.'*)

Cases were screened using information included in the Home Office index alongside further details that were collected from investigating police services. The grounds used to determine whether a case might be linked to organized crime were as follows:

1. Evidence that suspects were part of a criminal group/ network.
2. Evidence that suspects were involved in routine profit making criminal activity.
3. If the suspects/ offenders would have gained materially from the crime.
4. If there was evidence of planning prior to the commission of the offense.
5. How the victim was killed, with a weighting for cases involving a gun.
6. If the suspect had known organized crime involvement.
7. If the victim had known organized crime involvement.

8. If the case involved multiple suspects from the same crime group.
9. If the suspect(s) or any of their associates had tried to undermine the prosecution in any way.
10. If any other police intelligence suggested a link to organized crime.

Of the 696 cases screened, a total of 54 (7.8%) were deemed to have a possible link to organized crime. These cases were then examined in more detail in interviews with senior investigating officers. These interviews focused on the events before, during and after the homicide, as they emerged through the police investigation.

It is important to understand the strengths and weaknesses of the data drawn on in this study. The only sources available to the research team were the returns police made to the Home Office for the Homicide Index, the recollections of the officers who had conducted the investigations and the investigation records they drew on (such as case files that included suspect and witness statements). The homicide events themselves and the events leading up to the homicide could clearly not be observed and we did not have access to the suspects or victims. Therefore, the data collection depended on the police, whose investigations we treat here as primary research exercises not only focused on finding culprits but also producing results that could be appropriated for our purposes. The difficulties the police face in investigating homicides where there may be organized crime involvement might be more acute than in other cases, both because of codes of silence from organized criminals (though often breached) and real or perceived threats to witnesses making them reluctant to come forward. Whilst the research team were convinced that the police tried hard to construct accounts that were consistent with the evidence and to test them insofar as this was required in efforts to find those who were culpable, their conclusions are clearly fallible. An alternative reading of their responses to our questions would be that they constitute only police accounting practices, with no necessary correspondence to the underlying circumstances leading to

the deaths of the victims. We prefer here to treat them as the most plausible available accounts of real conditions leading to real, fatal outcomes in the cases referred to, rather than as mere artful constructions reflecting only a particular discourse. Alternative sources with different forms of discourse might, of course, have been used. For example, offenders might have been interviewed or court reports analysed. In the case of the former, problems would have included respondent availability and veracity as well as achieved sample representativeness. In the case of the latter, problems would have included the failure of some cases to come to court and the irrelevance and hence non-inclusion of much of the background material included here in the proceedings of cases that did come to court. There are no perfect data. Despite their acknowledged weaknesses, for this piece of work police constructions of cases were the most dependable we could access, although future studies could certainly usefully complement the results reported here by drawing on others from different sources.

Following our consultations with the police a total 42 cases (6% of the total sample) were deemed to have some link to organized crime. However, the nature and strength of these links varied widely. In 17 cases (2.4 % of the total sample) the homicide was thought to be the direct result of organized crime group (OCG) activity. In 13 cases (1.9 % of the total sample), the homicide was thought to be the direct result of organized crime activity, but the groups in question tended to operate as loose networks rather than having a formal, recognisable structure. Their forms of conflict, co-operation and co-offending were quite anarchic, reflecting shared criminal lifestyles rather than anything resembling membership of a recognisable, purposive, enduring group which plans crime in a systematic way. In 12 cases (1.7 % of the total sample), there was some link to organized crime (for example, either the victim or suspect had links to OC), but the homicide itself was not directly linked to organized crime *activity* by an OCG. These cases included, for example, a domestic homicide where the suspect was an organized criminal and a case involving a fight outside of a night club, in which the perpetrator happened to be a member of an organized crime group.

This remainder of this paper presents in-depth analysis of the 17 cases that were the direct result of organized crime group activity.

Organized crime and homicide

The contexts of conflict resulting in homicide

As stated above, Wright (2006) takes the violence used by organized crime groups to be purposive rather than gratuitous. If this is true, then it is necessary to understand how the everyday activities of organized groups lead to situations where decisions to commit homicide make sense for them. Here we explore this issue by considering the characteristics of the organized crime groups in the sample and how any previous interaction or history between the victim and the offender can explain how conflict arose.

