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Assessing the Impact of Civil Gang Injunctions on the Use of Online Media by Criminal Street Gangs

Jared R. Dmello¹

Texas A&M International University, United States of America

Gisela Bichler²

California State University, San Bernardino, United States of America

Abstract

Mounting evidence suggests that members of criminal street gangs use internet communications technology to advertise their accomplishments, promote a counter-normative lifestyle, and continue illicit operations. Noting that not all content is equal in its ability to influence target audiences, this study investigates the message sensation value (MSV) of material posted by street gangs with civil gang injunctions. Gangs facing increased social censure and behavioral restrictions associated with the imposition of CGIs may be more inclined to post YouTube videos with high MSV to promote gang lifestyles and brand, as their visibility in the neighborhood may be diminished by law enforcement action. The results show that (1) there is a moderate association between indices measuring MSV and content (lifestyle and branding); (2) gangs that continue to use physical violence to maintain social dominance are observed to have lower scores on MSV, lifestyle and branding metrics; and, (3) videos filmed in public settings and those produced by gangs that have been under injunction for a longer period are likely to have stronger branding messages, while videos filmed in a safe zone are expected to have lower lifestyle messages. We find no significant difference between video quality between the Bloods and the Crips.

Keywords: Message Sensation Value, Cyberbanging, Gangs, Digital Drift, Bloods, Crips, YouTube.

¹ Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice, Department of Social Sciences, Texas A&M International University, 5201 University Blvd., Laredo, TX, 78045, USA. Email: jared.dmello@tamui.edu

² Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway San Bernardino, CA 92407, USA. Email: gbichler@csusb.edu

Introduction

Internet communications technology (ICT) materially changed how information is disseminated, and in doing so, opened new public and private channels through which individuals can interact with one another (Sanders, Field, Miguel, & Kaplan, 2000; Shapira, et al., 2003; Kaltiala-Heino, Lintonen, Rimpelä, 2004; Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). Online connectivity removes geographic and temporal barriers, enabling greater self-chosen privacy and anonymity for individuals than real-world interactions (Goldberg, Wagner, & Brewer, 1997; Kennedy, 2006). Of interest to the present study is the rise of user generated video content that promotes social interaction, viz., YouTube (Brake, 2014; Chua, Fuhr, Grefenstette, Järvelin, & Paltonen 2018; Waldron, 2013).

As with all technological change, accessibility and use of ICT to share media is not restricted to pro-social purposes. Widespread adoption of ICT and Web 2.0 user generated online content can be used to promote criminal behavior and facilitate drift between online and real-world offending. Building on Matza's (1964) work that adolescents drift between legal and deviant behavior, Goldsmith and Brewer (2015) describe this new capability as 'digital drift,' emphasizing the transient nature of the Internet in facilitating deviant behavior. From this perspective, access to the Internet and exposure to online content provides affordances that "may intensify and foster opportunities for online delinquency of various kinds" (Brewer, Cale, Goldsmith, & Holt, 2018). The growing digital footprint of members of criminal street gangs are illustrative of this issue.

Research has begun to document the presence and interactions of criminal street gangs in social media (e.g., Moule, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2014; Patton et al., 2014). Symbolism, bragging, and promotion of a collective gang identity are themes commonly identified in the extant literature (Décary-Hatu & Morselli, 2011; Patton, Eschmann, & Butler, 2013; Womer & Bunker). Despite recent investigations into the digital footprint of street gangs, Decker and Pyrooz, (2015) contend that the nature of how criminal gangs leverage ICT to achieve their objectives is still relatively unclear. To date, the extent to which criminal street gangs leverage ICT to disseminate their operations to broader audiences remains under-researched and we do not know how a real-world restriction, such as a civil gang injunction, would impact the shift into cyberspace.

Adding to this emerging field, the current study investigates the extent to which historic rivals, the Bloods and the Crips, utilize social media to continue their gang activity and exert a community presence after civil gang injunctions restrict their capacity to operate in physical space. In this analysis, we explore the impact of gang-associated characteristics on the quality, and likely impact on viewers, of videos posted to YouTube. We review the extant literature on internet usage by street gangs. We then develop and present three negative binomial regressions to explore the relationships between our key variables, yielding new theoretical and policy insights.

