

An Analysis of Serious and Organised Crime Networks

Data Analytics Lab

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Serious and organised crime is both an enabler and a direct cause of crime and therefore harm. Here an approach is developed using natural language processing (NLP) to detect serious and organised crime groups and the nominals involved. Then techniques in network analysis are used to identify the effective means of dismantling the networks identified and inhibit the growth and operation of serious organised crime.

This project is not designed to replace intelligence tasks looking at SOC groups in granular detail on a daily basis; but to enhance existing intelligence processes described above and ensure that senior officers direct teams to focus their intelligence development on the most harmful groups.

The intention of this project is to provide a strategic understanding of which groups are generating the greatest harm and the extent to which they overlap with other serious organised crime networks. The output will identify those groups and nominals which are causing the greatest harm to vulnerable individuals and communities. This will enable the Intelligence Department to focus its resources on developing intelligence assessments on the most harmful groups and to feed into further activities.

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2 Introduction

The aim is to identify nominals and groups that are part of the serious and organised crime (SOC) ecosystem. Once identified, analyses can be undertaken to assess the impact of SOC groups and the importance of nominals within their associated group as well as the wider SOC network. This gives the user a detailed view of a particular group of interest whilst providing the wider SOC context to which the group fits into.

A publication from (Home Office 2018) describes the severity of SOC:

“Serious and organised crime affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat and leads to more deaths in the UK each year than all other national security threats combined. It costs the UK at least £37 billion annually.”

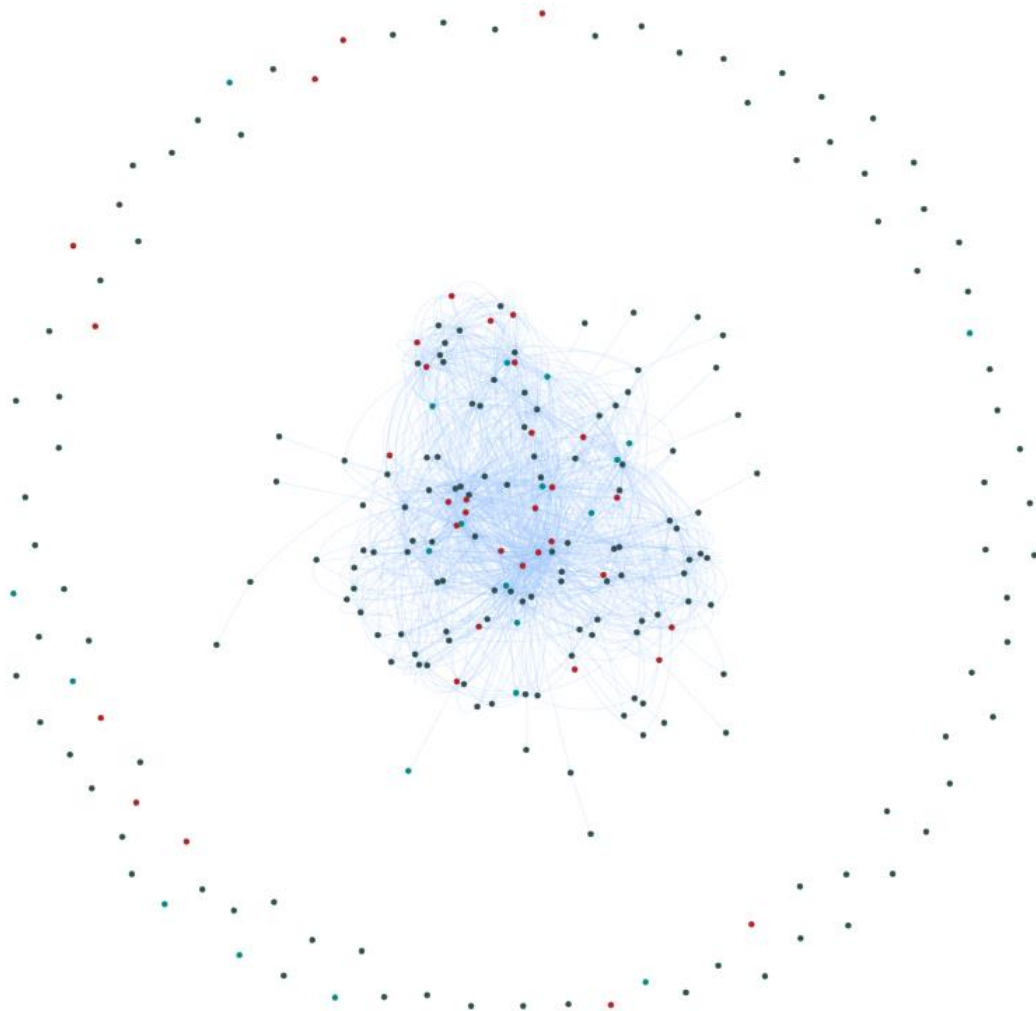
Other organisations such as the National Crime Agency and the National Audit Office have made similar summaries regarding SOC in (National Crime Agency 2018) and (National Audit Office 2018) respectively. Therefore, it is crucial that SOC within West Midlands Police (WMP) can be identified and networks dismantled in a systematic manner to reduce their impact on society.

3 Executive Summary

A network has been identified containing 79,741 nodes, of which 247 are SOC group nodes and the rest are nominals, and 610,313 edges using the procedure described in the [methodology section](#). There are also temporal equivalents to see how a SOC group changes over time.

After the network has been identified, a series of network centrality measures are calculated to assess the importance of nominals and groups in the network.

The overall network is too large to plot in its entirety; however, the network can be aggregated by assigning each nominal to a SOC group by calculating distances to their nearest group. This aggregate network is visualised below.



Once each nominal is assigned a SOC group, a network for each SOC group can be analysed and visualised. By analysing the network of a single SOC group, recommendations can be made as to which nominals if removed from the group would

efficiently dismantle the network¹. These findings are then displayed in a Qlik dashboard.

3.1 Data

The data used includes:

- **Intelligence logs:** this includes all logs from 2002 to 2019 which are deemed to be from a reliable source and the information contained in the log is known directly or indirectly².
- **Crime records:** this includes all crimes from 1996 to 2019.
- **PINS³ data:** this data contains all pairs of nominals who shared a cell for 30 days or more from 2011 to 2019. See footnote. As this falls into the day-to-day work of Police forces a data sharing agreement is not required.

¹ That is to say, “dismantling” the network means that if some members of a network cease their activities, the network in question would cease to operate as it has been, reducing its efficacy as a network and so reduce the harm resulting from it within wider society. See later in the report.

² Details of the specific codes and descriptions included can be found in the [definitions](#) section of the appendix.

³ Prisoner Intelligence Notification System (PINS) is software used by almost every police service in the UK. It collects prison and police data from a variety of key sources and automatically cross-references and links historic and current prisoner records on a daily basis. It notifies law enforcement agencies of forthcoming prison releases to assist offender managers as offenders re-enter the community.

4 Methodology

There is no reliable source of data stating which nominals are involved in SOC and which group(s) they have allegiance to⁴, so an approach would need to be developed to produce this data. There is, however, a list of organised crime groups (OCG), this list only includes OCGs specifically. This data contains information regarding the OCG name, OCG ID and crime types the OCG are typically involved in. There are also urban street gangs (USG) that are not tracked and so not included in the data. For these reasons, the available data has been used and expanded upon. The first step is to identify a way in which SOC groups can be detected from the systems.