In all 17 cases the police had some intelligence about who might be responsible for the killing. In 14 at least one suspect was questioned by the police and in 11, one or more were eventually convicted of homicide⁶. In all the cases, the police also had some specific intelligence about the type of organized crime group to which the suspect belonged. The groups can be broadly categorised into family run enterprises (n=1), organized criminal networks (n=12) and professional criminal gangs (n=4). Details of the structures of association and activities of the groups are presented in Table 1. The family run group was based around a small family unit with a number of ‘foot soldiers’ who could be called upon to perform specific tasks. The organized criminal networks included groups ranging from complex transnational drug operations to networks of street level drugs dealers. As the following extracts from interviews with investigators illustrate, it was common in transnational and street level networks to find some sort of command structure:

‘XX is the overlord, the leader who does not generally do hands on. He oversees it all and everything is done and sanctioned by him. His power is one of negotiation and manipulation’

[Case 12- organized drug distribution and security services⁷]

‘In this sophisticated type of network, you've got a proper rank structure similar to the army or something, you've got runners, they call them soldiers themselves, lieutenants, the proper management and the hierarchy you never really see’

[Case 37- organized street dealing network]

The third type of criminal enterprise identified comprised professional criminals who regularly came together for specific, lucrative criminal jobs. These would be carefully planned and the team members selected for specific roles and responsibilities. In relation to one case the investigator told us that:

‘He [the group leader] was pretty much creating a tier structure on it, I'd say he was probably at the more top end; he seemed to be the one who was holding the cash, holding the guns, had the drugs.....XX and XX would be called on more for their heavy handedness around actually enforcing the job through’

[Case, 52- organized cooperation of armed robbers]

Most of the 17 groups had associations that stretched beyond their immediate locality. These associations were primarily required to obtain and distribute drugs, though many of the organized criminals were ‘well connected’ and police believed they could obtain any goods or resources required for their groups to function or for specific ‘criminal jobs’ to be done. The core activity of each group was the generation of profit from continuing illegal activities, although one of the organized crime group networks also ran a legitimate security business. The family-run enterprise and the organized criminal networks all ‘delivered’ criminal goods and services in their locality and their primary activity was the dealing and distribution of drugs, though trading in firearms was common and one of the groups was also associated with people trafficking. The gangs of professional criminals came together to commit armed robberies from a pool of known criminal

associates. These groups committed well-planned robberies and often travelled long distances to commit specific offenses.

Table 1

Main Characteristics of the Crime Groups Involved in the Homicides

Crime group	Structures of associations	Activities
Family run enterprise (n=1)	Family group, with small number of non-family 'foot soldiers'. Unknown if hierarchy exists. Outside associations mainly local, though inter-city associations necessary for trade.	Mainly buying/ selling drugs at local level/ inter-city distribution.
Organised criminal network (n=12)	Strong network of highly organised criminals. Hierarchical structure in evidence in some groups. Often more experienced criminal 'bosses' manage and plan, whilst those younger and 'up and coming' act as 'foot soldiers'. Some more 'street based' groups based upon American street culture. Many have cross city and international connections. High value placed on territory and loyalty	Organised crime activity often operated in conjunction with licit business activities- such as security companies. Commonly involved in drug and firearms distribution.
Professional criminals (n=4)	Professional career criminals, have links through previous criminal jobs and prison. Associate for big one-off jobs every so often, which require a number of people in specialist roles.	Mainly highly organized robbery with large potential cash rewards.

In the majority of cases the victim and offender had some sort of relationship prior to the homicide (see Table 2). It has been observed that this is a common feature of homicide generally. For example, Brookman (2005) found that in only 15% of homicide cases in the UK between 1995 and 2001 were the victim and offender strangers. The victims in the 17 cases focused on here fell into three categories. They were either rival group members, people from the same crime group or third parties trying to intervene in a crime event. In all 13 cases involving the family-run group or criminal networks, the intended victim and the offender knew each other prior to the homicide. In seven of these cases the homicide was a result of conflict with a rival group and in the other six it followed

from internal group conflict. In the remaining four cases associated with professional criminals the homicides were linked to robberies where the victim and offender were unknown to one another prior to the crime event. Interestingly, a suspect was convicted in all but one of the inter group cases and in all of the cases linked to a robbery. A suspect was only convicted in one of the internal group cases.⁸

Table 2

Suitable Targets, Connections to the Crime Group and Reason they were a Target

Type of conflict	Pre-event relationship to the recognized crime group doing the killing
Inter group rivalry (7 cases and 7 victims)	Pre-event relationship in all cases. Victim was known rival crime group member.
Internal group conflict (6 cases and 9 victims)	Pre-event relationship in all cases. The victim was a member of crime group doing the killing or 'wannabe' member of the group.
Enforcement of specific crime activity (4 cases and 4 victims)	No pre-event history. The victim was a guardian or bystander at a specific crime event. Homicide is a by-product of other event process (in this case the robbery)

