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Article

"I Pray That We Will Find a Way to Carry on This Dream": How a Law Enforcement Crackdown United an Online Community

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Abstract
Durkheim claimed that punishment of crime generates social cohesion as "honorable" people are united in emotional, passionate condemnation of those who transgress society's moral boundaries. This study examines reactions to punishment in the punished group. Specifically, it examines how members of an online community responded when law enforcement shut down their websites. Drawing on data from three discussion forums, the author argues that the crackdown produced solidarity and enhanced a particular moral worldview that strengthened the community and enabled it to survive by migrating en masse to new websites.

Keywords
punishment, crime control, online communities, illegal markets, emotions and crime, cryptomarkets

Introduction

Durkheim argued that punishment of law-breaking is a symbolic, collective, and deeply emotional condemnation of acts that "offend … collective feelings which are especially strong and clear-cut" (1982: 99). Punishment of crime is required because it produces "a passionate reaction" (1984: 48) that protects society's "moral conscience" (1982: 99–100) and "sustain[s] the common consciousness in all its vigor" (1984: 63). Critics note that law-abiding actors often disagree on what's right and wrong, and that it is unclear if the law truly represents the people (e.g. Foucault, 1977; Garland, 1991), but Durkheim's fundamental insight that crime and punishment creates emotional reactions in the populace remains influential (Lukes and Scull, 1983; Smith, 2008a). While punishment is now delivered out of sight (Foucault, 1977; Elias, 1978), the declaration of punishment continues to take the form of a public ritual (Garland, 1991; Smith, 2008b; Garland, 2012).

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I examine reactions to punishment within the punished group. I ask, how do people respond to law enforcement crackdowns that target them and their peers? Are their acts purely practical, e.g. as they shift to other locations, or will punishment also produce emotional responses?

To understand law-breakers, one must consider not just cognitive decision-making but also emotional subjectivity (Katz, 1988; Young, 2003; Ferrell et al., 2008); two forces which reinforce each other (Mead, 1904; Giordano et al., 2007). Emphasis on emotions is particularly important because it defamiliarizes conventional criminological approaches. Graffiti, for example, is in one way a problem of vandalism that might be reduced by increased CCTV surveillance and legal disincentives, but if we take the view of the graffiti artists through ethnography, we see that their acts are driven by the adrenaline rush of creating illegal art in an over-controlled city environment that is defined by boredom (Ferrell, 1996). In this study, I take the view of members of a discussion forum hosted by Silk Road (SR1), a thriving e-commerce market for illegal drugs (Barratt, 2012). The community was frequented by tens of thousands of users who discussed safety issues, politics, and drug use (Van Hout and Bingham, 2013, 2014; Martin, 2014b; Munksgaard and Demant, 2016). Participation was growing steadily until the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) shut down SR1 in October 2013.

Geographically targeted policing often reduces crime rates, but sometimes criminals move "around the corner" (Weisburd et al., 2006). After the FBI shut down SR1, vendors who wanted to maintain economic ties with their customers had to relocate, and at least four other markets and forums were available. One of them, Black Market Reloaded, had been in operation for almost two years (Branwen, 2017) and was widely known as a successful market. Trade patterns suggest that many SR1 actors continued in the already-existing markets (Soska and Christin, 2015), but discussion forum data collected for this study also document that a group of SR1 actors started to rebuild their community by constructing new websites—which requires considerable skills and efforts—and that thousands of SR1 users followed them. The migration suggests that many actors had more than instrumental motives. Rather than opting for an established market, they joined a collective reconstruction project.

How does an online community respond when law enforcement attempts to terminate it? What are the cultural mechanisms that enable an online community to outlive its shared space? To answer these questions, I have reviewed, manually coded, and analyzed over 3300 posts in three discussion forums, authored by more than 1000 unique users. The data—most of which are from the first three months after the FBI shut down SR1 in October 2013—are not representative of users of digital drug markets. Rather, the focus is on a substantial group of actors who created and partook in a concerted mass-migration from the SR1 forum to two other forums, and thereby supported the survival of their online community. Some of them participated in resolving technical issues, e.g. backing up data and constructing new websites; others supported the community through affectionate words and actions. These findings suggest that the "punishment" was indeed morality-affirming and solidarity-producing (Durkheim, 1982, 1984), among the law-breakers.

Digital Communities

Community as a concept has been critiqued because it implies a false coherence that masks cultural varieties and the ongoing movement and interaction between them (Wilson and Peterson, 2002). Etzioni (1998) nonetheless offers a definition that is more helpful than detractive. He writes that a community, wherever it exists, has two characteristics: 1) a web of affect-laden relationships among a group of individuals, relationships that often crisscross and reinforce one another; and 2) commitment to a set of shared histories and identities, i.e. a particular culture.

The distinction between real and "virtual" communities are arguably futile, because communities, identities, and networks exist regardless of how members interact (Wilson and Peterson, 2002). The symbolic interactionist view here is that the "reality" of a community should not be measured by its physicality, but by the extent it has a real and genuine effect on something else, e.g. its members (Chayko, 2008). By this definition, online communities are very much real. They display strong group norms of support and reciprocity (Maloney-Krichmar and Preece, 2005), online relations can be meaningful (Cole and Griffiths, 2007), and computer-mediated interactions sometimes involve "extraordinarily high" levels of empathy (Preece and Ghozati, 2001).

