CCJ

The Prison Firm: The 'transportation' of organised crime, the evolution of criminal markets and contemporary prisoner society

Kate Gooch (iD)
University of Bath, UK

James Treadwell
Staffordshire University, UK

Abstract
Despite the burgeoning literature on organised crime within the community, little research has focused on the prison as a 'space' for organised crime. Based on ethnographic and qualitative research conducted within male English and Welsh prisons, this article critically examines how organised crime functions within these prisons. It is argued that the prison has become a fertile site for organised crime which is 'transported', rather than 'transplanted', into and out of prison in ways that extend the reach of criminal networks and alter the character of prisoner society.

Keywords
Drug markets, gangs, organised crime, prison, prisoner society

Introduction

In the opening pages of his seminal text, *Lush Life*, Dick Hobbs (2013) introduces his analysis of the social construction and practice of organised crime by stating:

Corresponding author:
Kate Gooch, Department of Social and Policy Sciences, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY, UK.
Email: Kg637@bath.ac.uk

Lush Life . . . stresses that this recently concocted concept [of organised crime] should be understood within the context of political change, particularly in forms of global governance, post-industrialism, unrestrained consumerism, and the intensity of contemporary illegal trading relationship, which has resulted in UK prisons being full of those young men serving long sentences because they got a taste of the good life. (p. 2)

Accounts of organised crime typically end there, at the prison gate. The expansion in academic research on organised crime has largely overlooked the prison as an institutional context for organised crime. Equally, the revival in British ethnographic prisons research (for discussion, see Drake et al., 2015; Jewkes, 2014) has focused on the harms and 'pains' suffered by prisoners – which are undoubtedly considerable and enduring – but without offering a similarly diligent and rigorous treatment of the harms that prisoners deliberately and intentionally impose on others within and beyond the prison (note, by way of contrast, Gooch and Treadwell, 2015, Edgar et al., 2003; Liebling and Arnold, 2012, Williams & Liebling, 2023). Criminological scholarship within England and Wales is silent on the topic of organised crime within prison. Typically, harmful groups within English and Welsh prisons have been described as 'gangs', erroneously importing US centric notions (see, for example, Maitra, 2016, 2020; Wood and Adler, 2001; Wood et al., 2009). As this article demonstrates, this conceptual framework fails to accurately describe the patterns of serious and organised criminality in England and Wales.

While the complaint that prisons are 'Universities for crime' is as old as the prison itself, it is argued that there has been an expansion of criminal collaborations and markets *into, within* and *out of* the prison. This migration is best described as 'transportation', not as 'transplantation' (c.f. Varese, 2011), and reflects a wider tendency for entrepreneurial criminals to exploit new financial opportunities. These collaborations can be chaotic, diffuse and 'messy' (Fraser and Hobbs, 2023). Yet, during the last decade, organised crime has become a more mainstream feature of prisoner society in England and Wales. Our immersive and qualitative research over an extended period meant that we both witnessed this transformation firsthand, and heard the accounts of prisoners and prison staff as it occured. We also benefitted from access to prison security information as well as information gleaned from collaborative work with the police and from ongoing partnership work with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS). Our observations were also confirmed by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2015, 2017, 2019, 2022), Independent Monitoring Boards (2022a, 2022b, 2023), statistical data regarding drug use and contraband 'finds' (Ministry of Justice, 2021, 2023), and HMPPS' own claims that one in five organised crime groups were operating within prison (Ryan, 2022). This article argues that this expansion represents the cumulative effects of: a new easily marketable and transportable goods (where there is both high demand and profits); new technological solutions (facilitating communication and financial transactions, and creating new supply routes); an absence of State governance; structural and material deterioration; growing economic and social capital for criminal entrepreneurs; the counterproductive effects of 'disruptive' tactics; and the adaptability of criminal entrepreneurs. This expansion of criminal markets and networks has transformed the shape and character of prisoner society in closed male prisons and young offender institutions (YOIs) in England and Wales, with the prisoner normative code evolving to stigmatise

the debtors, not those who extort others. It demonstrates that criminal enterprises are as representative of shifts in political economy *within* prison as they are in the community (Hobbs, 2013), and that while organised crime has corrosive effects, it is also highly functional and adaptive.

Conceptualising prison collaborations and criminality

Organised crime is a nebulous, ambiguous and contested concept (Levi, 1998; Paoli and Vander Beken, 2014; von Lampe, 2016). Yet the appeal of 'organised crime' to distinguish certain criminal activities remains, not only in the public imagination but also in law enforcement priorities (HM Government, 2018; Levi, 2004; National Crime Agency, 2020) and as a key focus of academic research (see, for example, Paoli et al., 2014; von Lampe and Antonopoulos, 2018). The definitional problems arise partly due to the: (1) dominance of 'myths promulged by popular culture' (Hobbs, 1995: 12) – particularly those that centre on notions of 'cartels', 'Mafia' or indeed the iconic figures of the London firms in the mid-late 1900s (for further analysis, see Hobbs, 2013; Paoli and Vander Beken, 2014; von Lampe and Antonopoulos, 2018); (2) inclusion of transnationalism within definitions, adding little conceptual clarity; (3) uncertainty about the features that distinguish 'organised crime' from other forms of criminal association; and (4) expansive, vague and 'baggy' definitions used by law enforcement agencies. Yet, as Hobbs (1995) noted, the concept of organised crime retains a 'centrality' and 'vitality' because its resonates with a common sense understanding of entrepreneurial crime.

The possibility that organised crime affiliated individuals might continue criminal activities within prison is not new (Ariza and Iturralde, 2022; Kupatadze, 2014; Van Der Laan, 2012). Indeed, the South Italian Camorra was 'born in prison' (Dickie, 2011), and it is from the part of the Gulag Archipelago known as the 'Perm' that the *vory-v-zakone* (thieves with honour) flourished and post-Soviet criminal groups emerged (Varese, 2001). In some countries, imprisonment is an important pre-requisite for affiliation. For the *vory* (Russian Mafia), for example, a prison record was not only a 'sign of distinction' but also a 'formal requirement for membership' (Gambetta, 2009: 13). Most strikingly, the imprisonment of high-profile individuals can reshape the prison landscape, as in the case of Pablo Escobar for whom *La Catedral* prison was constructed in Columbia (Ariza and Iturralde, 2022). That said, there is a surprising paucity of research examining how organised crime functions within prison (note by way of exception Van Der Laan, 2012). Moreover, in North and Latin America, the focus has predominantly been on prison 'gangs' (Biondi, 2016; Darke et al., 2021; Delisi et al., 2004; Pyrooz and Decker, 2019; Skarbek, 2014; Winterdyk and Ruddell, 2010). Despite these conceptual differences, the research is united by a focus on prisoner governance (Darke, 2018; Kupatadze, 2014; Skarbek, 2014; Sozzo, 2022). Prisoner governance can – it is argued – be co-produced and/or instituted as part of responsibilisation strategies by prison authorities (see, for example, Avila and Sozzo, 2022; Darke, 2018), or can arise in the absence of, or to usurp, State governance (Gooch and Treadwell, 2023; Kupatadze, 2014; Skarbek, 2020). Since English organised crime lacks the highly formalised structures often associated with gangs, the

Mafia and Triads, the precise form and function of the English and Welsh prison firm merits explanation.