Sources of conflict and circumstances of their resolution

Table 3 shows the major sources of conflict and whether the homicide was planned in advance or resulted from a particular confrontation. The primary sources of conflict in the inter group cases related to control of drugs markets, to drug debts or to alleged activity as police informants. The internal group sources related to thefts of money or drugs from group members, to disrespect for group leaders or to the desire of erstwhile members to stop working with the group. Finally, the four homicides related to the enforcement of specific crime activity all arose out of victim resistance

in robberies or intervention by third parties. The following vignettes provide examples of the sources of conflict in relation to inter group, internal group and 'crime event' homicides.

'we've got [name of suspect] as part of this new group from Jamaica. The victim is part of the British Crew. The British Crew are known as a notorious importer of cocaine, crack cocaine into the UK. This [the British Crew] is a Jamaican gang who work both in Jamaica and the UK. There wasn't anything to suggest that the new group from Jamaica were up and running.....but it seems they were trying to become established....rivalries grew over firearms and drug importation and it cumulated in the shooting'.

[Case 16- Inter group homicide]

'.....there was an amount of money went missing in [name of city in northern England] over deals that involved him..... the money was missing from [name of gang leader] drug gang, the reason why he [the victim] was sent to London....he was set up in a house in a specific area and within a week of that, he was shot. He's obviously gone against why the whole organized group set up a network up there [in the northern English city], he's ripped them off, they've said "go to London" and he's been set up'.

[Case 15- Internal group homicide]

'They did a reconnaissance on the Sunday, they go into [name of English city where the robbery is committed], they leave and go away. Now that week, between the Sunday and the Friday of the robbery happening, the three main players that goes in to do the robbery arrive in [name of neighbouring English city close to robbery location] with firearms. That night, they're joined by the two organizers. On the Friday morning in the early hours, the other two robbers turn up from London, so we've now got the group of seven there [in neighbouring English city close to robbery location]Shortly after lunchtime on the Friday, all seven, in three different cars, leave to go to [name of robbery location]. They go to [name of robbery location]; they're driving in convoy; they attend the location where the robbery's to be committed and they all go to pre-determined locations; they're in constant telephone contact with one another. They go into the place to do the robbery, but the police get there, that's when the shooting happens'.

[Case 14- Robbery/ crime event homicide]

Table 3

Conflict Type, the Source of Conflict and Conflict Resolution.

Conflict Type	Source of conflict	Conflict resolution
Inter group rivalry (n=7)	Drug market competition (n=4)	Opportunist confrontation (n=3)
		Planned attack (n=1)
	Drug debts (=2)	Opportunist confrontation (n=2)
Internal group conflict (n=6)	Informing to police (n=1)	Planned attack (n=1)
	Theft from group (n=2)	
	Disrespect of leaders (n=1)	All planned attacks (n=6)
Enforcement of specific crime activity (n=4)	Member leaving group (n=3)	
	Victim resistance /non-compliance (n=2)	All confrontational (n=4)
	Intervention in crime event/ apprehend robbers (2)	

Polk's (1994) assertion that homicide events can be extendable over time appears to be particularly relevant in homicides involving organized criminals. In all of the inter group and internal group cases the specific source of conflict occurred days or weeks before the eventual homicide. In seven cases the actual homicide event occurred following a 'chance' meeting of adversaries and in eight it was carefully planned. There are clear differences in the ways conflict is resolved depending upon

whether the conflict is between rival group members, individuals from the same group or between an offender and third party during a specific crime event. In the majority of inter group cases, the conflict was resolved through confrontation after a 'chance' convergence of rival groups. Internal group conflict was resolved through a pre-planned attack and the homicides related to specific criminal activities were a direct result of an unplanned confrontation as the incident unfolded.

The ways in which the conflict was resolved in the sample cases show some close similarities with confrontational or revenge homicides that have been described in the wider literature, although there are key differences. Brookman (2005) identifies two main categories of male homicide. First, there are carefully planned incidents, which are not provoked by any immediately preceding precipitating event. Second, there are confrontational incidents where the outcome is totally dependent on the event process or situated transaction between the victim and offender that immediately precedes the actual killing. Luckenbill (1977) argues that confrontational homicides are generated by 'face saving' behaviour following six steps. First there is an initial offense to the face (step 1); the recipient interprets this offense (step 2) and makes countermoves to save face (step 3). There is then an agreement to do battle (step 4), a battle develops (step 5) and finally, there is the aftermath (step 6).