4.1 Identify Search Criteria

To begin with, the IMS logs are processed and after removing stop words (commonly occurring words that usually provide relatively little information such as “the”, etc.) and punctuation and combining all details into logs, these logs are then parsed to a Word2vec (see [Word2vec](#) for details). This model gives the ability to search for words that are similar to a given word in the context of the logs. This model is then used to find synonyms in this context of words such as “gang”, “OCG” and “USG” which are then used to build up a series of nouns which should follow after the SOC group name. The full list of nouns can be found in the [definitions section](#). Then, the OCG names from the OCG tracking spreadsheet are extracted and used alongside the search nouns to build up a search criteria for every tracked OCG. Again, using Word2vec and searching for the discovered nouns detects some of the untracked USGs, which are combined with the tracked OCG list to form a list of SOC groups.

4.2 SOC Identification

The identified search criteria use regular expressions to search through the reliable IMS logs for potential SOC associations. Every positive match is recorded against the IMS logs so that the nominals mentioned in the IMS logs can be linked with the mentioned SOC group as well as any other nominals mentioned in the same log⁵. It should be noted that this will include adversarial associations as well as substantive associations. The date the log was created is used for the temporal links. The strength of an IMS log is related to how many different nominals are mentioned on the same log, if n is the number of unique nominals mentioned on a specific log relating to a SOC group then each nominal would be linked to the other and to the group with strength $1/n$. The link strength is further reduced dependent on the age of the IMS log in years using an exponential decay.

⁴ There are data containing very few nominal allegiances to SOC groups however it is static and is suspected to be outdated and inaccurate.

⁵ Within each log there are usually several entries, these entries are aggregated up such that there is one text entry for each IMS log. These aggregated text logs are then used to derive potential associations.

To find further associations in the Crimes system, the crime records are filtered to crimes where there are more than one offender/defendant⁶. The records are then filtered further to crimes where at least one nominal was identified as having links to SOC from the processing of the IMS logs. Associations are then drawn between nominals on the same crime record. The date the record was created is used for temporal links. All links derived from Crimes have an initial strength of 1, which is reduced using the same exponential decay based on the age of the crime in years.

Finally, the PINS data is then filtered to only the links where at least one nominal has been identified previously from the IMS logs or the Crimes records as being involved in SOC (either directly or indirectly). Nominals sharing the same cell for more than 30 days where at least one nominal in the cell is involved in SOC are linked. PINS links are plentiful and so are given a small initial weight of 0.001, which is reduced using the same exponential decay based on the age of the PINS record in years.

4.3 Network Analysis

Following the identification process, a natural question is to ask *which nodes are more important in the network?* The network centrality measures are calculated in an attempt to answer this question. These measures include, as described in (Cambridge Intelligence 2020):

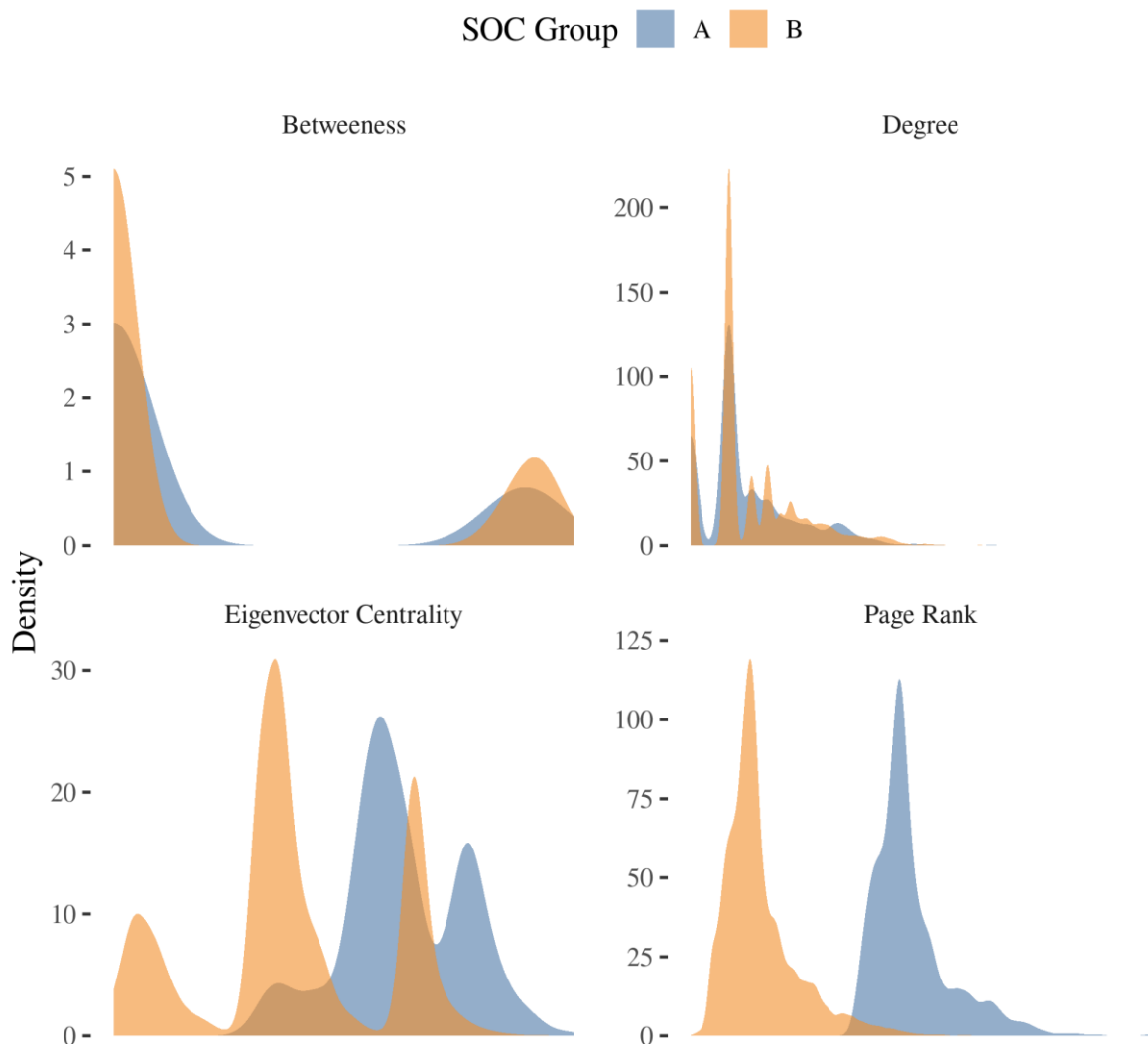
- **Degree:** Assesses the importance of a node based on the number of links each node has.
- **Betweenness:** Assesses the importance of a node on the times a node is in the shortest path between other nodes.
- **Eigenvector Centrality:** Assesses the importance of a node on the number of links and the importance of the nodes it is linked to.
- **Page Rank:** Similar to Eigenvector Centrality, assesses importance on the number of links and the importance of the linked nodes, also accounting for weighted edges (the weight of an edge is the number of times those two nodes are linked).

These can also be applied for each SOC group or⁷ to compare two. Below is a chart comparing the centrality measures of the networks generated by the members of two SOC groups. In this case, group B has more members than group A but both the Page Rank and Eigenvector Centrality distributions show that group A has more “important” members (because the distributions are to the right of those of B). This is suggestive that group B has more members on the periphery than group A.

⁶ The specific crime roles for identifying links are ‘SUSPECT’, ‘DEFENDANT/OFFENDER’, ‘PERSON REPORTED FOR CRIME/OFFENCE’, ‘POTENTIAL DETECTION’, ‘PERSON PROBABLY RESPONSIBLE’, ‘PERSON THOUGHT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OFFENCE’.

⁷ This would also be calculated over nominals who know members (but are not directly members), etc.