Methodology

This article is based on qualitative and ethnographic research conducted in English and Welsh prisons from October 2014 to July 2023. It draws on three specific studies, offering a robust evidence base. First, the authors engaged in a sustained analysis of prison violence in a Category A prison, two Category B Local prisons, a Category C prison for sex offenders, a YOI and a dual Category C & YOI prison. In addition, questions regarding prison safety and security (including crime, violence, gangs, prison economies and organised crime) were posed in a further two Category C prisons and another Category C & YOI prison. Before embarking on the research, University ethical approval was secured, as was the permission of the National Research Committee of HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS).

As part of that research, we spent long periods of time within each prison (typically more than 9 months), conducted semi-structured interviews (including 476 prisoners and 235 prison staff) and analysed management information. We also attended operational meetings, such as safety meetings, security meetings, segregation reviews and reviews for those at risk of suicide and self-harm. The semi-structured interviews were (with consent) recorded, transcribed and coded using NVivo. The codes included, but were not limited to, 'gangs', 'groups', 'organising crime', 'violence', 'drugs', 'the illicit economy', 'drones', 'phones', 'weapons', 'social hierarchy', 'masculinities' and 'social norms'.

Expanding on this research, a project focused on ongoing criminality in prison was funded by the Police and Crime Commissioners of Staffordshire Police, West Midlands Police, West Mercia Police and Warwickshire Police (Treadwell et al., 2019). We were able to analyse trends regarding patterns of crime and criminality across a wider region with the input of police, prisons, regional/national intelligence units, the regional organised crime unit, the Crown Prosecution Service and Ministry of Justice/HMPPS. One of the authors (Gooch) was also invited by HMPPS to examine the emergence of a prison-based criminal network within a Category B Local prison. Access was given to intelligence drawn from a range of sources (prison, police, probation, regional intelligence units and National County Lines Co-ordination Centre), and a serious of follow-up meetings with key professionals and stakeholders organised. Taken together, we not only observed and heard how prison violence was often linked to economic imperatives, underpinned by a transformed illicit economy and the emergence of (sometimes highly organised) crime networks within prison, but were able to understand how law enforcement agencies were increasingly involved in the policing of prisons.

The prison firm: Contemporary prisoner criminal collaborations

> On the news they show a lot of these Black kids in London stabbing each other, like what about these guys that are getting executed on motorways and that? Like organised gangs, you never

see that on the news. I know a couple of stories about people in like organised crime executions and things, they don't say anything about that on the news. (Steve, Category C Prison)

Arguably, the 'prison gang' has dominated explanations for prison violence and victimisation (Delisi et al., 2004; Jacobs, 1977; Maitra, 2016, 2020; Pyrooz and Decker, 2019; Pyrooz et al., 2011; Skarbek, 2012, 2014; Wood and Adler, 2001; Wood et al., 2009). Although prison gangs – and more recently 'county lines' – have a 'seductive imagery' within prison, such explanations lack 'empirical reality' (Phillips, 2012). In the latter case, 'county lines' is a redundant concept within prison. 'County lines' drug dealing is a loose and arguably misused concept that emerged to describe the movement of 'urban drug dealers' from city hubs to smaller 'coastal, rural and market towns' (Spicer, 2019; Windle et al., 2020). There is nothing new about the migration of drug dealers or the use of mobile telephones to co-ordinate sales and distribution (Spicer, 2019). What may separate 'county lines' from other business models may simply be the novel practices that have developed to support drug supply in satellite areas, such as 'cuckooing' (where accommodation is taken over by drug dealers) (Coomber and Moyle, 2018). However, prisoners may be compelled to cross country boundaries due to their location in the prison estate, and may rely on mobile (and prison) phones to communicate, but neither of these things denote a 'county line' illustrating something of how ill-defined 'county lines' is. The association with youth and modern slavery also means that few prisoners want to admit 'county lines' drug dealing even if the police would describe it in that manner.

None of our participants recognised the 'gang' construct and, in contrast to the descriptions of formal hierarchies, structures, constitutions and enduring membership typical of prison gangs in other jurisdictions (Pyrooz and Decker, 2019; Skarbek, 2012), 'there was little to suggest an organised gang presence' (Phillips, 2012). The Eurogang definition requires only durability and a group identity tied to illegal activity (Weerman and Decker, 2024), and some researchers suggest that street gangs are 'fluid and loose' (Aldridge and Medina, 2008). However, the risk of relying on such a 'baggy' definition is that social networks can be easily mislabelled as 'gangs' (Smithson et al., 2012). Within the prison, groups may also form for the purposes of illicit activity but bear no resemblance to a 'gang' (e.g. to riot, to plan terrorist activities). Pyrooz and Decker (2019) argue that prison gangs are distinguishable from street gangs by virtue of their greater structure, enduring membership, stronger collective identity and the greater discipline over members (p. 17). However, in England and Wales, criminal groups and networks often lack this collective identity, coherence or durable membership. Moreover, since the 'language used in prison represents what is considered important enough by the prison community to warrant naming' (O'Donnell, 2004: 245), the absence of a prison 'argot' related to gang activity or membership provided further evidence of the limited role of 'gangs' within prisons (c.f. Jacobs, 1977; Symkovych, 2017).

This absence merits explanation since it is undoubtedly the case that some prisoners will import affiliations with urban street groups, some of which may constitute durable 'street gangs' (Pitts, 2008) or their splinter groups. YOIs and prisons holding larger numbers of young men (aged 18–25 years old) are often perceived to be arenas for gang activity, particularly in large Metropolitan areas. In addition, the 'gang trope' (Phillips, 2012)

has been used to describe the growing presence, power base and solidarity of the 'Muslim brotherhood' within Category A (high or maximum Security) prisons. However, the 'gang' label has often '[mis]attributed' (Hallsworth and Young, 2008: 180). In the latter case, the term 'gang' is primarily used to describe the collective solidarity and power of the Muslim brotherhood (see, for example, Liebling et al., 2011). The number of Muslim prisoners in English and Welsh prison has been gradually increasing (HM Prison and Probation Service, 2022) and for many their faith will play a 'positive and rehabilitative role' (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, 2010). For those Muslim prisoners who are collectively involved in violence, the drug economy, grooming and coerced conversions, and extremism (also see Hamm, 2009, 2013; Liebling and Arnold, 2012; Liebling et al., 2011), the 'gang' label lacks precision and represents something of the tendency to rely on tired concepts (Fraser and Hobbs, 2023).