The homicides in five of the inter-group rivalry cases were a result of confrontation that was not pre-planned. However, the sequence of events in these cases did not always follow the pattern outlined by Luckenbill. In three cases resulting from drug market competition there was a commitment to do battle as soon as the victim and offender met⁹ (Luckenbill's step 4). Therefore, steps 1 to 3 had been bypassed. In these cases the setting was the street; the groups involved appeared to be street based drugs groups; and the eventual victim(s) died following a shooting. Despite being unplanned, the offenders were prepared to engage in violence with known rivals in the absence of immediate provocation. This shows similarities to collective violence observed occasionally in relation to rival football hooligan groups where there is a constant 'receptiveness' to engage in violence with

appropriate rivals at any given time (Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Armstrong, 1998). Here, the 'receptiveness' of the culprits is underlined by the fact that all the confrontational incidents involving rival groups occurred in public in the presence of a number of potential guardians. As the following investigator interview extract reveals, these events can be complex and can unfold over a long period of time moving across locations. In this particular case, two of the original offenders were eventually killed:

'The guy's driving along with his younger brother in the car. He's stuck in traffic outside the row of shops spotted by a group.....they come over to his car, start dragging him out, start attacking him. He manages to escape, and runs to the barber shop which is on the corner. Runs into the shop, straight through the shop into the back and goes into a store room where he props a gas bottle against the door....phones his brother and tells him "I'm in XX, I'm being chased by the XX".....The gang rush into the shop. Literally less than a minute later two cars pull up, one with [the intended victim's] mum and his stepdad and one with his twin brother. They move onto the pavement, at which time you've probably got 15 people in the shop. His brother walks onto the pavement outside the shop, obviously sees the shop is packed. You see him on CCTV pull out a pistol, discharge a bullet into the shop from the pavement. The father and him then go into the shop, two more bullets are discharged in the shop. The father's described as a big bloke, just chucking people off, throwing them about and basically they go in, recover son, stepson and brother and come out the shop in the cars and drive away.....'

[Case 3- conflict over drugs markets]

In a further four confrontational cases the eventual homicide was a by-product of robbery. In all of these cases the process fits closely with Luckenbill's concept of situated transaction. In each the homicide was a direct result of an unplanned confrontation that arose within the context of the robbery. In three of these cases the victim was shot (the other stabbed). Two of the homicide victims were the intended victims for the robbery and were killed as they resisted. In the other two homicides the victims attempted to intervene in robberies of businesses. One was the brother of the

owner of one of the businesses, the other a policewomen. The following extract describes how an attempt to intervene in a robbery led a homicide. In this case, a police officer was killed:

'They [the gang] threaten to kill them [the staff inside the business] unless they tell them where the safe is and they explain that they've recently banked the money and there's only about £5k there. Unbeknown to them [the gang], somebody has activated the silent alarm ... resulting in police attendance. Whilst they're inside the shop, a signed police vehicle pulls up outside containing two officers in uniform. The police officers approach the front door where they are met by two Council street wardens who have access to police radios. They've heard the radio call go out. They tell the police officers, whilst they're looking through the window into the back office. The two police officers approach the front door to enter. The three robbers burst out of the front door and shoot both officers at point blank range. Both were wearing body armor and it's possible that as PC XX ducked with the shock of having the pistol pointed at her there's a movement and, it's exposed her chest ... and that's unfortunately penetrated part of her heart and hit her spine. Hence she then fell straightaway. As the three were running away, they turned around and fired another shot, probably as a warning to the street wardens.'

[Case 14- armed robbery by organized crime group]

All of the internal group cases were pre-planned and the intended victim had been a member of the crime group or had been closely associated with it. The offenders knew the victims and had a clear idea of their everyday activities¹⁰. This enabled offenders to predict where intended victims would be at certain times or enabled offenders to lure the victim to a particular location to kill them. Potential 'capable guardians' were present in only one of the pre-planned cases. This suggests that the offenders planned their executions in such a way that there would not be witnesses to the crime event or anybody who could potentially intervene. One investigating officer succinctly summed up the characteristics of a pre-planned event in an incident, where the routine activity patterns of the victim were well known:

‘The bottom line was it clearly was planned and planned quite well, the victim was a creature of habit and would return home most nights that kind of time, so it wouldn't be unusual. There were no witnesses whatsoever.’