Review of Literature

1. *Cyberbanging*

Street gang use of the digital space for deviant activities is referred to as *cyberbanging*. Cyber or internet banging is defined as content that has been posted to social media sites

by gang members that depict their gang affiliation along with behavior that threatens, disrespects and incites violence toward other gangs (Patton et al., 2013). Migration of gang behavior into online environments should be expected as part of the natural shift in socialization processes that accompanied the digital revolution, as research shows that youth associated with gangs tend to spend significantly larger amounts of time online than their non-gang counterparts (King, Walpole, & Lamon, 2007). Arguing that social media use is a key aspect of socialization processes, Sela-Shayovitz (2012) found that if a gang's members have more advanced computer skills, the gang will adopt online delinquency as a routine part of operations. The study emphasized the role of high-skilled gang-involved youth who are able to provide guidance to other members. Moreover, the nexus with criminal activity grows more salient as youth increasingly turn to technology for communication and information (Moule, Pyrooz, & Decker, 2013).

Studies show that gangs primarily use social media to promote the gang and its street culture rather than for individual displays (e.g., Décary-Hatu & Morselli, 2011; Morselli & Décary-Hatu, 2013; Pyrooz, Decker & Moule, 2015); Womer & Bunker, 2010). For example, Moule, Pyrooz, & Decker (2014) found that over half of the 418 gang members questioned reported that their gang had an online presence, mostly comprising of posting videos online that had content associated with reputation building, self-promotion, and advancing counter-normative lifestyles (weapons, masculinity, music, and illicit profits). Morselli and Décary-Hatu (2010) found gangs to use Twitter to publicize their 'debauch' and 'wild' lifestyles, to promote their gang through colors and other symbolic representations, further reporting that gangs use visual characteristics in their online postings. Outreach workers in Chicago described how youth use social media as a mechanism for taunting and provoking other gang members and to digitally document disrespecting rival groups on their turf without being seen in-person (Patton, Eschmann, Elsaesser, & Bocanegra, 2016).

Exhibiting a large digital footprint enhances the perception of group size and community support. For example, Décary-Hatu and Morselli (2011) found not only a large gang presence online, but that both the Bloods and the Crips had thousands of followers across multiple profiles on Facebook. In his work on resiliency, Aldrich (2012) suggests that online activity may increase the ability of a group to increase its social capital by receiving 'buy-in' to group aims by a broader audience. By turning to social media for promoting a collective group dynamic through symbolism and lifestyle-oriented content, postings can serve as a form of recruitment propaganda in the cyber realm (Patton et al., 2013; Womer & Bunker, 2010). These posts serve as a mechanism for continued recruitment campaigns, both formal and informal, by street gangs even when civil gang injunctions prohibit active recruitment via in-person processes; thus, appealing to an even broader audience and increasing the odds of continuous accession to gang ranks.

One aspect of internet banging that remains unexplored is that publicly accessible online platforms to share video content can have unintended adverse effects on gang-suppression efforts. CGIs prohibit gang members from associating with each other in specific areas referred to as safety zones. CGIs are often imposed in an attempt to hinder the gang's ability to show force. Gang activity, however, is not restricted to public streets. Researchers believe that gangs are seeking other ways to exploit their brand by using

online platforms. Averaging at least four hours a week online (Patton et al., 2013), YouTube and other online social media platforms may offer sanctioned gangs a mechanism to continue to dominate “public space”. Gangs under CGIs are not allowed to socialize in public, but publicly accessible online platforms that permit streaming video content, may enable enjoined gangs to sidestep the restrictions of CGIs.

2. YouTube

YouTube, a video sharing platform, has become a central site for distributing and consuming user generated content (Rotman & Preece, 2010). Past research has demonstrated that YouTube's influence and growing user volume has established a digital 'community', appealing to wide audience, from adolescents to extremist organizations (Rotman, Golbek, & Preece, 2009; Sureka, Kumaraguru, Goyal, & Chhabra, 2010; Paek, Hove, & Jeong, 2011; Burgess & Green, 2013). The National Gang Intelligence Center (2013, 2015) reported that gangs are using new media, with YouTube being the second most utilized platform, to “communicate discreetly, locate and establish targets, intimidate rivals, facilitate criminal activity, enhance criminal operations, and to monitor law enforcement,” reporting on a broader usage of online media than just symbolized self-promotion. For example, Drezner (2010) found Mexican Mafia use YouTube for showing their assassination videos, using the platform for posturing purposes to intimidate rivals and the community. Building on past research which has primarily examined why groups use social media, the current study will analyze the visual effectiveness and quality of the video content that gangs post on YouTube to better understand their drift into the digital world.

Not all videos have the same level of influence. Everett and Palmgreen (1995) developed the message sensitive value (MSV) scale to evaluate how the characteristics of a video message solicit responses from consumers. For instance, research shows that higher perceived message sensations contained in anti-drug public service announcements are associated with more effective drug cessation rates (Dillard & Peck, 2000; Palmgreen, Stephenson, Everett, Baseheart, & Francies, 2002; Morgan, Palmgreen, Stephenson, Hoyle, & Lorch, 2003; Bigsby, Cappella, & Seitz, 2013). Additional research has found that the subcomponents of the MSV scale also have varying impacts on consumer attitudes (see: Kang, Cappella, & Fishbein, 2006). While most past work employing the MSV scale has focused on anti-drug campaigns, this scale is applicable to all online communications content seeking affective responses.