With young men, it is more typical for such groups to represent something more diffuse and informal than the label 'gang' suggests. As Hobbs (2013) argues, 'gang' suggests a 'level of competence and organisation somewhat removed from the rootless, chaotic street life of those young men for whom the term "exclusion" could have been invented' (pp. 133–134). Those who were thought to be involved in gangs were quick to dissociate from the 'gang' label even if they admitted a former allegiance to 'loosely organised street collectives' (Phillips, 2012) and peer group offending (Hallsworth and Young, 2008). Typically, any affiliations were seen as a natural consequence of shared experiences in the same communities and schools:

> I was about 12, he gave me my own burner (firearm), but I don't see it as I'm in a gang. Obviously, I've got beef but basically, it's just a group of us from the same hood going to the same school, chilling at school together, or chilling on the bus together, coming back from school, go change, eat our dinner, meet back up outside, all chilling. (Lee, YOI)

These young men (and others like them) admitted being involved with 'guns, knives, robberies, the usual' and acknowledged that (violent) conflict would occur between different areas (also see Decker and Pyrooz, 2014). However, this conflict did not always represent territorial disputes but rather the highly sensitised reactions to 'disrespect':

> I don't need to walk in my streets every day, looking for war. Some situations haven't been out of choice. One of their people, cussed out his baby and his baby was not even a year old. We're not going to take that lightly. People got hurt. It's just the way it went. You can't draw out a man's baby like that; we ain't going to stand there and take it. (Carter, Category C and YOI)

In addition, there is a significant difference between groups of young men engaging in performative displays on social media (see, for example, Stuart, 2020; Thapar, 2021) to those who were already immersed in drug dealing, firearms use and at the peripheries of organised crime networks. For example,

> It's serious, there's no glamourising shit, it is what it is. Like London, you see these kids glamourising it. That's all they're doing. They're glamourising. 100%. Getting pictures on Instagram with their big knives and that. Where I'm from mate, that knife would be going through your fucking whatever. (Cameron, Category C and YOI)

Cameron had 'smoked' (shot) someone with a double-barrelled shotgun after the victim had beaten him in a fight. As he alludes to, and others confirmed, being affiliated with a street group held little weight or gravitas within prison, partly because it is not seen as 'serious' criminality. Some (often young) men would import and continue conflict with rival groups and – by virtue of civil gang injunctions (Treadwell and Gooch, 2015) – be unable to associate with rivals. However, any such violence represented the minority of prison assaults, and none were actively seeking to recruit members (c.f. Mitchell et al., 2017). Where some did engage in conflict with rival groups, this was not always 'gang' related and could be related to personal conflicts and grievances (e.g. one young man stabbed another to avenge the loss of his kidney in a street assault). Equally, even if individuals import gang affiliations, they may engage in drug dealing outside of that structure (Windle and Briggs, 2015). The key argument here then is not that prisoners do not import street gang affiliations, nor that there is no gang-related violence at all (Hallsworth, 2011), but that 'gangs' do not structure prison social order (c.f. Pyrooz and Decker, 2019) nor is 'gang' a suitable concept for describing prison criminal collaborations in England and Wales.

Transportation: The migration of criminal collaborations and activities into prison

The migration of organised crime into new territories and the investment in emerging markets is not new (Allum, 2014; Lintner, 2004; Morselli et al., 2011; Sergi, 2019; Varese, 2006). To Varese (2011), the 'transplantation' of the Mafia involves the offer of criminal protection over a sustained period by established members of a criminal organisation operating in a new region. Crucially, simply moving into a new territory is not sufficient to guarantee transplantation. Rather, the success of such migration depends on a 'special combination' of certain factors, including the absence of other Mafia groups; the sudden expansion of a new market; and the inability of the State to regulate such markets (Varese, 2011). Transplantation involves an 'uprooting' of a Mafia group 'far from their places of origin and their operations' to 'colonise new markets and territories' (Varese, 2006: 290). However, the precise mechanisms of migration into the prison are distinctive. First, organised criminal 'firms' in England and Wales are not Mafia-style organisations but flexible 'social systems' (Hobbs, 2013). Second, while there are notable similarities in the structural conditions that make migration possible, the expansion of criminal networks within English and Welsh prisons is best described as *transportation*.

Here, we define transportation as the movement of knowledge, associations, commodities, and finances into, within and out of the prison estate. A pre-existing 'group' may not be imprisoned in the same prison (if at all), but even if they are, they are not 'uprooted' and then 'replanted' as a discreet entity of their own volition (as Varese describes transplantation). When individuals deliberately jeopardise their freedom (e.g. breaching license conditions) to (re)enter a prison with contraband for sale and distribution, this tends to be one or two individuals rather than the entirety of the group. Equally, the expansion of existing criminal collaborations is not a 'new outpost' (Varese, 2011) but a fluid continuation of criminal networks that morphs and adapts to the prison and across the prison estate. By its very nature, criminal enterprise within prison is often dependent on community connections to, for example,

manufacture goods, facilitate conveyance, manage financial transactions or enforce payment. Moreover, prisoners may be released and 'transport' back into the community new affiliations and criminal enterprises.

Prisoners do not lose their community associations when they are imprisoned, nor do they necessarily lose an interest in the affairs of their collaborators or any shared enterprises. Prisoners can still organise criminal activities occurring within the community with the assistance of community-based associates. Such activities have included, but are not limited to, murder, kidnapping, jury intimidation, physical assault, theft of luxury goods, arson, criminal damage, drug production and drug trafficking. While such actions represent ongoing criminality, a distinction can be drawn between organised crime that remains community based and that where the prison itself is the site for criminal activity. In the former case, the transportation is linear – between the incarcerated individual and their associates in the community. In the latter, collaborations and markets diversify as dealers encounter new users, associates and accomplices (e.g. prison staff). Unlike descriptions of the Mafia (Gambetta, 1993; Varese, 2011), protection rackets were far less common within prison, and it is the 'bricolage' drug market that was the primary source of financial gain.