[Case 2- killing of a group member]

In five of the internal group cases the event itself was ‘quick and simple’. However, despite being pre-planned, the sixth came as the climax of a protracted incident. Here there was a long and chaotic sequence of events after the intended targets of a planned shooting managed to avoid the initial attack. Those who were supposed to kill the original targets were themselves killed in this instance. The following vignette provides a brief description of the key events in the case.

‘The gang leader ran [name of northern city] with an iron fist, and nothing happened without him knowing about it. However, two young lads, known for armed robbery who have done jobs for him and are part of his team, started to become a problem after they are refused entry to one of the gang leaders clubs one night [the doors were run by the gang leaders security company]. The gang leader is at this point running everything from inside [in prison], so the lads go after his number two. Now, the gang leader has got a problem as he's got young, hard, dangerous men to sort out. How is he going to sort it out? What sort of influence, power, authority, and manpower is he going to have to sort these men out? One day the lads are in the [name of gang leader's] pub. They're in the pub, they're watching the Manchester United game, it's half time. They are in the vault and there are about 50 people there, across the hallway there are about 200 people in the lounge. At half time there is a vehicle parked across the road and two hooded men are seen to leave this vehicle and go into the pub. They open fire. The first man is shooting, the second man comes up behind; we believe that the second man has also got a 9 millimetre but we think he's having trouble with this gun. Both the lads are shot (but not fatally). All hell breaks loose, and the two men are seen running from the pub, back towards the car. However, they only run a relatively short distance, because they fall. One of them drops about 50 metres from the pub and another about 100 metres. They are both shot. All we're left with is two dead bodies and their mobile phones’.

[Case 12- Internal group conflict]

The motives for homicide related to organized crime

Wright (2006) asserts that violence is used by organized crime groups to achieve 'short-term' tactical or 'long-term' strategic goals. In the 17 cases under review, the short-term motives were ascertained by piecing together the events of cases and through respondents' recall of the details of cases. However, it was difficult to draw any firm conclusions about what might have been the long-term goals of homicide from the police interview data. Therefore, the following section focuses on the short-term or immediate motives for the use of violence across the 17 cases (Tables 4 to 6). The motives are categorised as either instrumental or expressive. This distinction has been used in a number of homicide studies (see Thijssen & De Ruiter, 2011; Miethe & Drass, 1999). Crime events are defined as instrumental when the offender sets out to achieve a specific goal, such as obtaining money, belongings or territory (Thijssen & De Ruiter, 2011); and 'expressive' when the aggression occurs as an emotional response to frustration or ego threats, such as an insult or to exact revenge for wrongdoing (Thijssen & De Ruiter, 2011). It should also be noted that while studies of aggression often treat instrumental and expressive motives as separate entities, it is common for both expressive and instrumental motives to be observed within the same crime event. For example, Block and Block (1993) first suggested expressive and instrumental motives might be observed across a continuum as the event unfolds.

Across the 17 cases, there were 12 where the primary motive appeared to be instrumental and five expressive. Table 4 shows that across the inter-group cases six of the cases were instrumental and one expressive. In summary:

- The six homicides related to drug market competition/ debts were instrumental in motive as they were designed to achieve a specific goal (in these cases to remove rival dealers or to secure a drug debt);

- In the case where a suspected police informant was killed, the motive was expressive as the main desire was to exact revenge on the victim.

Table 4

Motives for Violence in Inter-group Rivalry Cases (n=7)

Source of conflict	Motives
Drug market competition (n=4)	Rival drug dealers are killed in all four cases. The primary motive is instrumental as violence is used to secure drug market territory.
Drug debts (=2)	In both cases two gangs conflict over an unpaid drug debt. The primary motive is instrumental as violence is used to enforce payment which leads to confrontation and killing of gang member.
Informing to police (n=1)	Rival gang member suspected of being informant and is shot. The primary motive is expressive as the informant is shot as punishment/ revenge.

If we turn to Table 5, the primary motives in the homicides committed as a response to theft from the group and disrespect to the group leaders were expressive as they exacted revenge for an act of wrongdoing against the group. Several SIO's also mentioned in interview that organized criminals occasionally used violence within their organized crime group both to show they were 'willing' to use violence and to act as a form of informal control over the group members. This wider function of violence has been noted in the previous research literature (see, for example, Bourgois 1995; Wright, 2006) and as the following extract suggests, this internal violence was used to act as a warning to others:

‘if you're going to be a criminal at that level, you are not going to be allowed to be ripped off so what are you going to do? You will have your revenge, you will have to shoot people.....you will advertise what you've done, you will show people that you've done the murder.’