Distribution of Network Measures



Source: WMP DAL 2020

Each centrality measure has its own pros and cons and so a different measure could be used depending on the given objective. Now that a means of assessing nominal importance has been identified, an approach can be developed to attempt to identify how to dismantle a given SOC group efficiently. Similar to the process described in (Wandelt 2018), four algorithms have been developed and used to assess the means to dismantle every SOC group identified, descriptions of which can be found in the [algorithms](#) section. The results of which are summarised in the below chart which shows the effect on each group as more nominals are removed. This affect is quantified using the giant connected component (GCC) as suggested in (Ren et al. 2019), which is a measure of the number of nodes in the largest connected component of the network.

4.4 What is meant by Dismantling / Destruction of Groups?

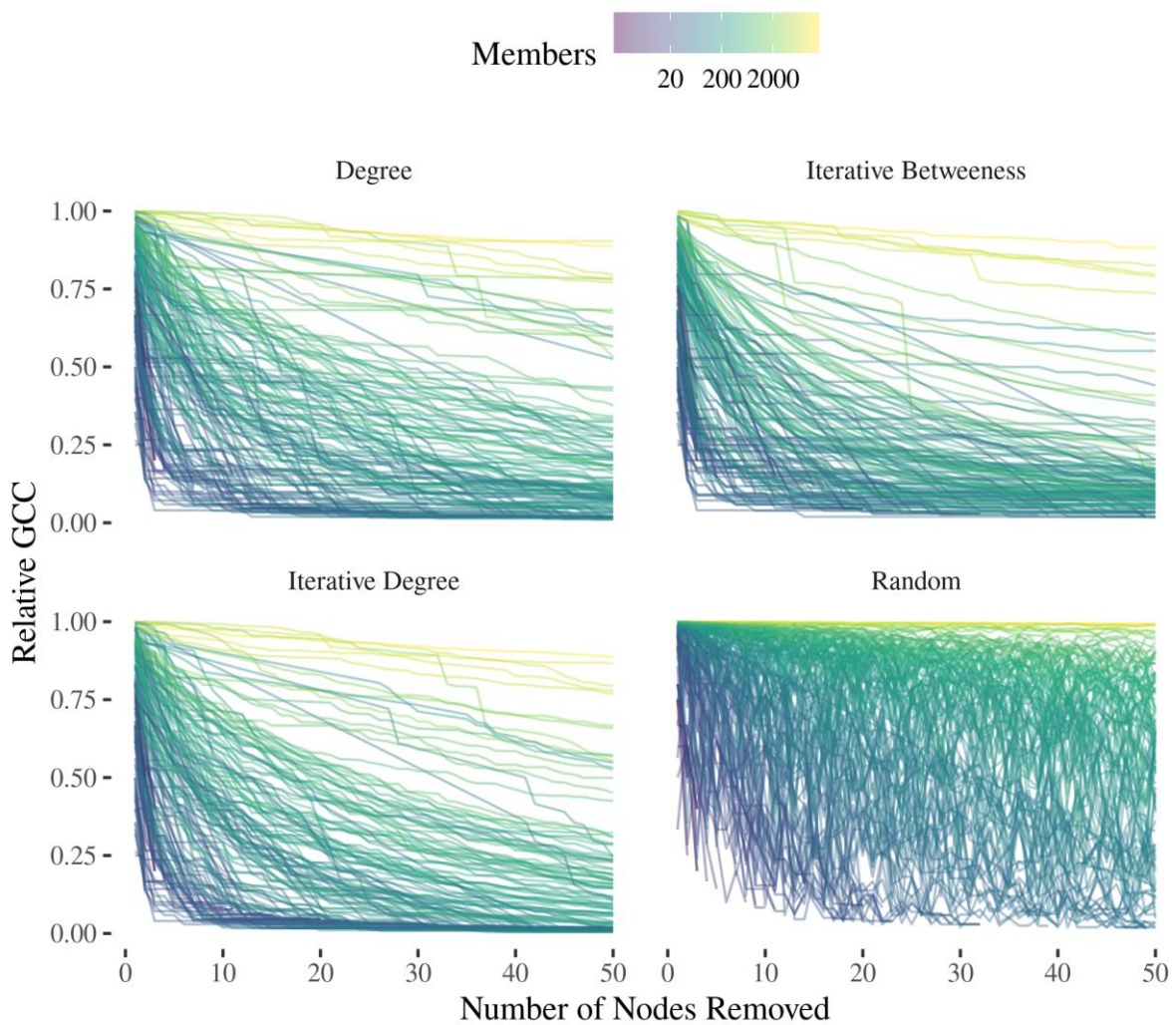
Dismantling groups means that if some of the members of the network ceased their criminal activities, the network would cease to operate as effectively and so lead to the reduction of harm created by criminal activity within society. Ceasing their activities

could be by way of sentencing through the criminal justice system, by way of offender management processes or, potentially, of their own volition, etc. The algorithm in question allows for the identification of those nominals who, if they were to cease their activities, would lead to the breaking up of the network most efficiently.

This means that, based on harm generated, the various groups can be prioritised in terms of the tasking of relevant WMP activities and within those groups, the nominals identified via the algorithm could also be prioritised.

Destruction of Groups

Relative giant connected component as nominals are removed from each group.