Prisoners were, for example, actively involved in the lucrative trafficking, sale and distribution of contraband (typically drugs, but also prescription medication, mobile telephones, SIM cards, alcohol, weapons and firearms). While prisoners will use readily available items to trade (e.g. food, vapes, toiletries), higher value items and larger debts are typically repaid via payments into community bank accounts, crypto currencies or in cash amounts paid to associates. Thus, contraband is exchanged within prison, but payments made outside of it (and in ways that prison security teams find difficult to trace):

> Drugs. That's what fuels prisons. The thing is with prison now, people can move money about, it never used to be like that. Bank transfers. All they have to do is ring up a girlfriend or whatever [and say] 'Here you are I'll give you an account number, put so and so'. You've got drug dealers who are making money, money, money. (Liam, Category C Prison)

Since these seemingly innocuous payments were transferred directly into legitimate bank accounts, it obfuscated the need to 'cleanse' money through other means. Not only has the growth of the Internet, social media, mobile phone apps (including Encrochat) and crypto currencies overcome some barriers to organised crime in prison, but the availability of drones allowed for large packages to be flown to specific locations, including the cell window of a prisoner who had volunteered or been coerced to collect a package. To thrive, therefore, these prison-based markets needed associates who were both prison and community-based, including manufacturers, drivers, drone pilots, conveyers, debt collectors, finance managers and enforcers. In this way, transportation was multi-dimensional – crossing into, out of, and across the prison estate.

Crucially, within prison, it is possible to overcome one of the key challenges for Mafia migration, namely – Varese (2011) argues – the need for enough individuals to move into a new territory and establish their reputation for violence. By virtue of their function, prisons create direct contact with a higher proportion of offenders – individuals who can quickly establish a reputation for violence (with or without its actual use), and

for whom knowledge of their criminal collaborations will precede them or can be quickly verified. A common myth was that those who were *really* controlling criminal enterprise would not be imprisoned, but even senior figures reported becoming 'greedy' and/or 'sloppy' (and stopped taking the necessary precautions), or were imprisoned for offences other than drug trafficking. Some migration of criminal enterprise was therefore a natural result of (lengthy) imprisonment; in other cases, men were deliberately infringing their license conditions so they could be recalled to prison and earn several thousand pounds (Gooch and Treadwell, 2020). Imprisonment could serve as an opportunity to expand such networks within the prison estate and/or *transport* such collaborations back into the community. These criminal networks can be regionally based but are amenable to expansion, especially if prisoners are transferred to prisons across the country or community associates are willing to travel to multiple prisons. Notably, prison managers typically seek to 'disrupt' criminal activity by moving prisoners to another prison, but this can extend a network and bring individuals into contact with new associates.

The combination of technological advancements and the development of new supply routes does not solely explain why organised criminal enterprise flourished within prison in the 2010s. There are two critical structural factors. First, prisoners were able to exploit a new market, namely the sale of psychoactive substances (PS) (often dubbed 'Spice' or 'Mamba'). The drug economy has been a source of concern for at least the last 30 years (Cope, 2000; Crewe, 2005, 2006; Edgar and O'Donell, 1998; Hughes, 2000), but its scale and composition was altered by the introduction of PS (Gooch and Treadwell, 2020). Efforts to stymie PS use through legal prohibition and mandatory drug testing did little to reduce its appeal. In fact, amounts of PS found by prison staff trebled post prohibition (Ministry of Justice, 2022b). For suppliers, PS could be easy concealed and transported into prison by, for example, spraying it on domestic or legal mail with each A4 paper page fetching anything from £500 to £1000. For users, PS was often a cheaper and more easily available than heroin and cannabis, and PS could be soaked in a vape capsule and smoked surreptitiously. Thus, it was easier to traffic into and around the prison than heroin or cannabis, but also easier to use and more lucrative to sell.

Crucially, the 'transformation' of the prison drug market (Gooch and Treadwell, 2020) coincided with a rapid deterioration in the quality of prison life. Increasingly, prisoners were spending more time within their cells as staff shortages and inconsistent work and educational provision meant drug use became a way to 'have your day out of prison'. Equally, there was an endemic sense of hopelessness as prisoners felt increasingly 'stuck in the system'. Essentially, dealers had a 'captive market':

> The drug dealers obviously live like kings don't they. Spice is so easy to sell and there's so much money in it. Obviously, the drug dealers are living it large aren't they, loving it, know what I mean? That's where the money is now, drugs. (Carl, Category C and YOI)

Prisoners described such entrepreneurship as 'pure business'. It represented a form of 'unlicensed capitalism' (Hobbs, 2013: 232) where prisoners were earning hundreds and thousands of pounds, partly because inflationary prices far exceeded community markets, partly due to demand, partly because some prisoners were willing to pay the large sums demanded and partly because associates would approach family members directly

to enforce re-payment. Thus, small seizures of contraband, or the non-repayment by some, could easily be tolerated.

Second, austerity measures led to the departure of large numbers of long-serving prison officers and 'leaner' staffing profiles (National Offender Management Service, 2017). Those that remained typically lacked experience (Ministry of Justice, 2022a) and the 'blind [were] leading the blind'. For those prison officers who lacked confidence and skill, there was a tendency to under-use their power, which could be just as dangerous as its over-use (see, for example, Crewe et al., 2014). While the illicit nature of drug economies means that prisoners could rarely appeal to State to govern markets, the 're-configuration of penal power' (Crewe and Liebling, 2017) was such that officers were less likely to identify patterns of criminal activity, were absent from the landings, were less willing or able to enforce the rules and – in some cases – reliant on prisoners to police the landings (either by design or default). This was more pronounced in some prisons and prison wings than others, but it was the 'Businessmen' who benefitted and/or assumed power. At first glance, this structural account corresponds with Varese's (2011) thesis that Mafia migration, however, the proliferation of criminal enterprise within prison, also needs to be understood in a wider penal, social and cultural context.

The prison firm and prisoner society

The 'demands of penal power' have become increasingly individualised, requiring prisoners to actively demonstrate their commitment to their own rehabilitation (Crewe, 2009). Penal policy has deliberately sought to atomise prisoner society to prevent collective disorder of the kind seen in the 1991 prison riots (Crewe, 2007; Liebling, 2004) but in ways that have contributed to a more fragmented prisoner society. Meanwhile, shifts in political economy in the community post-industrialisation have seen criminal culture and identities becoming increasingly consumeristic, competitive and hedonistic (Hall et al., 2013; Hobbs, 2013; Winlow and Hall, 2006). This has produced a cultural context that tolerates – and at times honours – criminal enterprise. Rather than prohibiting extortion and racketeering (c.f. Sykes, 1958), the prisoner normative code had evolved to require sound financial management. Little sympathy was extended to the 'debt heads' (those who could not repay their debts) and 'spice heads' (those who could not manage their drug use) who were stigmatised and demoted to the lower echelons of the prisoner hierarchy not far above the 'nonces' (sex offenders). Conversely, it was the 'Businessmen' who were at the apex of the prisoner hierarchy and were perceived to have the most economic and social power.