[Case 39- theft from group]

In the cases where the group member was setting up a rival enterprise, the primary motivation was instrumental in that violence was used to try and persuade the individual to conform to a particular course of action (to prevent member from leaving group). Similar to the cases where individuals were killed after wrongdoing against the group, the respondents suggested violence was also used here to exert informal control over gang members. As the following extract illustrates:

‘our victim was chosen for the reasons that he was getting a bit loud and he was getting a bit of a problem..... he was also allied to this other individual who was particularly violent as an individual, who was very cavalier and disregarded any threats that came his way.....I think probably the murder of our victim was a warning to him as well.’

[Case 2- leaving the group to set up rival enterprise]

Table 5

Motives for Violence in Internal Group Conflict Cases (n=6)

Source of conflict	Motives
Theft from group (n=2)	The primary motive is expressive as violence is used in retaliation/ punishment for theft from group.
Disrespect of leaders (n=1)	The primary motivate is expressive as violence is used to retaliate/ punish for disrespect of the leader.
Member leaving group (n=3)	The primary motive is instrumental as violence is used to try and persuade the individual to conform to a particular course of action to prevent them from leaving group and setting up rival enterprise.

The primary motives in the four cases linked to robbery were all instrumental and short-term. A wide body of research has highlighted that certain crime events, such as robbery, can lead to unplanned homicides where the death of the victim is ‘subsidiary to the primary goal’ (Mouzos, 2003, p. 1). Brookman (2005) notes that over the period 1997-2001, 7% of all homicides recorded in England and Wales were committed in the course of other crime¹¹. In two of the cases under review here, the victim of the robbery also became the victim of the homicide. In both cases the victim resisted the demands of the offender and effectively became what Polk (1994) describes as a ‘double victim’- being robbed and then a victim of homicide. In the other two cases, a police officer and a member of the public were killed trying to intervene in the robbery of a business. In all of these cases the intended primary motivation of the homicide was to achieve short-term immediate goals (successful completion of the robbery and to ensure escape).

Table 6

Motives for Violence in Cases Related to Robbery (n=4)

Source of conflict	Motives
Victim resistance /non-compliance (n=2)	The primary motive is the successful completion of the robbery. The victim resistance is met by violence to ensure victim resistance is overcome and the robbery is a success.
Intervention in crime event/ apprehend robbers (n=2)	The primary motive is the successful completion of the robbery. The intervention by a family member in one robbery and a police officer in the other leads the offender to kill to ensure escape from the scene.

Discussion and Conclusions

This paper presents the findings of research that operationalized a definition of organized crime in order to explore the extent to which organized crime groups in England commit homicide, the sources of such conflict and the motivations for the use of fatal violence. As several authors have

noted (see for example Cohen, 1977; Wright, 2006; Levi, 2012), organized crime is a contested concept that can embody many different types of criminal activities organized through many different types of networks or associations. For the purpose of this research, to mitigate the risk of excluding any homicide cases where organized crime groups were involved, an inclusive definition of organized crime was used. However, even when utilizing such an inclusionary definition, the data suggest the use of fatal violence by organized crime groups in England is relatively rare.

From what we were able to ascertain, it appears that of the 696 homicides in 2005-06 fewer than 6% had any link to organized crime and under 3% (just 17) were linked to structured groups and committed to further the interests of those groups. Given the fallibility of police records drawn on and the accounts of the investigating officers who were interviewed this finding has to be treated with some caution. However, as there are estimated to be around 38,000 organized criminals operating in around 6,000 organized crime groups in the UK (Home Office, 2011) and violence is taken to be a common feature of organized crime, the prevalence rate observed appears to be low in comparison to some countries. For example, Mallory (2012) notes that in 2009 there were 6,587 drug-gang related murders in Mexico (a rate of 5.83 per 100,000 population) and the National Violent Death Reporting System data from the USA (see Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012) show that in Los Angeles alone there were 646 gang-related deaths between 2006-08 (18 per 100,000 population). When compared to the average yearly homicide rate of around 1.5 per 100,000 in England and Wales, questions arise about why organized crime groups in England appear to be less inclined to use fatal violence compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world. Of course, we can only speculate on why these differences exist, though there are several possibilities. First, organized crime may be much less widespread in England than is assumed to be the case as policy responses and specific police operations may have contained its growth. For example, part of the role of the Serious and Organised Crime Agency¹², which was established in 2006, has been to gather intelligence in relation to organized crime. This intelligence then often feeds into specific policing operations (such as Trident in the Metropolitan Police area that focus on the investigation