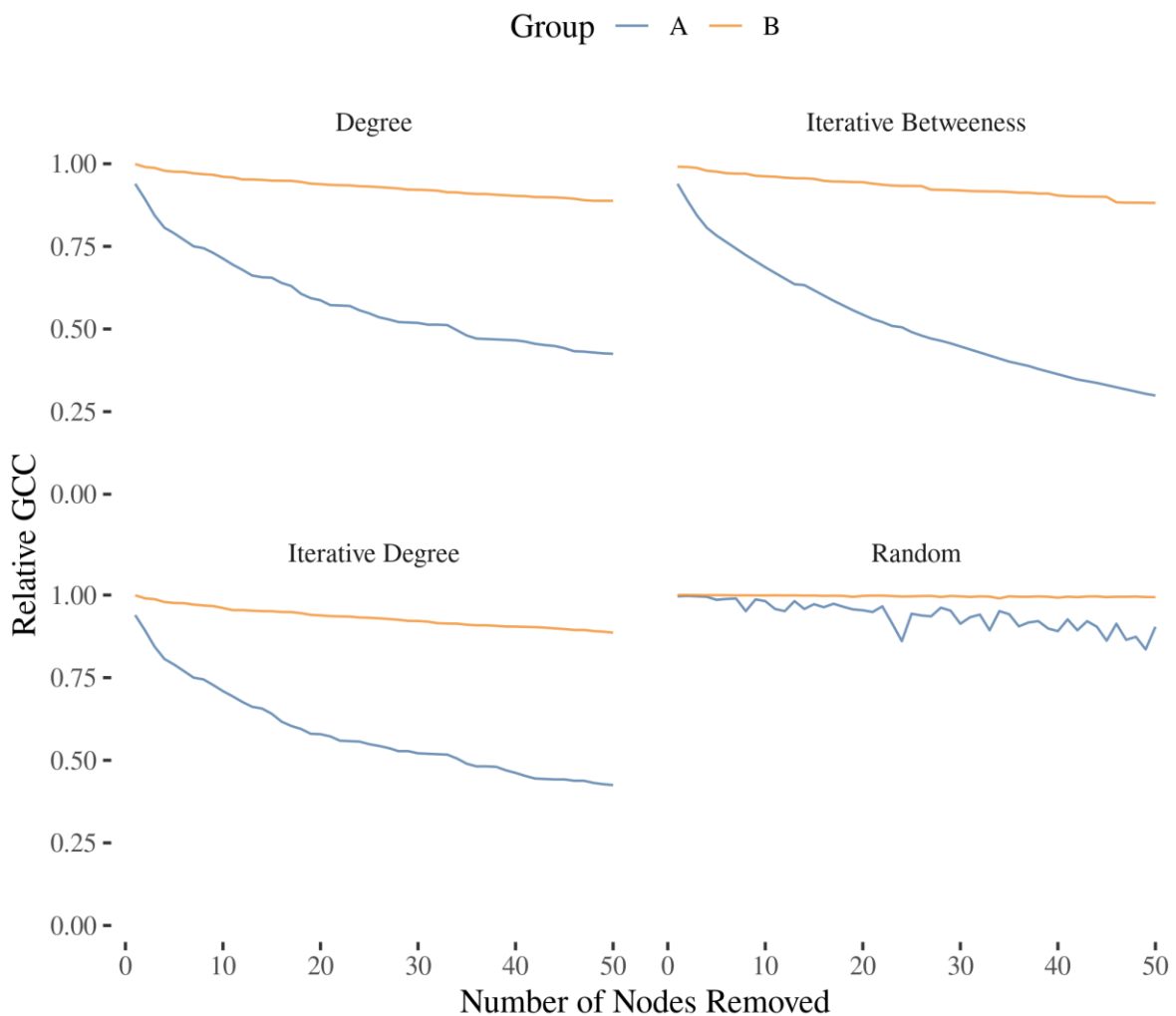


Source: WMP DAL 2020

The change in GCC for the same SOC groups A and B previously analysed is visualised below. Since group B has such a large number of members, removing a small number of nominals appears to have little effect on the GCC of the group. Group A is not a small group but the removal of a small number of nominals (roughly 6) is estimated to reduce the GCC by approximately 25%.

Destruction of Groups

Relative giant connected component as nominals are removed from each group.

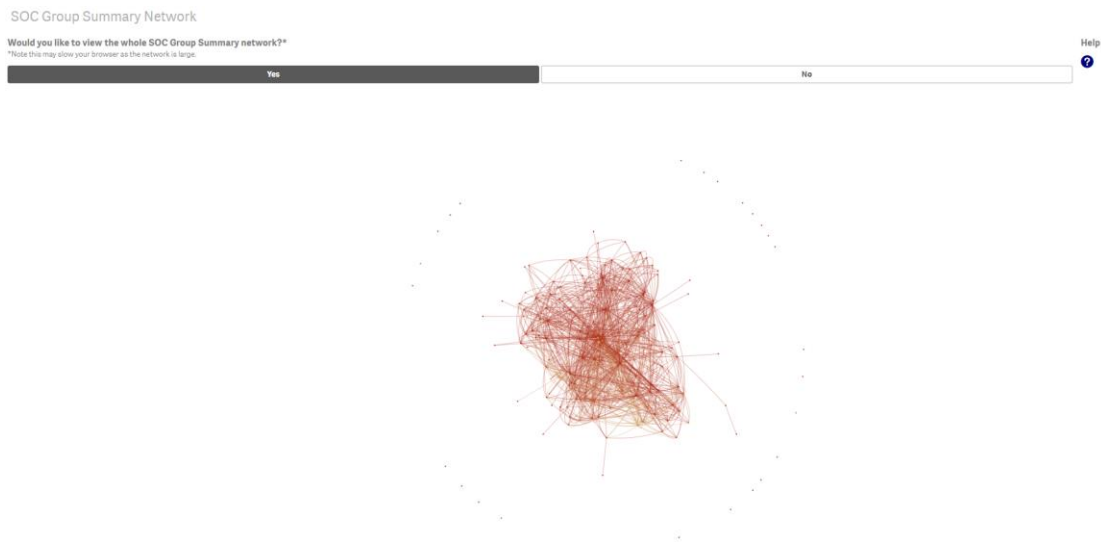


Source: WMP DAL 2020

Finally, the large overall network can be aggregated to a SOC Group summary view for visualisation. Various summary metrics can also be given for each SOC group such as amount of harm generated⁸, number of crimes and number of members. Some of these metrics and charts are produced in a Qlik dashboard to enable intelligence professionals to select the data they would like to focus on (subject to the operational principles). Below are a series of images from the concept Qlik dashboard, which is being developed in partnership with analysts in the SOCEX intelligence team.

⁸ Both the Cambridge Crime Harm Index [Sherman, L.W. How to Count Crime: the Cambridge Harm Index Consensus. *Cambridge Journal of Evidence Based Policing* (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41887-020-00043-2>] and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Severity Scores [<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/datasets/crimeseverityscoreexperimentalstatistics>] are used within the analyses to suit any potential different analytical purposes.

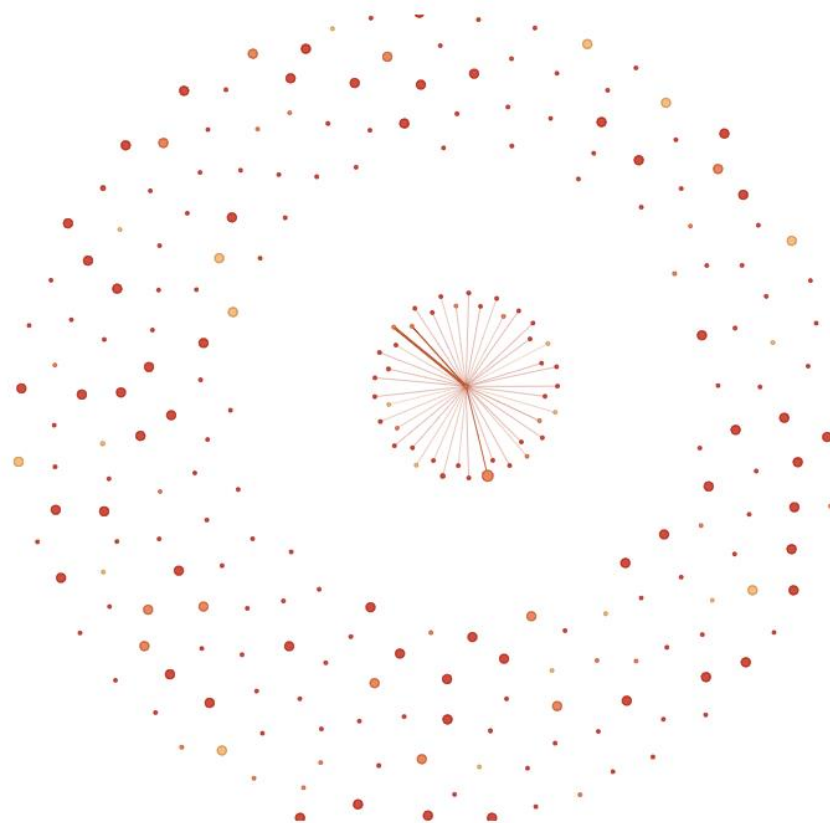
The SOC Group Summary Network page gives the user the option of displaying the overall summary network, relationships between SOC groups are derived by identifying nominals with direct links to multiple groups, these nominals are potential facilitators. The node size represents the number of members in the group, the thickness of an edge between two groups represents the number of potential facilitators between the two groups and hovering the cursor over a specific group node will display a popup stating the sum of the Cambridge Crime Harm Index of all crimes committed by members of that group.



The SOC Neighbourhood Network page initially displays a table summarising the type, number of members, total Cambridge Crime Harm Index and ONS Severity score of each group. Once a group is selected from the table, another table will appear showing the other SOC groups with links to the selected group, this will also be visualised with a network diagram. The selected group is kept until the user changes their selection.