Even if the 'Businessmen' and their associates lacked a normative commitment to the State's rehabilitative goals (Crewe, 2009), there was virtue in creating the appearance of legitimacy (e.g. being convivial with staff, appearing not to be involved in misconduct, attending courses). Indeed, this could be the most prudent strategy to ensure progression to less secure conditions and release at the earliest possible opportunity:

> You're looking after your own interests. You've got to learn to play the game. Prison's a game. (Jimmy, Category B Prison)

For prison officers, seemingly charismatic and influential prisoners – as the 'Businessmen' often were – could be of significant assistance in policing the wing. It was not uncommon to find those involved in criminal enterprise were also given jobs that afforded greater freedom, allowed more time unlocked and were on the highest level of the 'Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme' (i.e. on 'Enhanced regime') (also see Gooch and Treadwell, 2020, 2023).

For many 'Businessmen', the art of balancing legitimate and illegitimate business enterprise was well practised. Those who had been involved in organised criminal activities in the community had often used legitimate businesses (e.g. hair salons, nail salons, tanning studios, gyms) to 'cleanse' money or conceal their illicit activities:

> You were getting up in the morning and going to work. You were looking after the kids. You were taking them on holiday so the kids had their time, [the wife] had her time, the business had that time, the drugs had that time, and you had your time. (John, Category C Prison)

For those who lacked the commitment to comply with staff – even if only performatively – 'flying under the radar' was a sensible strategy, even if it simply meant less time in segregation, a reduced risk of being 'shipped out' or fewer additional penalties (such as 'added days' in prison). The most prudent entrepreneurs sought to avoid the 'dirty work' by relying on 'foot soldiers', enforcers and 'Middlemen', with the 'Middlemen' and enforcers acquiring more status than the 'foot soldiers'. This could involve collecting payments, enforcing non-repayment, retaining the debt lists, coercing others to collect or 'hold' contraband, coercing prisoners to assault others or threatening family members:

> I just send an order down, because shit rolls downhill. So if I just send it downhill to the Middlemen and they would send it out to the Foot Soldiers and that. There's about another three or four here on this wing that I consider at the top, and they know it as well. But they're not above me. (Darren, Category C Prison)

While some were paid for their involvement, others were coerced or only involved to clear their own debts. In this sense, some groups were more durable and had more identifiable roles and hierarchies; however, these roles were not necessarily fixed or static, and the collaborations often lacked a clear identity typically associated with 'gangs' such as nomenclature, region or signifiers (e.g. colours). While some criminal collaborations would not be described as an 'organised crime group', some do have more durability and seek to monopolise supply. For example, at HMP Pentonville, a prisoner was murdered, and two others seriously hurt, in attempt to enforce control of the drug supply on a particular wing.

It is notable that prisoners could be more concerned about the 'firm's' estimations of them, even in a High Security prison where progression relied on positive assessments:

> Because I'm here and I work with psychologists I say, 'Yeah, I really want to get away from all that bollocks to do with all the firm I'm with and having to worry about what they think and . . .' But at the end of the day, I do need to worry about what other people think, because I can

easily be whacked in prison if I do something that pisses them off. I'm more worried about what my firm think of me and what I'm doing, than anyone else. (Bobby, Category A Prison)

Communication between prisoners within and across prisons was such that business and enforcement activities – and the associated 'contracts on heads' – could be easily undertaken without any direct contact between those organising the 'hit' and the victim. This made any transfers of potential victims and debtors by the prison authorities far less effective.

Hidden in plain sight: Criminal collaborations and state corruption

They can see who's grafting. It's like when you see them on the wing and they're running around, you can see who's selling drugs. So, when they're running around, in and out of pads, it's obvious who's doing what, do you know what I mean? (Ben, Category C Prison)

To operate effectively, prisoners and their associates have to 'neutralise law enforcement by technical skill of crime commission, by corruption and/or by legal arbitrage' (Levi, 2004: 828). Minimising the risk of detection can be achieved by using drones; diversifying supply routes in response to security tactics (e.g. moving from using domestic mail to legal mail, the latter being subject to greater legal protections); trading through bank accounts, the darknet or cybercurrencies; exploiting opportunities in the regime schedule or officer supervision; coercing the visitors of other prisoners to carry a package with them; and/or arranging for a 'pass' to occur during a hospital escort. However, organised crime within prison cannot flourish without the corruption of the State (Levi, 2008). Thus, we reinstate the importance of corruption – however ambiguous a phrase (Campbell, 2016) – to the definition of organised crime within prison and in the separation of organised crime from 'crime that is organised' (Reuter, 1983; Schelling, 1971).

The issue of prison staff corruption has received relatively scant academic attention (for notable exceptions, see Goldsmith et al., 2016; McCarthy, 1984). There is limited statistical data on prison staff corruption with the effect that it is impossible to accurately establish how many prison staff have engaged in corrupt practices that constitute criminal and/or disciplinary offences. A Freedom of Information request revealed that during 2020–2022, 80 prison officers were prosecuted, dismissed or excluded[1] for conveying drugs into prison (Hansard, HC Deb, 19 December 2022, cW). However, the number of corrupt staff is likely to be far higher. The conveyance of contraband can include a wider array of items than drugs alone, and what constitutes 'corruption' is both more subtle and can include a wider range of practices. Corruption can include the misuse and disclosure of confidential information (e.g. identities and locations of individuals); disclosure of information about prison security or law enforcement activities; assisting in an escape; preferential treatment of particular prisoners; overlooking rule violations; neglect of duties; assistance in criminal ventures; loss or destruction of evidence; and sexual relationships. It is not just prison officers who may be involved, but prison managers and

those working for other organisations (e.g. the probation service, health, charity, education or employment contractors). Prison staff can be an effective supply route for larger quantities of goods, for goods that was less easy to 'plug' and when other supply routes prove more hazardous.