and prevention of homicides that are commonly related to drug turf wars. However, evidence of the impact of such policy responses and policing operations is limited. As Syal (2010) points out, since the establishment of Trident, the average number of shooting incidents remains constant at over 200 per year, of which around 15 tend to be fatal. Second, the association of violence with organized crime may be overstated. Although Wright (2006) suggests the ability to use violence can be important for organized criminals, Levi (2008 & 2012) shows that the perpetration of much organized crime, for example that involved in fraud and corruption, may require little violence. Third, even when violence is used in England, it may rarely take the form of homicide. For example the trafficking of women to the UK to work in massage parlours as prostitutes (see Levi, 2012) may require coercion but homicide is rare. Therefore, homicide may not be needed to achieve the ends of most British organized crime groups. Silverstone and Hallsworth (2008) also note that professional crime groups may abjure homicide because of the unwelcome sustained attention it could elicit from the police. That attention would risk disruption of and distraction from other aspects of the organized crime group's activities and senior members of the crime group may well attempt to minimise it. Fourth, where conflict between organized groups arises, the risk of fatal retaliation to the groups as a whole may be sufficient to motivate efforts at the control of the more violently inclined members. Finally, although firearms are regularly used in incidents of fatal violence, strict gun laws still operate in the UK. As a consequence firearms might not be as readily available to UK based organized criminals as compared to organized criminals in countries such as Mexico or the USA.

Where fatal violence does occur in relation to organized crime activities, the previous literature has tended to focus on issues of 'respect' or to a lesser degree, disputes over 'drug turf' as key triggers (see Decker & Van Winkle, 1996; Block & Block, 1993). Indeed, in this study, in four cases homicide resulted from inter group rivalry over the control of the retail end of local drug markets, in two from unpaid drug debts and in one, as a response to a police informer on drug-related activities. However, in a further six cases, homicide followed from internal group conflict, and in four from enforcement

during crime related activity. Whilst some scholars have identified 'organized robbery' by professional groups as a common characteristic of British organized crime (see Levi, 2012), relatively little is known about how internal group conflict is produced or how robbery events can generate fatal violence.

In this study, a number of differences were observed in the ways fatal violence unfolds where used as a result of inter group conflict, internal group conflict and the enforcement of crime activities. Homicides associated with inter group rivalries are commonly instrumental and resolved opportunistically through a process of situated transaction. In such cases, the progress of the specific homicide event shows some similarities to the process identified by Luckenbill (1977). However, a key difference is observed in that the organized crime groups were already committed to violence when the opposing groups converged during their everyday routine activities: there was no specific situated trigger. This is a significant finding as it suggests that Luckenbill's model, although accurate in relation to many types of confrontational homicide, requires some revision where conflict occurs between organized crime groups. In contrast, in cases of internal group homicide, the crime events tended to be pre-planned and specific knowledge of the routine activity patterns of the intended victim enabled assailants to carefully plan homicides. The data also show that both instrumental and expressive motives are observed equally in cases where there is internal conflict. All of the instrumentally motivated cases aimed to stop a member leaving the group to set up a rival enterprise and threaten the profitability of the group. This contradicts some previous research that suggests internal conflict within crime groups is commonly expressive and based around honor, respect and reputation (see for example Bourgois, 1995). In the present study, respect/ disrespect issues only appeared to be the key motivational factor in one case. However, some caution needs to be expressed in relation to this finding. As Brookman and Robinson (2012) suggest, although much violence involving organized criminals may appear to be instrumentally motivated, there are also likely to be underlying motives around a need or desire to be shown respect. Finally, in cases relating to the enforcement of robbery, the motivations are instrumental and generated through a process

of situated transaction between offenders and victim(s). However, in these cases confrontation was not a result of the 'face saving' behaviour noted in Luckenbill's model, but borne out of either a desire to enforce victims' compliance in a robbery or to remove a potential barrier to successful escape. Again, this suggests the need for further development of the Luckenbill's model of situational transaction.