Current Study

As groups gain experience with technology, they should generate more sophisticated videos that have a higher MSV. MSV is the degree to which audio and visual features of a video elicit sensory responses from the viewer (Palmgreen et al, 2002). Videos with higher MSV and may have different effects on the viewer: video messages are full of powerful messages that are rich with: nonverbal cues, vivid images, and violent content (Salem, Reid, & Chen, 2008). The videos that have these elements are prone to have greater success in terms of mobilizing and recruit members (Salem et. al, 2008). As illicit groups face increasing restrictions from openly operating in the physical space, they leverage internet capabilities to move operations into the cyber realm (i.e. digitally drift) where

criminal activity is far more accessible. In this study, we investigate the video content posted by gangs under civil gang injunctions by testing five sets of hypotheses:

H₁: Videos filmed in safe zones are predicted to have lower MSV index scores and less branding content. Gangs with CGIs are prohibited from associating with each other in designated safe zones. Safe zones are areas associated with gang turf where members were known to congregate to advance gang objectives. Members continuing to operate publicly within restricted safe zones must be more cautious to avoid detection by law enforcement since these areas are specifically prohibited under the CGI. Gang members face the threat of being arrested if found in these spaces (Hennigan & Sloane, 2013).

H₂: Videos filmed in public spaces generally will result in higher MSV scores and greater branding and lifestyle content. Enjoined gangs may flaunt their ability to operate publicly (outside of safe zones) as a means of recruitment and a demonstration of their prevailing power in the area, despite increased attention from law enforcement that accompanies a civil injunction.

H₃: The MSV index scores and degree of promotional content (branding and lifestyle) are expected to increase the longer a CGI has been active against the gang. Gangs must find alternative means to maintain their reputation due to restrictions in the physical space from the CGI.

H₄: The MSV index scores and degree of promotional content is expected to decrease as attacking power of a gang increases. Gangs that engage in more violent offending in the physical space do not need to rely on social media for maintaining their reputation.

H₅: Bloods and Crips gangs are expected to exhibit differences in MSV. Prior research found noticeable differences between the gang families.

Methods

a. Sample

Our sample includes 128 YouTube videos produced by self-proclaimed members of 23 gangs affiliated with the Bloods or the Crips. The Blood affiliated gangs selected because of their CGI status include: Bounty Hunter Bloods, Black P Stones, All for Crime, Pueblo Bishops, Blood Stone Villains, East Side Pain, and Swan Blood. The Crip affiliated gangs selected because of their CGI status include: 42nd Street Gangster Crips, 43rd Street Gangster Crips, 46 Neighborhood Crips, 46 Top Dollar Hustler Crips, 48th Street Gangster Crips, 7-trey Hustlers/Gangster Crips, Geer Street, Grape Street, Harbor City, Main Street, Rollin 40s, Rollin 60s, School Yard Crips, Venice Shoreline Crips, Playboys, and Hoover Criminals Gang. Notably, these groups are known to be involved in gang-on-gang conflict in the City of Los Angeles, which resulted convictions for homicide, manslaughter, aggravated assault, or other serious violence intended to promote gang objectives (Bichler, Norris, Dmello, & Randle, 2019).

While street gangs are active on a variety of platforms (see: Storrod & Densley, 2017; Décary-Héту & Morselli, 2011), we selected YouTube for this analysis because it is one of the most popular user-generated content websites. The platform draws “20% of HTTP traffic, which is nearly 10% of all traffic on the Internet” and “Internet users aged 18–29, 89% report that they view content on video-sharing sites, and 36% do so on a typical day”

(Paek, Hove, & Jeong, 2011, p. 163). Past research has also found that YouTube was best used for “authority figures that want to communicate messages” (Auger, 2013, p. 2013). Although gang members are not seen as authority figures, they are portrayed as influential actors, to some degree, in today’s culture. Gang violence tends to receive more media coverage than community responses (Thompson, Young, & Burns, 2000); this has contributed to the description of stereotypical street gangs becoming more commonplace within society.

Videos were searched for in YouTube by using the name of the gang with six key terms (handshake, representing, calling out, dissing, threatens, and drill rappers). Our objective was to find original material created and posted by gang members and to exclude documentaries or investigative journalism created by third parties. To accomplish this objective, we applied four eligibility criteria:

1. length – videos must be 0-5 minutes in length;
2. the content of the video must highlight gang lifestyle and be classed as a “music video”, criminal activity or fighting, or impromptu chat;
3. the video title or description must mention one of the 23 focal gangs; and,
4. the video must have at least 5,000 views and 100 likes.