Not all prison staff enter employment with the aim of directly facilitating criminal activity, but some certainly do. They too are another example of the transportation that takes place across the prison boundary. During our research, prison and police representatives had identified partners and relatives of prisoners connected to organised crime networks who were working as prison officers. Recruitment and vetting processes for prison officers are notoriously weak: prison officers are not interviewed prior to employment, training is short and vetting checks do not always identify associations. The associations reported to us only came to light after suspicions were raised and additional checks were conducted using the Police National Database. For those who were not 'planted', involvement in criminal activity could be coerced (e.g. where threats to family members were made and where prisoners reference details about the home and school addresses of family members), be driven by financial incentives or occur within the context of a sexual relationship. Prisoners were keenly aware that prison officer pay was poor and considered the offer of £2000 or £3000 sufficient to tempt some into criminal activities. In other cases, requests to convey contraband were made within the context of a sexual relationship:

> A lot of officers have sexual relationships with inmates now don't they? Never used to be. You got 21-year-old officers, 22, 23, 24. [They've] got no communication skills, no social skills, no people skills at all. Then they come in and a lad pays them a bit of attention, flirts. The next thing you know, they're in a servery [where meals are served] and then you know the rest. And she's obsessed now, she's hungry, she's hooked, every night they're phoning. Next thing you know she's bringing loads of packs in. She's caught then. And it's easy done because these young and innocent girls fall in love quick. Pass her onto your mate. Then, 'It's not working between us, but I tell you what, you want to keep that money, my mates there, bring that to him'. (Theo, Category B Local Prison)

If a prison officer became uncomfortable with the requests, or felt coerced and manipulated, it could be difficult to report this without also divulging that they had 'crossed the line'. Indeed, sexual transgressions alone would be sufficient to prompt prosecution. But just as the political economy and social texture of a prison is critical to understanding the dynamics of organised crime, so it is critical to understanding staff corruption. When staff feel unable to rely on each other for social and physical safety, some lean into prisoners for security. Equally, if prison officers find it difficult to interpret rehabilitative goals, the offer of well intentioned, kind individualised care can, if not boundaried, lead to the kind of intimacies that ease romantic liaisons. Ultimately, for entrepreneurs, prison staff were always in ready supply:

> You'll never stop drugs in prison. You've got staff that bring it in for a start. No prison can say that they 100% trust every single member of our staff because you'll always have one that needs money and they'll get groomed by people and they'll bring something in. (Rex, Category B Local Prison)

If demand remains, there will always be some who will conclude that the financial gains outweigh possible sanctions (if caught) and that staff can be relied upon even if other supply routes fail. Thus, preventing organised crime also ensuring prison officers feel safe, supported, guided, suitably reimbursed and able to report early indicators of conditioning and corruption.

Conclusion

Organised crime has flourished within prison in the last decade due to a unique combination of new drugs; lucrative contraband markets; increased demand due to impoverished regimes and the structural hopelessness endemic across the system; the restructuring of State governance and the relative physical and symbolic absence of prison officers; tired, sometimes ineffective, security tactics; the evolution of the prisoner code, the fragmentation of prisoner society, and increasingly competitive, consumeristic prisoner culture; and the diversification of supply routes. Thus, the migration of organised crime into prison was 'driven by alterations in wider political economy' (Hobbs, 2013: 227) *within* prison not just in the community, and eased by changes to 'social, cultural and structural' (Fraser and Hobbs, 2023: 167) conditions within prison. The 'transportation' of organised crime into prison does not involve severing ties to the community (and may expand networks) but represents a mutation of organised crime to capitalise on new criminal markets. A typical response to organised crime is to bolster law enforcement activity and resources. However, supply routes are adaptable and buoyant, and where demand remains, there will always be financial incentives for suppliers. Writing about possible responses to prison gangs, Skarbek argues (2014: 161) that 'a better approach . . . is to alter the conditions that give rise to inmates' demand'. Such an approach is equally welcomed here. Until the social, economic and moral conditions of the prison are improved, criminal enterprise will continue to be a highly functional response to imprisonment.

Here, we use the term 'organised crime' with some caution as it is prone to the same misattribution as concepts such as 'gangs' and 'county lines'. Some prisoners engaged in relatively low-level drug dealing 'characterised by entry and succession that was less formal, less structured and with fewer barriers than might be suspected' (Decker and Townsend Chapman, 2008: 5). For others, the criminal enterprises were more sophisticated, involved State corruption, had geographical reach and were somewhat durable. It was these features that separated 'crime that is organised' from 'organised crime'. It is the informal, diffuse and dynamic nature of English and Welsh organised crime that means that criminal collaboration represented neither the prison gangs of North and South America nor the highly structured Mafioso in European and the post-Soviet countries. Scholars such as Pyrooz and Decker have distinguished prison gangs from street gangs, arguing that the former is typically hierarchical and durable but the latter can be looser in form, structure and membership (Decker et al., 2022; Pyrooz and Decker, 2019). However, prisoners typically rejected the 'gang' construct both in terms of their own street affiliations but also within prison, and the criminal collaborations lacked a 'cohesive identity' typically associated with prison gangs. Crucially, 'gang' affiliations did not hold grafitas; it was the entrepreneurial 'Businessmen' that gained economic and social power.

This article focused specifically on adult male prisons and YOIs, without considering how forms of harmful group behaviour may have changed in women's prisons, youth custody (for those aged 12–18 years old), sex offender prisons or open prisons. At the time of writing, we were aware of emerging changes within women's prisons, where women were becoming involved in organised crime from within prison and women's prisons were deliberately targeted to further expand the illicit prison economy. How this will play out is as yet unknown but merits further research. Moreover, for those women involved in criminal enterprise with male prisoners, we are yet to fully understand the range of roles women play, and the patterns of complicity and exploitation (e.g. how many women play active roles compared with those who are begrudging, unwilling or coerced). While this dearth of research is reflective of wider patterns in criminological scholarship (Hosford et al., 2022), the discipline is ill served by this paucity and further research is merited.

ORCID iD

Kate Gooch ![iD] https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5088-333X

Note

1. The exclusion list ensures that those who resign from HM Prison and Probation service cannot be employed by other contractors or services and occupy alternative roles within a prison.

References

Aldridge JA and Medina J (2008) Full Research Report. ESRC End of Award Report RES-000-23-0615. In: Aldridge JA and Medina J (eds) *Youth Gangs in an English City: Social Exclusion, Drugs and Violence*. Swindon: Economic and Social Research Council, p. 23.

Allum F (2014) Understanding criminal mobility: The case of the Neapolitan Camorra. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 19(5): 583–602.

Ariza L and Iturralde M (2022) Tales from La Catedral: The Narco and the reconfiguration of prison social order in Columbia. In: Sozzo M (ed.) *Prisons, Inmates and Governance in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 63–92.

Avila F and Sozzo M (2022) The 'prisoner-enterpeneur': Responsibilization and co-governance at penuta de reiles prison in Uruguay. In: Sozzo M (ed.) *Prisons, Inmates and Governance in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 297–328.

Biondi K (2016) *Sharing This Walk: An Ethnography of Prison Life and the PCC in Brazil*. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Campbell L (2016) 'Corruption by organised crime': A matter of definition? *Current Legal Problems* 69(1): 115–141.

Coomber R and Moyle L (2018) The changing shape of street-level heroin and crack supply in England: Commuting, holidaying and cuckooing drug dealers across 'county lines'. *The British Journal of Criminology* 58(6): 1323–1342.

Cope N (2000) Drug use in prison: The experience of young offenders. *Drugs: Education, Prevention and Policy* 7(4): 355–366.