SOC Neighbourhood Network

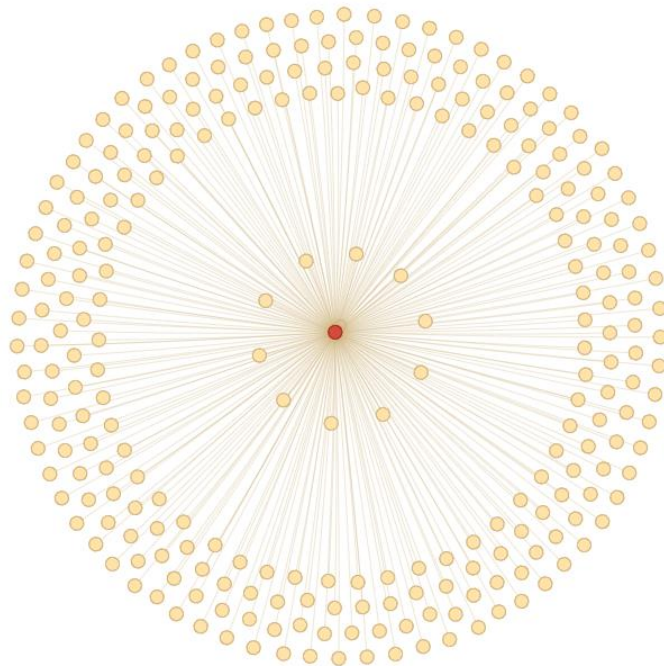
Help



The Immediate SOC Group Network page shows a table and network diagram displaying the nominals that are directly linked to the selected group, in other words, the path from the nominal to their associated SOC group does not contain any other nominals. The table also contains information about the nominal such as name, date of birth, harm caused and number of links to the selected group.

Immediate SOC Group Network

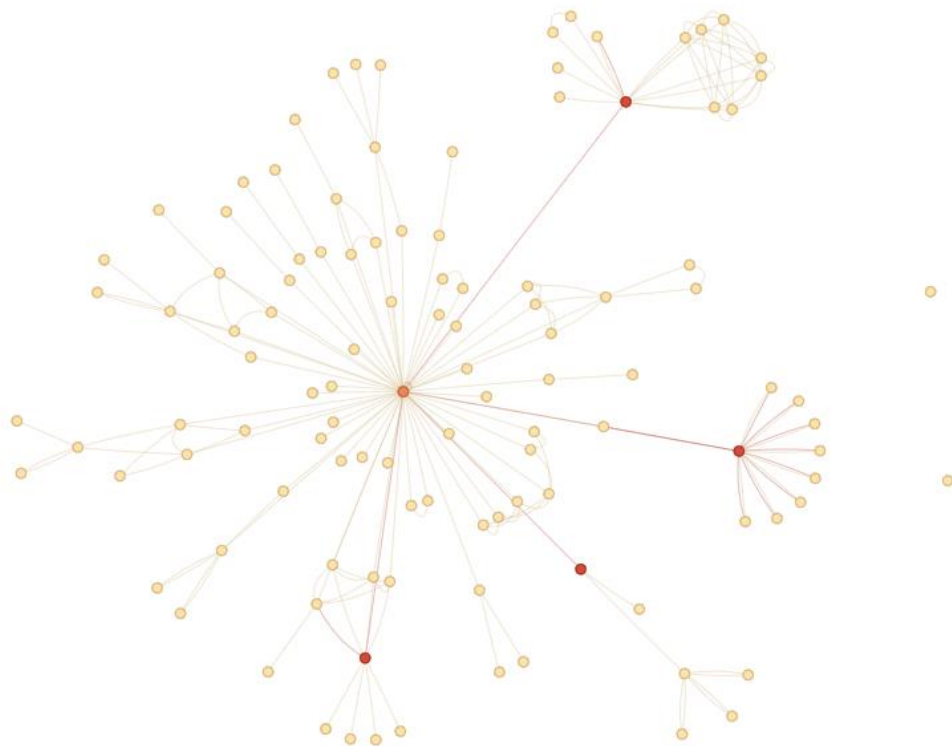
Help



The SOC Member Network page contains the SOC group network, this shows how all nominals in the selected group are connected. This page also contains a table containing all the links and the harm caused by each nominal and the order in which they should be removed from the network (up to rank 50) based on the iterative betweenness dismantling algorithm.

SOC Member Network

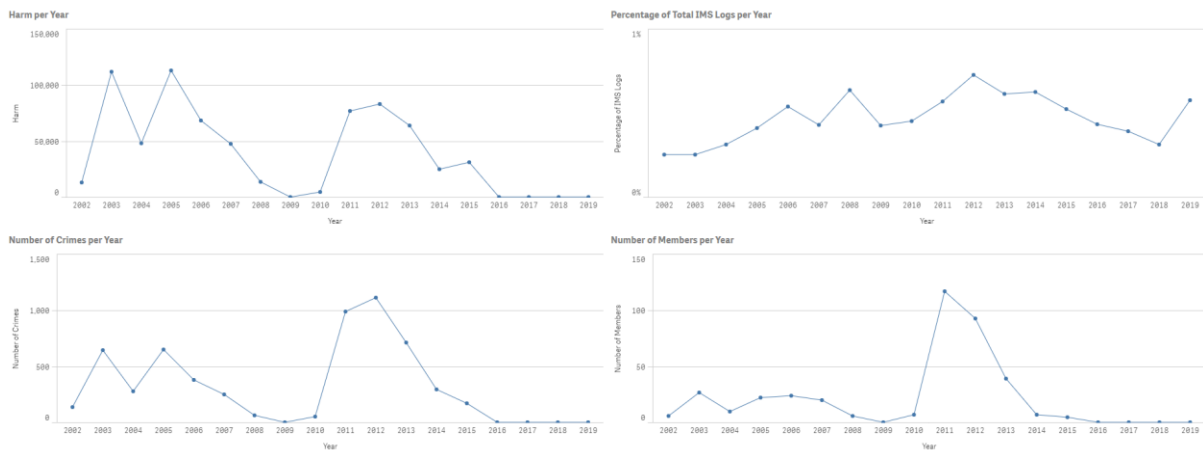
Help



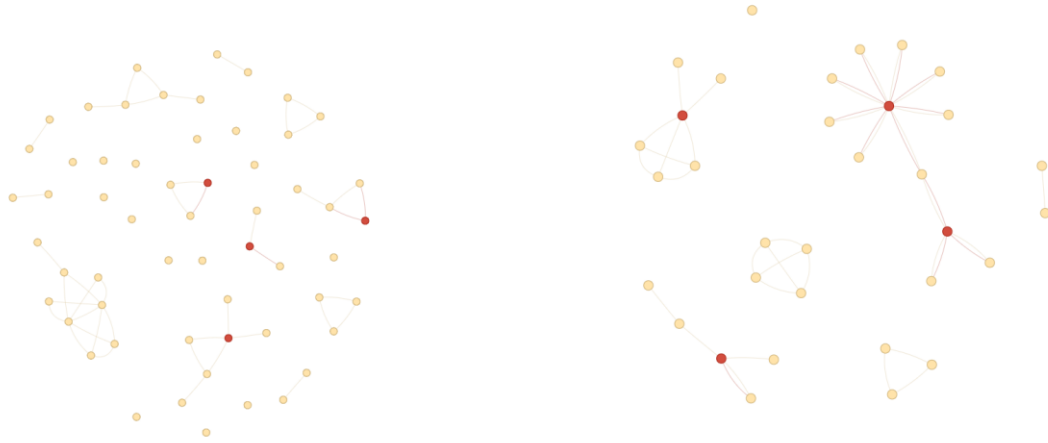
The SOC Group Temporal Metrics page shows how the selected group has developed and changed over time. The metrics are:

- The total Cambridge Crime Harm Index of crimes committed by members of the selected group per year.
- The percentage of reliable intelligence logs that relate to the selected group per year.
- The number of crimes committed by members of the selected group per year.
- The number of associated nominals in the selected group per year.

These metrics are derived from identifying SOC nominals for each year from 2002 to 2019 independently of each other.