We included all videos that satisfy these criteria. To ensure videos were not coded multiple times, the DOI for each video was saved. Duplicates were removed and replaced with other videos. Six researchers coded the videos, one gang at a time. Inter-rater reliability was initially assessed to be above 90%. Training continued until all researchers coded alike. In total, 128 videos were coded, averaging 7.5 videos per gang ($SD = 5.9$).

While we originally sought to code a maximum of 60 videos from each gang—30 videos before the injunction took effect and 30 videos after the injunction went into effect—the four eligibility criteria substantially limited the sample size. Even though the production period spanned from March 22, 2007 to May 15, 2017, 65% of the videos were produced after January 1, 2012. Not all gangs were enjoined before these videos were shared: 26% of the gangs were enjoined after the first video was posted. For these reasons, a pre- and post-CGI analysis is not feasible. Despite this limitation, we continued with the project because these videos exhibited substantial exposure—on average videos had 74,519 views ($SD = 165,696$). The average number of likes was 237 ($SD = 627$).

b. Dependent Variables

To evaluate video quality, we employ three dependent measures in our analysis: MSV Index, Branding Index, and the Lifestyle Index.

MSV Index: Drawing upon prior research, the MSV index used here adds four additional items to the 11-item index developed by Morgan et al., (2003). This summative index of fifteen items captures information about the artistry of the videos (e.g., surprise ending, unusual colors, and special effects), as well as the technical merit of the production, i.e., filmed in high definition, number of video cuts, and sound saturation of the clip. With one exception, each item was coded as 0 for absent or 1 for present. Number of video cuts was coded: 1 to 6 cuts = 0; 7 to 14 cuts = 0.5; and 15 or more cuts = 1. The higher the summative score, the greater the MSV.

Table 1. Message Sensation Value Index

Dimension/Feature	Scoring	Description
Video stabilization	No = 0, Yes = 1	Is the video stable? Shaky video results from the user not stabilizing his/her video recorder. The resulting video content can be interpreted as less than professional quality.
Video Orientation	Vertical mode = 0, Landscape mode or both = 1	Is the video shot in vertical mode? Video that has been recorded on a cell phone in portrait mode will show up with two vertical black bars on the right and left side of the screen. The resulting video can be considered of lesser quality. Video shot on a cell phone in landscape mode will show up without the left and right black vertical bars. The resulting video can be considered of a higher quality.
Scene duration	No = 0, Yes = 1	Videos can be shot in one continuous scene where the camera pans, instead of cutting, to other focal points. Camera is set on some mechanism that enables smooth movement, i.e., boom or crane that changes the camera's position without cutting the shot.
Focal point	No = 0, Yes = 1	The video has a main focus or center of activity
*Video Cuts	1 to 6 = 0 7 to 14 = 0.5 15+ = 1	"The number of times the camera cuts from one visual scene to the next." (Morgan, 2003). The more cut scenes, the more time and effort went into producing the video.
*Special Visual Effects	No = 0, Yes = 1	"Anything beyond the range of human ability involving special visual effects, including morphing, paint or blood "sliding" down the screen, or computer manipulation of images." (Morgan, 2003). Additionally, inserting text on the video.
*Sound effects	No = 0, Yes = 1	Sounds that could not have occurred while originally filming the video, any sound added after the fact
*Slow motion	No = 0, Yes = 1	The slowing of real-life action through technical intervention.
*Unusual Colors (filters)	No = 0, Yes = 1	Unusual colors outside the range of colors normally perceived in real life, i.e., use of filter.
*Music	No = 0, Yes = 1	Music present for introduction, ending, or anytime during the video
*High definition	No = 0, Yes = 1	Whether the video was shot in high definition or not.
*Intense images	No = 0, Yes = 1	Any image that sticks out in terms of shock value (i.e. shooting a weapon, guns pointing at camera, or copious amounts of drugs showed)
*Sound saturation	No = 0, Yes = 1	Back ground sound throughout the video noise that is not only being made by the person speaking.
*Acted Out	No = 0, Yes = 1	Viewers see actions corresponding to the point of the video rather than a talking head explaining.
*Surprise/Twist ending	No = 0, Yes = 1	The presence of a climactic, shocking end. If the end is unpredictable it generates a "second-half punch."