Crewe B (2005) Prisoner society in the era of hard drugs. *Punishment and Society* 7(4): 457–481.

Crewe B (2006) Prison drug dealing and the ethnographic lens. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 45(4): 347–368.

Crewe B (2007) Power, adaptation and resistance in a late-modern men's prison. *The British Journal of Criminology* 47(2): 256–275.

Crewe B (2009) *Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Crewe B and Liebling A (2017) Reconfiguring penal power. In: Liebling A, Maruna S and Mcara L (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Criminology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 889–913.

Crewe B, Liebling A and Hulley S (2014) Heavy-light, absent-present: Rethinking the 'weight' of imprisonment. *The British Journal of Sociology* 65(3): 387–410.

Darke S (2018) *Conviviality and Survival: Co-producing Brazilian Prison Order*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Darke S, Garces C, Duno-Gottberg L, et al. (2021) *Carceral Communities in Latin America: Troubling Prison Worlds in the 21st Century*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Decker SH and Pyrooz DC (2014) Gangs: Another form of organised crime? In: Paoli L (ed.) *Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 270–287.

Decker SH and Townsend Chapman M (2008) *Drug Smugglers on Drug Smuggling: Lessons from the Inside*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Decker SH, Pyrooz DC and Densley JA (2022) *On Gangs*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Delisi M, Berg MT and Hochstetler A (2004) Gang members, career criminals and prison violence: Further specification of the importation model of inmate behavior. *Criminal Justice Studies* 17(4): 369–383.

Dickie J (2011) *Blood Brotherhoods: The Rise of Italian Mafias*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Drake DH, Earle R and Sloan J (2015) *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Edgar K and O'Donnell I (1998) *Mandatory Drug Testing in Prisons: The Relationship between MDT and the Level and Nature of Drug Misuse*. London: Home Office.

Edgar K, O'Donnell I and Martin C (2003) *Prison Violence: The dynamics of conflict, fear and power*. Cullompton: Willan.

Fraser A and Hobbs D (2023) Urban criminal collaboration. In: Liebling A, Maruna S and Mcara L (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Criminology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 166–183.

Gambetta D (1993) *The Sicilian Mafia: The Business of Private Protection*. London: Harvard University Press.

Gambetta D (2009) *Codes of the Underworld: How Criminals Communicate*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Goldsmith A, Halsey M and Groves A (2016) *Tackling Correctional Corruption: An Integrity Promoting Approach*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gooch K and Treadwell J (2015) *Prison Bullying and Victimisation*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. Available at: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/law/prison-bullying-and-victimisation.pdf

Gooch K and Treadwell J (2020) Prisoner society in an era of psychoactive substances, organized crime, new drug markets and austerity. *The British Journal of Criminology* 60(5): 1260–1281.

Gooch K and Treadwell J (2023) The 'screw boys' and the 'businessmen': Re-negotiating penal power, governance and legitimate authority through a prison violence reduction scheme. *The British Journal of Criminology* 63(4): 1219–1236.

Hall S, Winlow S and Ancrum C (2013) *Criminal Identities and Consumer Culture*. Cullompton: Willan.

Hallsworth S (2011) Anatomizing gang talk. *Más Allá de las Pandillas: Violencias, Juventudes y Resistencias en el Mundo Globalizado* 1: 25–46.

Hallsworth S and Young T (2008) Gang talk and gang talkers: A critique. *Crime, Media, Culture: An International Journal* 4(2): 175–195.

Hamm MS (2009) Prison Islam in the age of sacred terror. *The British Journal of Criminology* 49(5): 667–685.

Hamm MS (2013) *The Spectacular Few: Prisoner Radicalization and the Evolving Terrorist Threat*. New York: New York University Press.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2010) *Muslim Prisoners' Experiences: A Thematic Review*. London: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2015) *Changing Patterns of Substance Misuse in Adult Prisons and Service Responses: A Thematic Review*. London: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2017) *Life in Prison: Living Conditions*. London: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2019) *HM Chief Inspector of Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report 2018–2019*. London: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (2022) *HM Chief Inspector in Prisons for England and Wales: Annual Report for England and Wales 2021–2022*. London: His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons.

HM Government (2018) *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy*. London: HM Government.

HM Prison and Probation Service (2022) *HMPPS Offender Equalities Annual Report 2021/22*. London: HM Prison and Probation Service.

Hobbs D (1995) *Bad Business*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hobbs D (2013) *Lush Life*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hosford K, Aqil N, Windle J, et al. (2022) Who researches organised crime? A review of organised crime authorship trends (2004–2019). *Trends in Organized Crime* 25(3): 249–271.

Hughes R (2000) Drug injectors and prison mandatory drug testing. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 39(1): 1–13.

Independent Monitoring Board (2022a) *Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Liverpool*. London: Independent Monitoring Board.

Independent Monitoring Board (2022b) *Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Wandsworth*. London: Independent Monitoring Board.

Independent Monitoring Board (2023) *Annual Report of the Independent Monitoring Board at HMP Gartree*. London: Independent Monitoring Board.

Jacobs JB (1977) *Stateville*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Jewkes Y (2014) An introduction to 'doing prison research differently'. *Qualitative Inquiry* 20(4): 387–391.

Kupatadze A (2014) Prisons, politics and organized crime: The case of Kyrgyzstan. *Trends in Organized Crime* 17(3): 141–160.

Levi M (1998) Perspectives on 'organised crime': An overview. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice* 37(4): 335–345.

Levi M (2004)) The making of the United Kingdom's organised crime control policies. In: Fijnaut C and Paoli L (eds) *Organised Crime in Europe: Concepts, Patterns and Control Policies in the European Union and Beyond*. Dordrecht: Springer, pp. 823–851.

Levi M (2008) Policing fraud and organised crime. In: Newburn T (ed.) *Handbook of Policing*. Cullompton: Willan, pp. 522–552.

Liebling A (2004) *Prisons and Their Moral Performance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Liebling A and Arnold H (2012) Social relationships between prisoners in a maximum security prison: Violence, faith, and the declining nature of trust. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40(5): 413–424.

Liebling A, Arnold H and Straub C (2011) *An Exploration of Staff-prisoner Relationships at Whitemoor: 12 Years on*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Lintner B (2004) Chinese organised crime. *Global Crime* 6(1): 84–96.

Maitra DR (2016) An exploratory study of prison gangs in contemporary society. In: Harding S and Palasinski M (eds) *Global Perspectives on Youth Gang Behaviour, Violence and Weapons Use*. Hershey, PA: IGI Global, pp. 215–237.

Maitra DR (2020) 'If you're down with a gang inside, you can lead a nice life': Prison gangs in the age of Austerity. *Youth Justice* 20(1–2): 128–145.