The SOC Group Decade Network page shows the group network generated using data from the years 2000 - 2009 and 2010 - 2019 separately.



Further summaries are also included in the dashboard which include:

- **Most connections** – This table gives the details of the top ten nominals associated with each identified SOC group who have the most identified connections.
- **Top dismantle** – This table gives the details of nominals with a dismantle rank in the top ten for each SOC group.
- **Longest standing** – This table gives details of nominals who have been involved in SOC the longest, including which group they were first associated to and which group they are now associated to.
- **Most harmful** – This table shows the details of the top ten most harmful nominals in each group including how much harm they have caused, metrics are included for both the total Cambridge Crime Harm Index and total ONS Severity.
- **Top Locations** – This shows the total number of times a given location is mentioned on IMS logs in relation to a specific group.
- **Group connections** – This table shows the number of nominals that are linked to two different groups in the last 12 months.
- **Relationships** – This table shows all the relationships identified through the SOC, CSE and county lines searches, including the two nominals the relationship involves, the source (e.g. the IMS log number or the Crimes reference number), the weighting given to the relationship and the date the source log was entered into the system. This enables Intelligence professionals to research the source systems and see the detailed information that sits behind the identified link.
- **Network Harm** – This chart shows the amount of harm by each SOC group broken down by SOC nominals, CSE nominals and county lines nominals.
- **CL and CSE dismantle** – This table shows the details of nominals with a dismantle rank in the top ten for each identified community within county lines and CSE.

- **Geo-location** – This table displays all locations mentioned on IMS logs in relation to any group. The group and year the log was entered into the system can be filtered.
- **Nominal summary** - This table gives an overview of all nominals identified through SOC, CSE and county lines. The table includes nominal details such as PNC and CRO numbers, as well as which networks (SOC, CSE, county lines) they have been identified in, their closest SOC group and their CSE and county lines membership.

5 Conclusion

The approach above has outlined a process to identify SOC groups and the nominals involved in their activities using an amalgamation of data across different systems with the ability to summarise the impact a given SOC group has on society as well as a nominal's importance and impact. The Qlik dashboard gives the user the ability to view the underlying SOC group network as well as which nominals the iterative betweenness dismantling algorithm recommends for removal and how the group changes over time through the temporal metrics.

6 Appendix

6.1 Definitions

The term serious and organised crime (SOC) is used in this report to include:

- Urban street gangs (USG)
- Organised crime groups (OCG)

Once intelligence has been gathered an Intelligence Officer will standardise the text within the log and grade the source and the information contained within the log. The previous “5x5x5” intelligence grading system was replaced with the current “3x5x2” system in 2017. The below table can be used to convert between the old and new grading systems and highlights which gradings are included in the SOC identification process.

Included	Old		New	
	Source	Information	Source	Information
Yes	A - Always reliable	1 - Known to be true without reservation	1 - Reliable	A - Known directly
Yes	B - Mostly reliable	2 - Known personally to the source but not to the officer	1 - Reliable	C - Known indirectly
Yes	C - Sometimes reliable	3 - Not known personally to source but corroborated	1 - Reliable	B - Known indirectly but corroborated
No	D - Unreliable	4 - Cannot be judged	3 - Not reliable	D - Not known
No	E - Untested	5 - Suspected to be false	2 - Untested	E - Suspected to be false

IMS new and old intelligence grading system

The current list of gang nouns is:

- gang
- crew
- thugs
- soldiers
- soljas
- boys
- family
- brothers

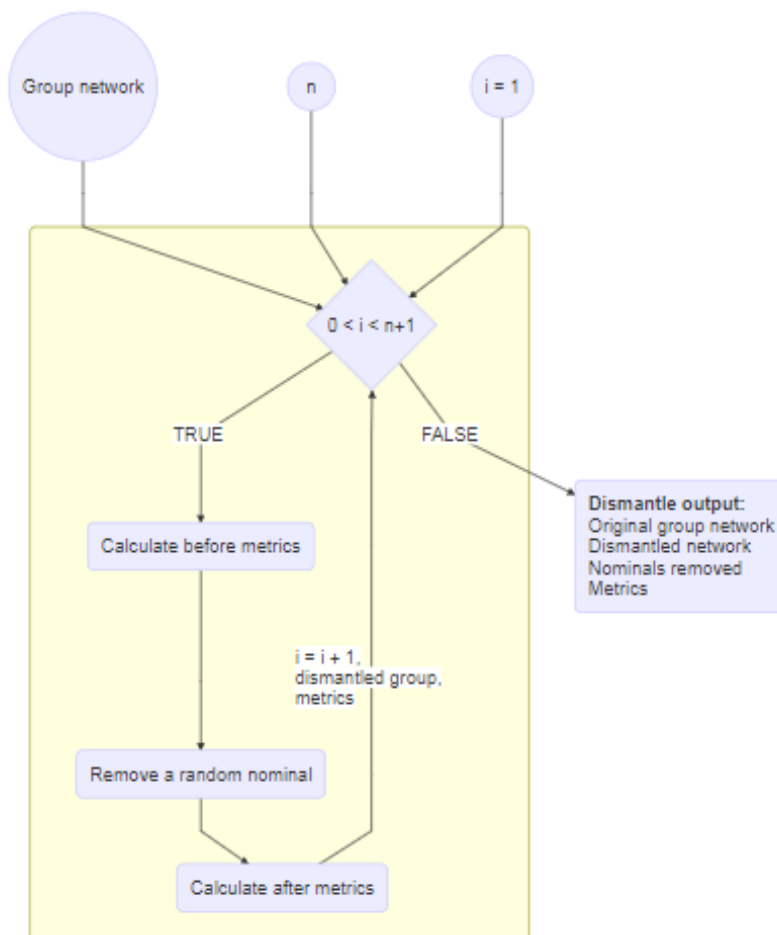
- bros
- ocg
- usg
- line
- clan
- bar

6.2 Algorithms

Several algorithms were used to compare different dismantling identification techniques described in (Wandelt 2018) with an additional random removal algorithm for a baseline.

6.2.1 Random Baseline Algorithm

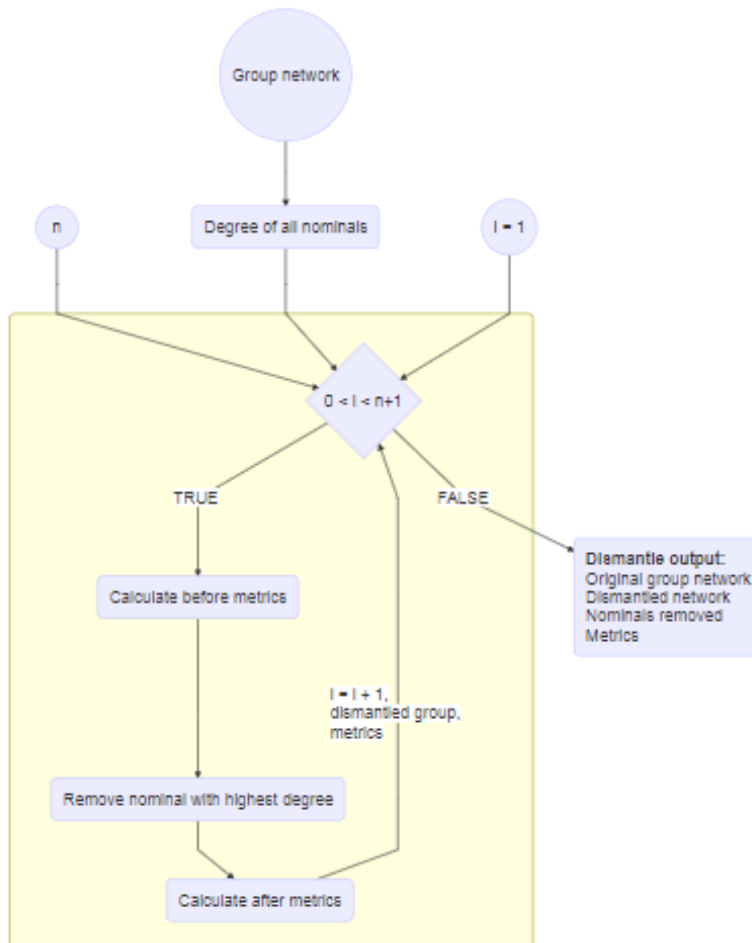
A random node removal algorithm was used as a baseline to compare with more sophisticated methods. The selected SOC group network and the total number of nodes to be removed are passed to the function.