* From original MSV index (Morgan et al., 2003)

Table 2. Branding and Gang Lifestyle Indices

Dimension/Feature	Scoring	Description
<i>Branding</i>		
Style	No = 0, Yes = 1	Images depicting colors, clothing (multiple people in the same shirts or hats, i.e., baseball teams)
Gang Symbols	No = 0, Yes = 1	Images depicting symbols, tattoos (multiple people with the same tattoo which appears gang related), or hand signs
Territorial markers	No = 0, Yes = 1	Graffiti or other territorial markers
Neighborhood Presence	1 to 6 = 0, 7 to 14 = 0.5, 15+ = 1	Number of people prominently featured who appear to be gang members.
Display of dominance	No = 0, Yes = 1	Any type of fighting or posturing made from one gang to someone in the community or another gang.
Dominance “boost”	No = -4, Yes = 4, else “.”	Focal gang is victor in a conflict.
<i>Gang Lifestyle</i>		
Trappings of wealth (non-money)	No = 0, Yes = 1	Modified cars, jewelry, and electronics.
Presence of money	No = 0, Yes = 1	Money being presented either by a person or in general
Dissing	No = 0, Yes = 1	Calling out or dissing other gangs.
Crimes	No = 0, Yes = 1	Committing a crime in the video (other than fighting).
Weapons Cache	No = 0, Yes = 1	Showing off the weapons but not shooting or pointing at the camera or a person.
Playing violent video game	No = 0, Yes = 1	Video shows gang members playing graphic or role playing violent video games, rated M, i.e., Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty, or Diablo.

Branding Index: Branding was measured with a summative index of six items (see Table 2). This measure included data on symbolism, gang territory marking, and dominance. The branding index provides information on a gang’s self-perception of its relative power in a neighborhood. With two exceptions, each item was coded as 0 for absent or 1 for present. The first exception was neighborhood presence which captured the number of people prominently featured in the video who appear to be part of the gang; films depicting 1 to 6 people were scored 0, if 7 to 14 people were shown a score of 0.5 was assigned, and 15 or more people garnered a score of 1. The other exception was the dominance boost factor, coded 4 if the focal gang was the victor and 0 if they were not. This factor was added as many videos pilot tested showed conflict between gangs. Since a “win” should bolster the branding effect we generated a weighted item (factor of

four) so that conflict outcome would substantially enhance the influence branding might have on the viewer. In total, 18% of videos received a dominance boost factor. The higher the total score, the greater the branding potential.

Lifestyle Index: As described in Table 2, promotion of gang lifestyle was measured with a summative index of five items, i.e., trappings of wealth such as modified cars and jewelry, large piles of money, ‘dissing’ of other gangs, actively committing crimes, and displaying weapons caches. Each item was coded as 0 for absent or 1 for present. The higher the total score, the greater the promotional potential.

c. Independent Variables

Safe Zone. In an effort to disrupt gang violence, CGIs impose safe zones to restrict active associations and recruitment by gangs in public space. Because gangs are unable to conduct usual operations in these geographic areas, they must resort to other means to ensure recruitment and to maintain reputation in these localities. Safe zones are designated by LA City Attorney’s Office. In our sample, 54.55% of videos visually show they were filmed in a designated safe zone (for full descriptive statistics, see Table 3).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean / %	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
MSV	128	6.38	2.91	1.00	14.00
Branding Index	128	3.42	2.38	0.00	10.00
Lifestyle Index	128	1.26	1.17	0.00	5.00
Length of Injunction	128	12.28	3.25	8.00	17.00
Attacking Power	128	49.58	35.76	1.00	112.00
Filmed in Safe Zone	110	54.55%			
Filmed in a Public Setting	128	68.75%			
Gang Family					
Bloods	44	34.38%			
Crips	84	65.62%			

Public Setting: Gangs must engage in a calculated risk when determining whether to film in a public setting. Conducting business in public space is more likely to draw attention for law enforcement and to expose gang activity. However, gangs may take this risk to convey a sense of power in their videos; for example, 68.75% of the videos in our sample were filmed in public locations. Locations where gang members can openly move through a public space could be indicative of the street gang’s relative power in the region.

Injunction Length: Civil gang injunctions have been implemented in the City of Los Angeles since 1987 with the intent of combating gang activity in the area. Under an injunction, gang members are prohibited from engaging in various activities, such as

recruiting children, loitering, or trespassing. Since injunctions prevent gangs from conducting business in physical space, online videos could be an alternate venue for gangs to preserve their influence.

Attacking Power: Bichler et al. (2019) found that civil gang injunctions do not effectively deter gang activity. Because of the restrictions imposed on gangs under CGIs, the gang must find new ways to preserve and promote its reputation. In this sense, the gang invests its physical social capital into the digital brand. To evaluate if physical gang reputation transcends into the cyber realm, we control for the attacking power of the gang producing the video. We adopted Bichler and colleagues' (2019) approach of employing out-degree centrality as a measure of the gang's attacking behavior, controlling for the number of incidents where the gang perpetrated a violent crime against another gang or non-gang member of the community.