Of course, the conclusions presented here are tentative and further research is required to explore some of these issues in more depth. As the current research focused only on homicides and organized crime rather than on violence and organized crime, it tells us little about the use of violence in organized crime more generally. Organized crime groups using violence for instrumental reasons might rationally decide to use non-fatal rather than fatal violence against their foes, in the sense that the former is less likely to attract sustained police attention: it may not even be reported if the victim is either too afraid to report it or too mistrustful of the police, and even if reported it is liable to be investigated less thoroughly than in the case of homicide. Athens (1997) suggests that violent offenders are often drawn into situations in which they almost commit violence, but restraining judgements change their courses of action to one of non-violence. Indeed similar questions might be asked about the circumstances in which different forms of violence are used by organized crime groups, some aiming to kill, some not aiming to kill and some killing unintentionally. Although such research would be of interest, it would require different methods and data sets from those used in this study. Interviews with victims and offenders, interrogation of court reports in cases of violence and ethnographic studies of organized crime groups would be preferable to the police accounts utilized in this study. That work would also require a more nuanced approach to defining and analysing organized crime. For the study reported here, the inclusive definition used potentially encompasses organized crime groups for whom violence would rarely, if ever, be needed. Research focusing on the organized crime groups where violence might most be expected, notably amongst those involved in drugs trafficking, would be illuminating. Further research might usefully involve a more detailed analysis of the crime scripts involved in drug trafficking, drug market

creation, drug-market protection, the robbery of drug dealers, and police interactions with drug dealers, to work through how and when violence of different levels is used. Indeed, such research would not only begin to identify the circumstances in which fatal violence is and is not used, but would also begin to add to some of findings in relation to how specific situations generate homicide events. Finally, it needs to be borne in mind that in Britain gun controls are strict. As indicated we conjecture that this is part of the explanation for the low levels of organized crime related homicide, where live-ammunition firing guns are often the means used¹³. Even though the lack of ready availability of weapons may be important, a better understanding of how those that are used come to be in the hands of their users would be useful both for academic purposes and also to inform policy on how best to disrupt supply.

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Notes

¹ It should also be noted that Mallory (2012) provides a useful overview of the organization and structure of a number of organized crime groups such as Colombian and Mexican Drug gangs, The Triads, The Yakuza and the Russian Mafia.

² The decision about the year was made by the Home Office and was based on two considerations. First, cases should be sufficiently recent that relevant investigating officers would generally still be in post and would remember details of the case and its investigation. Second, most investigations would be complete, allowing

officers to speak freely about them. Slight caution needs to be expressed over the representativeness of the sample data. As Smith et al., (2011) note, there have been annual falls in the numbers of recorded homicides since 1997/98 and since 2007/08 falls have been observed that fall outside of the expected normal statistical variation.

³ The terms incidents and cases are used interchangeably throughout.

⁴ The Homicide Index is compiled and held by the Home Office. It includes a wide range of information on each case of murder, manslaughter and infanticide. Data are collected via police officers responsible for homicides at the force level. Data are entered at three different points: on recording a homicide offense; when any suspect is charged; and when court proceedings are completed or other disposals decided (the deadline is within 30 days of each of these 'events'). The Homicide Index does not include a specific flag for linkage to organized crime.

⁵ This includes all 43 police force areas in England and Wales and British Transport Police.

⁶ In total 57 suspects were mentioned in the interviews, in all cases all suspects were male and most had a number of convictions for violent and drugs related offenses.

⁷ In this respect, 'security services' primarily related to securing contracts to provide door supervisors (colloquially referred to in England as 'bouncers') for nightclubs and bars.

⁸ This finding, though based on a small number of cases, is worthy of further exploration. Indeed, little research has explored the factors that promote or inhibit police investigations, detections or convictions in homicides involving organized crime.

⁹ In the other two cases that were inter-group and where the violence was confrontational, the homicide was preceded by an exchange over drug debts.

¹⁰ In the two other planned attacks relating to inter-group rivalry, the offenders knew the offenders prior to the attack and appeared to have knowledge of where the victim might be a certain times of the day.

¹¹ The number includes homicide committed in relation to robbery, burglary, sexual attack, avoiding/ resisting arrest and other gain.

¹² The Serious and Organised Crime Agency was legislated for through the Serious Organised Crime and Police Act (2005), which also extend investigatory powers in relation to organised crime.

¹³ The British government has tried to control the supply of imitation weapons because they can be used to intimidate. It is striking that British offenders have had to rely in imitation weapons, presumably because obtaining those capable of firing live ammunition is so difficult (see Wheal and Tilley 2009).