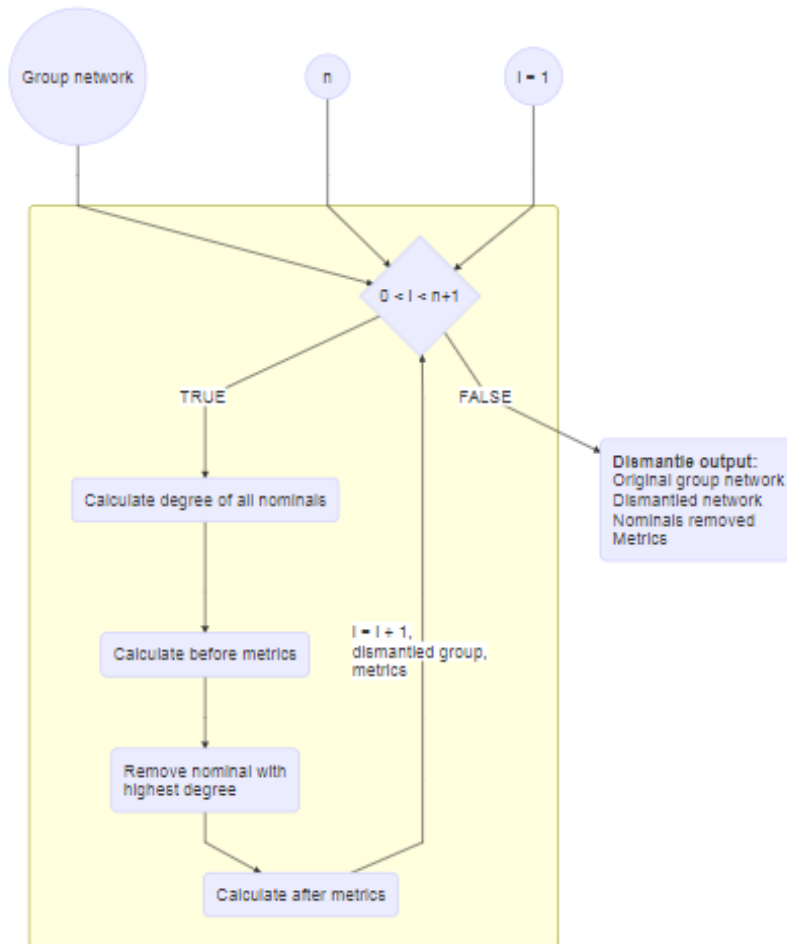
6.2.2 Degree-based Approaches

Degree in the context of undirected networks is the number of neighbours to a node. This is an intuitive way to assess importance in the context of a network. There are two degree-based techniques used:

Degree dismantling calculates the degree of every nominal in the network and then removes the top n nominals with the highest degree.

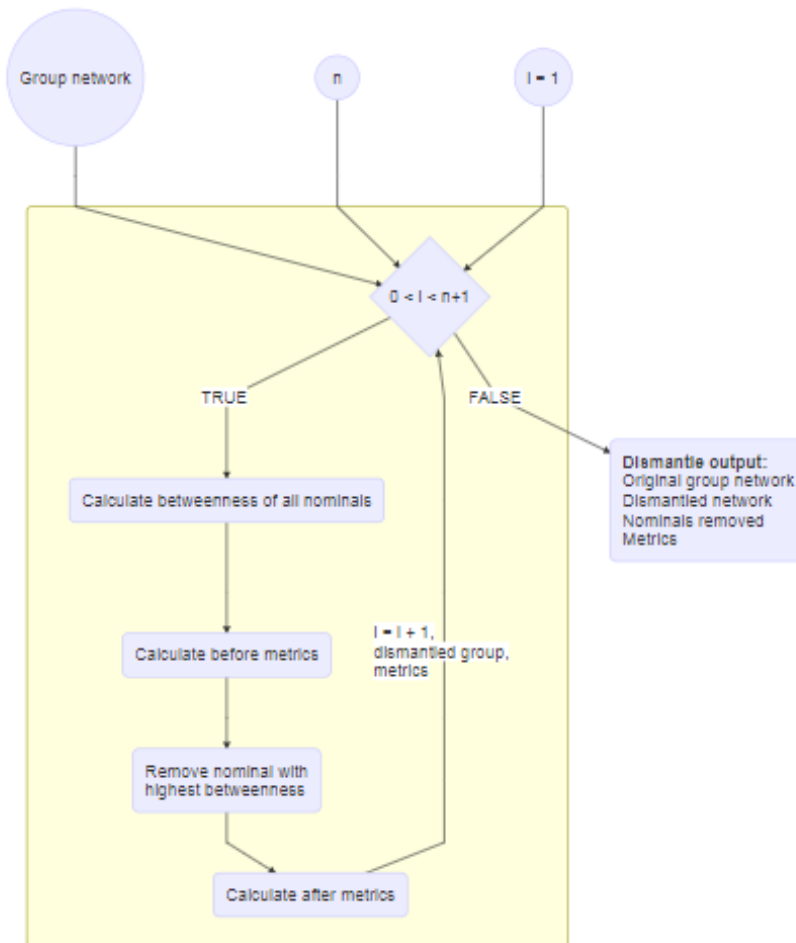


Iterative degree dismantling is slightly more sophisticated than straightforward degree dismantling described above. In iterative degree dismantling, a network and the number of nominals to be removed (n) is supplied. The algorithm calculates the degree of all nominals and then removes the nominal with the highest degree. These two steps are then repeated n times, in other words, the degree is updated after the removal of each nominal as illustrated below.



6.2.3 Betweenness-based Approaches

In the context of networks, betweenness is calculated by finding the shortest path between each pair of nodes; the betweenness of a given node is then the sum of how many shortest paths pass through it. Here an **iterative betweenness** approach is used in which the betweenness of every node in the supplied network is calculated and the nominal with the highest betweenness is removed. The betweenness for every node is now updated and again the nominal with the highest betweenness is removed, this is repeated until n nominals have been removed. This algorithm is illustrated below.



6.2.4 Word2vec

Word2vec processes text and generates word similarity metrics. In this case, the IMS logs were parsed into the model to find words which are used in similar contexts in the intelligence logs.

7 Bibliography

- Cambridge Intelligence. 2020. "Social Network Analysis 101: Centrality Measures Explained." viewed 2020-02-20 <<https://cambridge-intelligence.com/keylines-faqs-social-network-analysis/>>.
- Home Office. 2018. "Serious and Organised Crime Strategy." viewed 2020-02-11 <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/752850/SOC-2018-web.pdf>.
- National Audit Office. 2018. "Tackling Serious and Organised Crime." viewed 2020-02-24 <<https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Tackling-serious-and-organised-crime.pdf>>.
- National Crime Agency. 2018. "National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime." viewed 2020-02-24 <<https://www.nationalcrimeagency.gov.uk/who-we-are/publications/173-national-strategic-assessment-of-serious-and-organised-crime-2018/file>>.
- Ren, Xiao-Long, Niels Gleinig, Dirk Helbing, and Nino Antulov-Fantulin. 2019. "Generalized Network Dismantling." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116 (14): 6554–9. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1806108116>.
- Wandelt, Sun, S. 2018. "A Comparative Analysis of Approaches to Network-Dismantling." *Sci Rep* 8 (13513). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-31902-8>.