Gang Family: The historical conflict between the Bloods and the Crips is documented within gang literature (*see, for example:* Bichler et al., 2019; Morselli & Décarý-Hétu, 2013; McGloin, 2005; Decker & Curry, 2002). The inter-gang alliance structure inherent within the gang families could influence access to resources. Thus, we control for family affiliation of the gang, with the Bloods being the reference category, to determine if there are significant differences between the Bloods and the Crips in video production.

Analyses

Two sets of analyses were completed. The first set of analyses involved an exploration of correlation among the dependent variables—MSV Index, Branding Index, and Lifestyle Index. The objective is simply to investigate whether the new metrics add value to investigations of video content. The MSV was not developed to examine videos produced by criminal groups, and thus, we developed metrics specifically tailored to the objectives of street gangs. Assessing association between metrics helps to establish whether they in fact tap into unique, and potentially important types of influence that may affect the audience. The second set of analyses used negative binomial regression models to evaluate the impact of gang characteristics on several measures of video quality. We use the negative binomial approach over generalized Poisson models because the variance exceeds the mean for each of our dependent variables suggesting the possibility over-dispersion (*see:* Cameron and Trivedi's, 1990, 1998). We do not mean center our models because all continuous variables can have zero values, enabling logical interpretation of the regression coefficient without centering.

Results

1. Correlations

To assess the relationships between our variables, we first employed Pearson correlations analyses. As expected, we found significant weak to weak-moderate positive correlations between our variables, as seen in Table 4. This is expected as each of these measures assess varying components of message sensation. Because of the relatively low strength, we proceed with employing each of these three scales in multivariate analyses to further understand the nuanced relationship with our predictors. We additionally find weak to weak-moderate negative correlations between attacking power and the branding

and lifestyle indices. This suggests that increased quality of branding and lifestyle indicators in the online realm is dependent on a weakened ability for the gang to physically engage in off-line violence. It is possible that gangs can shift activity onto social media as a mechanism for moderating waning attacking capacities in the physical realm.

Table 4. Correlation Results

	Total MSV Index	Branding Index	Lifestyle Index	Length of Injunction	Attacking Power
Total MSV Index	1.00	0.36***	0.29***	0.00	-0.06
Branding Index	0.36***	1.00	0.26**	0.10	-0.31***
Lifestyle Index	0.29***	0.26**	1.00	-0.15	-0.25**
Length of Injunction	0.00	0.10	-0.15	1.00	0.14
Attacking Power	-0.06	-0.31***	-0.25**	0.14	1.00

Note: $p < 0.1^{\dagger}$; $p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^*$; $p < 0.001^{***}$

2. Multivariate Models

The expected log count of lifestyle index decreases by 0.476 for videos filmed in a safe zone, in support of H₁. Said another way, relative to videos filmed in areas not designated as safe zones, those filmed in safe zones result in a 37.87% decrease in lifestyle branding. CGIs may restrict the ability of gang members to engage in social exchanges, limiting their ability to flaunt their ties in public spaces. Because CGI imposed restrictions increase the odds of arrest or detainment by use of specific characteristics (Bichler et al., 2019; Boga, 1994), individual gang members must balance between representing the brand and avoiding detection and subsequent apprehension by law enforcement. While the Internet provides more opportunities for anonymity, too few identification markers marginalize the gang's ability to capitalize on the video for reputation building. Since our sample is comprised of videos posted by individuals who self-identified as gang members, the assumption of anonymity associated with the Internet has willingly been waived, as these individuals use YouTube as a mechanism of advertising for their gangs. This is in line with past work; for example, Oh, Agrawal, and Rao (2013) found that, in periods of social crises, media posts with a personal connection were not the most successful in obtaining network diffusion.

The expected log count of branding index increases by 0.513 for videos filmed in a public setting, yielding support to H₂. Said another way, relative to videos filmed in private settings, those in public result in a 67.03% increase in video branding. When filming in public spaces, gang members are portraying a sense of resistance to the state. This defiance serves to demonstrate that the marginalization effect of the injunctions does not adequately suppress all violence. Since public spaces are not necessarily restricted, this is signal of collective empowerment. Countless narratives depict groups rallying in public

for a cause, providing a forum to a wide venue of audiences. Ahmed (2010), for example, describes the role of the media in covering such events. While a gang video is very different from rioting minority, both groups engage in civil disobedience to promote a cause they believe is just, regardless of the normative view of the state.