McCarthy BJ (1984) Keeping an eye on the keeper: Prison corruption and its control. *The Prison Journal* 64(2): 113–125.

Ministry of Justice (2021) *HMPPS Annual Digest, April 2020 to March 2021: Finds in Prison*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (2022a) *Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service Workforce Quarterly: December 2022*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (2022b) *HMPPS Annual Digest: April 2021-March 2022*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Ministry of Justice (2023) *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly: October to December 2022*. London: Ministry of Justice.

Mitchell MM, Fahmy C, Pyrooz DC, et al. (2017) Criminal crews, codes, and contexts: Differences and similarities across the code of the street, convict code, street gangs, and prison gangs. *Deviant Behavior* 38(10): 1197–1222.

Morselli C, Turcotte M and Tenti V (2011) The mobility of criminal groups. *Global Crime* 12(3): 165–188.

National Crime Agency (2020) *National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime*. London: National Crime Agency.

National Offender Management Service (2017) *National Offender Management Service Annual Workforce Statistics Bulletin*. London: Ministry of Justice.

O'Donnell I (2004) Prison rape in context. *British Journal of Criminology* 44(2): 241–255.

Paoli L and Vander Beken T (2014) Organised crime: A contested concept. In: Paoli L, Albanese JS, Antonopoulos GA, et al. (eds) *Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 13–31.

Paoli L, Albanese JS, Antonopoulos GA, et al. (2014) *Oxford Handbook of Organized Crime*. Cary: Oxford University Press.

Phillips C (2012) 'It ain't nothing like America with the bloods and the crips': Gang narratives inside two English prisons. *Punishment and Amp; Society* 14(1): 51–68.

Pitts J (2008) *Reluctant Gangsters: The Changing Face of Youth Crime*. Cullompton: Willan.

Pyrooz DC and Decker SH (2019) *Competing for Control: Gangs and the Social Order of Prisons*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pyrooz DC, Decker SH and Fleisher MS (2011) From the street to the prison, from the prison to the street: Understanding and responding to prison gangs. *Journal of Aggression, Conflict and Peace Research* 3(1): 12–24.

Reuter P (1983) *Disorganized Crime: The Economics of Visible Hand*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Ryan J (2022) One in five crime empires are run from inside prison, study finds: As bosses warn 'the scale of the challenge is huge. *Daily Mail* , 3 April. Available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10680279/One-five-crime-empires-run-inside-prison-study-finds.htm

Schelling TC (1971) What is the business of organized crime? *The American Scholar* 40(4): 643–652.

Sergi A (2019) Traditional organised crime on the move: Exploring the globalisation of the Calabrian 'ndrangheta'. In: Talani LS and Roccu R (eds) *The Dark Side of Globalisation: International Political Economy Series*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 123–145.

Skarbek D (2012) Prison gangs, norms, and organizations. *Journal of Economic Behavior &Amp; Organization* 82(1): 96–109.

Skarbek D (2014) *The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Skarbek D (2020) *The Puzzle of Prison Order: Why Life behind Bars Varies across the World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Smithson H, Monchuk L and Armitage R (2012) Gang member: Who says? Definitional and structural issues. In: Esbensen FA and Maxson CL (eds) *Youth Gangs in International Perspective: Results from the Eurogang Program of Research*. New York: Springer, pp. 53–68.

Sozzo M (2022) *Prisons, Inmates and Governance in Latin America*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spicer J (2019) 'That's their brand, their business': How police officers are interpreting County Lines. *Policing and Society* 29(8): 873–886.

Stuart F (2020) *Ballad of the Bullet: Gangs, Drill Music and the Power of Online Infamy*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sykes G (1958) *The Society of Captives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Symkovych A (2017) The Ukrainian response to sykes: Prisoner hierarchy and self-rule: Power, legitimacy, and dynamics. *The British Journal of Criminology* 58(5): 1087–1106.

Thapar C (2021) *Cut Short: Youth Violence, Losss and Hope in the City*. London: Viking.

Treadwell J and Gooch K (2015) An ASBO for violent gangsters or just continuing criminalisation of young people? Thinking about the value of 'Gangbo'. *Papers from British Criminology Conference* 15, 60–76.

Treadwell J, Gooch K and Barkham Perry G (2019) *Crime in Prisons: Where Now and Where Next?* Warwickshire: Warwickshire Police and Crime Commissioner.

Van Der Laan F (2012) 'Prison doesn't stop them': Orchestrating criminal acts from behind bars. *Trends in Organized Crime* 15(2–3): 130–145.

Varese F (2001) *The Russian Mafia: Private Protection in a New Market Economy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Varese F (2006) How mafias migrate: The case of the 'Ndrangheta in Northern Italy'. *Law and Society Review* 40(2): 411–444.

Varese F (2011) *Mafia on the Move: How Organised Crime Conquers New Territories*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

von Lampe K (2016) *Organised Crime*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

von Lampe K and Antonopoulos GA (2018) An introduction to the special issue on 'organised crime and illegal markets in the UK and Ireland. *Trends in Organized Crime* 21(2): 99–103.

Weerman FM and Decker SH (2024) The Eurogang definition: Context, development, scrutiny, and debate. In: Pyrooz DC, Densley JA and Leverso J (eds) *The Oxford Handbook of Gangs and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–12.

Williams R and Liebling A (2023) Do prisons cause radicalization? Order, leadership, political charge and violence in two maximum security prisons. *The British Journal of Criminology* 63(1): 97–114.

Windle J and Briggs D (2015)) Going solo: The social organisation of drug dealing within a London street gang. *Journal of Youth Studies* 18(9): 1170–1185.

Windle J, Moyle L and Coomber R (2020) Vulnerable' kids going country: Children and young people's involvement in county lines drug dealing. *Youth Justice* 20(1-2): 64–78.

Winlow S and Hall S (2006) *Violent Night: Urban Leisure and Contemporary Culture*. Oxford: Berg.

Winterdyk J and Ruddell R (2010) Managing prison gangs: Results from a survey of U.S. prison systems. *Journal of Criminal Justice* 38(4): 730–736.

Wood J and Adler J (2001) Gang activity in English prisons: The staff perspective. *Psychology, Crime Law* 7(2): 167–192.

Wood J, Moir A and James M (2009) Prisoners' gang-related activity: The importance of bullying and moral disengagement. *Psychology, Crime & Law* 15(6): 569–581.

Author biographies

Kate Gooch is Senior Lecturer in Criminology at the University of Bath.

James Treadwell (BA, MA, DipPS, PhD, SEDA) is Professor in Criminology in Health, Education, Policing and Sciences at Staffordshire University, Stoke on Trent, England.