8 Overview of Referrals and Safeguarding

The purpose of this section is to address the concerns raised by the Data Ethics Committee about operationalising the network analyses produced by the Data Analytics Lab (DAL). These concerns are about how we respond to children and other vulnerable people who are identified as being involved in Serious Organised Crime (SOC), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and County Lines (CL) as a result of the analyses. The key areas of concern raised by the Committee include:

- That there is a risk of inadvertently or unfairly criminalising children.
- Being assured that there is a comprehensive and credible plan for how victims of exploitation are safeguarded and supported.
- A recognition that the victim/perpetrator overlap can be complex.
- How data about individuals is shared with partners for safeguarding purposes.
- Better understanding of prevention strategies.

Children and other vulnerable people are likely to be identified as a result of analyses undertaken by the DAL. This includes the various network analyses identifying people linked to SOC, CL and CSE. Please see the '*Operating Principles for Network Analyses*' for an explanation of how the DAL's output feeds into existing Intelligence Department processes.

These analyses use data science techniques which are new to law enforcement, to understand the criminal environment. However, any children, or other individuals identified as vulnerable to exploitation, will be safeguarded using West Midlands Police (WMP) standard operating procedures in partnership with other local statutory bodies. These procedures operate regardless of the vulnerable individual's status within our recording systems as a 'victim', 'suspect' or 'defendant'.

8.1 Statutory Guidance: Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)⁹

WMP and other partners across the region are bound by legislation which is summarised in the 2018 statutory guidance, '*Working together to safeguard children*'.

This guidance focuses on the core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals, organisations and agencies must and should do to keep children safe. In doing so, it seeks to emphasise that effective safeguarding is achieved by putting children at the centre of the system and by every individual and agency playing their full part. This child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.

⁹ HM Government, (2018) *Working Together to Safeguard Children: A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.*
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/942454/Working_together_to_safeguard_children_inter_agency_guidance.pdf

In particular, the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, strengthened the relationship between the police, clinical commissioning groups (CCG) and the local authority (LA) who are duty-bound to work together, and with other partners locally, to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.

WMP works with seven LAs (Birmingham, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton) and their associated CCGs.

8.2 Modern Slavery Act 2015

Section 45 of the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) 2015 created a defence for victims who commit certain offences when they are compelled to do so (in the case of adults) or when they commit them as a direct consequence of being a victim of slavery / exploitation, if a reasonable person, in the same situation with the same 'relevant characteristics' would do the relevant act (in the case of children).¹⁰ The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) adopts a four-stage assessment when deciding whether to prosecute a suspect who might be such a victim, in order to establish whether investigators have used the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) in the case of trafficking or slavery; or have considered whether a child has committed crimes arising directly from Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE). A person who is shown to have been exploited will rarely be considered for prosecution.

8.3 Safeguarding arrangements in the West Midlands

WMP's increased focus on tackling Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation (SOCEX) is underpinned by the newly formed SOCEX Hubs in Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton which include an uplift in the numbers of officers and staff dedicated to this issue. The Hubs provide a single interface for partners to engage with, rather than navigating different WMP teams which deal with missing people, gangs or CSE. Equally, officers become the WMP experts in the prevention strategies available in each local area. This offers improved opportunities for child centred safeguarding conversations and a consistent approach to safeguarding from WMP.

Each LA works differently with their unique structures, terminology and range of interventions. Birmingham has a well-developed multi-agency contextual safeguarding¹¹ hub (MASH), which includes WMP officers from several departments including the Public Protection Unit (PPU), Force Criminal Investigations Department (FCID), Force Intelligence and Neighbourhood teams. They are co-located with partner agencies including Birmingham Children's Trust, health, education, Barnardo's, Youth Offending Services and the Children's Society. Wolverhampton is building a similar partnership hub, although WMP officers are not yet embedded. Other LAs are at different points in their development but all are moving in the direction of building a safeguarding hub similar to that established in Birmingham. Regardless of current progress, each has a MASH for referrals and some have local daily briefings which are attended by WMP officers.

The strengthening relationship between the WMP SOCEX Hubs and LA MASH arrangements ensures WMP investigations go beyond simply investigating specific offences (such as

¹⁰ <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/human-trafficking-smuggling-and-slavery>

¹¹ Contextual Safeguarding is an approach to understanding, and responding to, young people's experiences of significant harm beyond their families. It recognises that the different relationships that young people form in their neighbourhoods, schools and online can feature violence and abuse. Parents and carers have little influence over these contexts, and young people's experiences of extra-familial abuse can undermine parent-child relationships. <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/>

possession with intent to supply drugs or 'PWITS'). Instead, they take a contextual safeguarding approach and consider that a child is being exploited, even if the child has made no such disclosures. A key aspect of the investigators' role in the SOCEx Hubs is to identify opportunities NOT to criminalise children. Indeed, the Force's Investigation Policy¹² states that the core mission of West Midlands Police is to prevent crime, protect the public and help those in need. The overwhelming principle is that, '*staff should treat every investigation as an opportunity to intervene and prevent future offending*' and that WMP, '*will seek every opportunity to work collaboratively with partners to prevent offending*'. To this end, the Force uses the new Home Office Counting Rule (HOCR) Outcome 22 for investigations where no further action is taken but diversionary, educational or intervention activity has been undertaken to address offending behaviour or prevent further offending.¹³ This is recognised as a 'positive' outcome to increase the use of 'behaviour change' early interventions.¹⁴

The Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) funds partners who can assist WMP in identifying these opportunities to prevent future offending and to support those being exploited. It has funded Trauma Informed training, delivered by Barnardo's, for many of WMP's partners across social services, education, family hubs and the voluntary sector. For example, trauma informed volunteers from the charity St. Giles¹⁵ take referrals from custody staff in Coventry to provide peer mentors with lived experience to support vulnerable young people. The ambition is to provide bespoke Trauma Informed training for WMP as an organisation and for specific roles such as custody staff.¹⁶

In Birmingham, where there is cause for concern about a child, for example if they have been arrested, a referral will be made to the MASH. If appropriate, the Exploitation Screening Tool will be completed and if they are assessed as being at high risk a Strategy discussion will be convened and initial safeguarding considered. If the child is assessed as medium or low risk, their case is reviewed the following day at the daily Contextual Safeguarding meeting. Cases assessed as medium risk go to a Disruption Panel; whilst low risk cases are monitored. These procedures are all governed by tight timescales to ensure prompt action is taken. Where opportunities for disruption are identified the Disruption Panel will explore the Home Office 'Child Exploitation Disruption Toolkit'.¹⁷

It should be noted that information for vulnerable adults is not automatically shared with partner agencies, since their consent is required. This means the ability to identify offenders involved in criminal exploitation of vulnerable adults is the first step towards gathering evidence to build a case which does not require victim support to progress the investigation.

¹² West Midlands Police Investigation Policy Ref CRIME/08; approved 23/02/2021

¹³ Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime (HOCR): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/977232/count-general-apr-2021.pdf Outcome 22 came into use in April 2020.

¹⁴ West Midlands Police Outcome 22 Policy Ref CRIME/07; approved 26/01/2021.

¹⁵ <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/what-we-do/child-criminal-exploitation/hospital-custody-suites/>

¹⁶ Conversation with Ben Curtis, Barnardo's. Ambition is dependent on funding decisions from Home Office.

¹⁷ HM Government (2019) 'Child exploitation disruption toolkit' <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-exploitation-disruption-toolkit>