Table 5. Negative Binomial Regression Results

	MSV Index	Branding Index	Lifestyle Index
Intercept	1.679*** (0.168)	0.698** (0.247)	0.988** (0.343)
Filmed in a Safe Zone	0.103 (0.088)	0.191 (0.128)	-0.476* (0.196)
Filmed in a Public Setting	0.042 (0.089)	0.513*** (0.142)	0.185 (0.201)
Injunction Length	0.021 (0.014)	0.048* (0.020)	-0.014 (0.030)
Attack	-0.002† (0.001)	-0.010*** (0.002)	-0.011** (0.003)
Gang Family: Crips	-0.060 (0.103)	-0.168 (0.155)	-0.148 (0.235)
<i>N</i>	110	110	110
<i>AIC</i>	534.48	460.47	308.17

Note: $p < 0.1^\dagger$; $p < 0.05^*$; $p < 0.01^*$; $p < 0.001^{***}$

For each additional year since the injunction was introduced, the expected log count of branding index increases by 0.048. Said another way, each additional year since the injunction was implemented results in a 4.92% increase in video branding. This finding supports H_3 , because the longer a gang is under a CGI, the broader the power differential that marginalizes the group's ability to engage in conflict. As such, groups must turn to other venues, such as social media and digital platforms, to maintain their reputations and continue operations. Although the annual impact is not as large as the effect of filming in a public space, this finding suggests that longevity of an injunction matters. It is possible that the decision to migrate operations into the online space was unintentional, as theorized by scholars such as Matza (1964) and Goldsmith and Brewer (2015), occurring by chance or circumstance rather than strategic foresight.

For each additional increase in attacking power, the expected log count of the branding and lifestyle indices decrease by 0.010 and 0.011 respectively, in support of H_4 . Said another way, each additional increase in attacking power results in a 1.01% and 1.11% decrease in the branding and lifestyle indices respectively. A seemingly small effect, this compounds very quickly. For example, our sample ranged from 1 to 112 attacks by offending groups. Gangs still engaging in more violent offending did not feel the power differential strengthen between them vis-à-vis the state; instead, post-injunction, the

conflicts continued, and in some cases intensified, through a new inter-group structural model (Bichler et al., 2019). The inverse makes a case for digital drift: as attacking power weakens, cyberoperations become more appealing as the affordances provided by Internet capabilities continue to increase.

We find no significant difference in video quality between Blood and Crip family gangs; accordingly, we reject H₅. This indicates that both gang families are leveraging social media in a similar manner. It also suggests that the Bloods and the Crips are being physically affected by the CGIs imposed against them in Los Angeles, forcing the expansion into the cyber realm. While past work has found the injunctions in their current form to be limited in their ability to end community activity by gangs, our findings suggest that CGIs are forcing gangs to innovate the mechanisms used for conducting their businesses. Groups perceive an increase differential between the normative state and their own ideals, causing them to seek alternative means for maintaining power and control in these areas. Within the security studies literature, research has identified a full ideological spectrum of radical groups, not just jihadi, involved in social media, such as American Far Right extremists (Cohen, Johansson, Kaati, & Mork, 2014). Finding no significant differences in their use of technology indicates larger trends in the adoption of social media platforms by fringe groups as an alternative voice.

Discussion

Implications

Gangs have an extensive presence on social media. YouTube, in particular, is one of the most utilized platforms by both street and prison gangs in the United States (National Gang Intelligence Center, 2015). The majority of past scholarly inquiries have found gangs to use content for lifestyle and branding purposes (Patton, Eschmann, & Butler, 2013; Womer & Bunker, 2010); however, other researchers have also described more extreme depictions of violence (Drezner, 2010; Sela-Shayovitz, 2012). We found that interactions in the physical space are significantly impacting occurrences in its digital counterpart. While law enforcement increasingly monitors social media, research has found some gang members to be savvy at evading detection by only displaying content for a brief period of time (Behrman, 2015; Pyrooz et al., 2015). Further partnerships between law enforcement agencies and the social media companies can facilitate detection and removal of gang propaganda from platforms like YouTube.

Civil gang injunctions have been employed as a mechanism for targeting gang violence. Past scholarly work has found mixed results in the effectiveness of CGIs on gang abatement. For instance, Grogger (2002) found that violent crime decreases up to 10% in the year following the imposition of a CGI, with no evidence of geographic displacement. However, Bichler et al. (2019) found the hierarchical structure of violence to evolve post-injunction, with a few gangs driving the conflict web. Findings from the current study build on past investigations of gang violence by furthering demonstrating the complex strategic framework necessary for gang abatement. Specifically, although the imposition of a CGI may have some effect on reducing gang-related violence, the restrictions associated

with the injunction cause criminal street gangs to move into the digital sphere to continue community terrorization and to protect their reputation.

The current study finds that the way gangs leverage social media post-imposition of a civil gang injunction operates within the theoretical framework of Goldsmith and Brewer's (2015) digital drift. However, we find a more nuanced relationship, suggesting that groups engaging in collective violence react to power differentials vis-à-vis the state from a strategic perspective. In terms of lifestyle projections (i.e. wealth and reputation), individuals must be more cautious with the increased restrictions imposed by CGIs. Members have to balance between representing the collective group and avoiding individual apprehension by law enforcement, particularly with the heightened penalties of conviction with a gang enhancement penalty. Conversely, gangs increase their branding index (i.e. symbolism, territorial markings, and domination) in videos for social media as a mechanism of resistance against the institutionalized power norms. By continuing promotion of the brand in the digital space, gangs signal a defiance of societal norms and continue their terrorization of communities. In doing so, groups challenge the state's attempt to increase the power differential (i.e. to marginalize the group's ability to operate) by actively showing brand promotion. Content sharing forums may be used as a vehicle through which gangs continue to engage in prohibited behaviors.

Similarly, it is important to consider re-conceptualizing civil gang injunctions to produce a more effective gang abatement tool. This study adds to previous work (see: Bichler et al., 2019) that civil gang injunctions in their current form do not eliminate gang activity but forces a transformation in how groups engage in conflict. Since organized criminal groups are engaging in forward-thinking decision-making, the criminal justice system should reciprocate and establish protocols for targeting gang activity in both the physical and cyber worlds. One such option could include the introduction of cyber injunctions against radical groups.

Limitations

Sample Size. In a prior study investigating the network of gang-on-gang conflict initiated and experienced by these 23 Bloods and Crips gangs, we discovered that members of 78% of the groups had posted multiple YouTube videos with content that could be classified as serving to advance group objectives, i.e., recruitment, community intimidation, and provoking gang-on-gang conflict (Bichler et al., 2019). Of note, some of these videos had more than 2 million views. Searching all gangs enjoined by the City of Los Angeles (72 groups), we discovered that 73% were represented on YouTube with videos. This led us to expect that we could investigate online content pre- and post-CGI, as ample material was uncovered. Applying inclusion criteria, however, significantly limited the number of materials coded. Recall that our objective was to exclude documentaries and investigative news reports created by third parties. To better identify gang produced content we only coded videos that were 0-5 minutes in length, depicting a "music video", criminal activity or fighting, or impromptu chat, that were titled or described using the name of one of the 23 focal gangs, and had least 5,000 views and 100 likes. Due to these criteria we fell short of the 1,380 videos we aimed to code. Instead we had to settle for a sample of 128 videos.

The most significant factor that eliminated posted content from the study was that most videos did not name the focal gang. Instead, material was posted by individuals promoting their individual monikers or sub-cliques within the larger gang. It was not possible to know with certainty that the video in question was produced by the target gang. About half of the videos found in the search were excluded for this reason. Another issue was the inadvertent exclusion of provocation videos. A number of posts included footage where someone, presumably a member of a rival gang was walking or driving around another gang's territory documenting that "no one was out" protecting their turf. In what appears to be an attempt at provocation, these documented intrusions into known territories went on for a long time, exceeding the length criterion and not resulting in a conflict or other eligible action. In hindsight, an additional criterion for "provoking" behavior would have been useful.

MSV Index. Of late, rapid advancement in video technology and smart phone functionality, coupled with widespread adoption of user-friendly ICT, may have materially advanced the technical quality of videos posted to YouTube. Because our sample includes videos posted within the last decade (from 2007 onwards), organizations have been increasingly able to leverage new technology to increase their video messaging. As such, certain items within the MSV index were less pervasive, contributing limited variability to the scale. Specifically, three sub-measures contained less than 25% variability within the sample: 1) videos filmed in slow motion (11.72%), 2) videos without a focal point (22.67%), and 3) videos with a surprise or twist ending (7.03%). These may be reflective of preferences within the population. To increase viewership, publishing organizations must appeal to their broader audiences' preferences and interests.

Conclusion

This study found that civil gang injunctions impact how gangs portray their lifestyle and larger brands through the dissemination of videos on social media. Specifically, when gang activity is repressed by CGIs and groups have a diminished capacity or means to engage in physical offending, the groups turn to social media for continuing their brand and reputation. Conversely, members operating within these groups must limit dissemination of lifestyle characteristics to avoid individual apprehension and removal from the social network. YouTube and other social media platforms provide additional opportunities for gang members to drift into and out of criminal pathways beyond those affordances provided by operations restricted to the physical space.

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