Relations formed in online communities live on elsewhere (Pearce et al., 2011; Whiteman and Metivier, 2013), sometimes out of necessity. Whiteman and Metivier (2013) studied two forums that faced termination because the administrators decided to close down the websites. Some members exchanged contact information and discussed maintaining the websites on their own, but because no-one offered technical assistance, both communities were eventually closed. The successful mass-migration of the community that originated in SR1, henceforth called the Darknet Community (DNC), suggests that a community can outlive its shared space even in the face of powerful external threats. Scholars have found that online communities can foster extremism and facilitate law-breaking (Holt et al., 2010; Wojcieszak, 2010; Ladegaard, 2017), but little is known of the resilience of such groups.

Meaning and Emotion in Crime and Punishment

Durkheim's work on the relationship between crime and punishment is far-reaching (Lukes and Scull, 1983; Lukes, 1985; Garland, 1991, 2012; Smith, 2008b), arguably beyond the recognition it has received (Smith, 2008a). A key contribution is the thesis that crime and its punishment instill "passionate responses" in the "conscience collective," which strengthens people's commitment to social mores and values (Durkheim, 1982, 1984). Tarde, Durkheim's intellectual sparring partner, argued that desires and fears are socially contagious processes that move "like electricity" between all individuals and shape their "(cognitive) beliefs" and "(emotionally) charged desires" (Tarde, 1903; Pfohl, 2017). Law-breakers are in this respect no different from law-abiders because their cognitive and emotional understanding of social life is formed by people around them (Shott, 1979; Giordano et al., 2007). Punishment, then, is likely to create socially contagious reactions among both law-abiders and law-breakers, but the reactions will differ as people's view of the law depends on the milieus they are committed to and operate within (Sutherland et al., 1992).

The law-breaker is typically presumed to be acting upon instrumental goals, but Katz (1988) deviated from this view. He emphasized human agency in crime, and argued that the sensuous experience of breaking the law can be a desirable attraction in itself. Criminologists have drawn on Katz to argue that structural strain sometimes provoke emotional responses that shape actions and inspire law-breaking. Crime can be a means to correct the humiliation of poverty and social exclusion (Young, 2007), and at a time when many find themselves over-controlled and yet without control of their own lives (Hayward, 2004), crime can be a revolt against the mundane (Ferrell, 2004), as when rules are transgressed because they are there (Katz, 1988), and risk can be viewed as a challenge, not a deterrent (Young, 2003). The point is not to deny that much crime is instrumental, but that law-breaking is an expressive act of human agency that is driven by cultural goals (Merton, 1938) and involves transgression, anger, rage, excitement, pleasures, and creativity (Hayward and Young, 2004; Ferrell et al., 2008).

If we follow Tarde's insight that everyone is shaped by the collective desires and fears of people around them (Tarde, 1903; Pfohl, 2017), and that people act upon both cognitive and emotional perceptions of meaning (Mead, 1904; Giordano et al., 2007), will punishment of a group generate

emotional reactions that unify members of the punished group, as Durkheim posited for people on the other side of the law? A key difference between law-abiding and law-breaking actors is that the latter will often face "problematic situations" and cannot continue as before (Mead, 1904), e.g. after a crackdown. How, then, are their future actions shaped by their collective experience of punishment, if at all?

A Genealogy of the Darknet Economy

Markets like SR1, henceforth called cryptomarkets (Martin, 2014a), are typically accessed through The Onion Router (TOR), which makes it very difficult to monitor internet users (National Security Agency, 2007), and all trade is done with cryptocurrencies, e.g. Bitcoin, which are easy to move around online outside of regulated banks and money transfers (Meiklejohn et al., 2013). When the FBI shut down the SR1 market and arrested its operator in October 2013, it was most likely due to human error, rather than faults in the technology (Christin, 2014). That perception persisted after the US prosecution presented its evidence in court (Ladegaard, 2017).

SR1 connected individual vendors and customers in a socially supportive and relatively secure online environment (Van Hout and Bingham, 2013, 2014; Barratt et al., 2014; Martin, 2014b). Total vendor revenue was estimated to be $1.2 million per month in 2012 (Christin, 2013), and a year later, $7.48 million (Aldridge and Décary-Hétu, 2014). SR1 vendors have been identified as intelligent and responsible consumers of drugs who were dedicated to providing a quality service where "quality" was in part measured by interaction with customers, shipment of slightly overweight orders, good "stealth" techniques (i.e. clever packaging), and competitive prices (Van Hout and Bingham, 2014). Customers abided by established community norms for drug consumption and harm reduction (Van Hout and Bingham, 2013). People used SR1 because it was, relative to other drug sources, safe, reliable, and convenient (Barratt et al., 2014).

A self-selected online survey of nearly 4000 respondents in the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States who had bought drugs in cryptomarkets found that the median age was 22, 82% were male, 92% were white, and 38% had completed a university degree (Barratt et al., 2016). Ross Ulbricht, who created SR1, had a master's degree from Penn State in material sciences and engineering (Segal, 2014), while the alleged operator of SR2 had a SpaceX internship on his curriculum vitae (McMillan, 2014). Unlike "street capital" (Sandberg, 2008), the cultural capital required to access and navigate cryptomarkets is highly valued in the formal economy. This point, and the user demographics, suggest that cryptomarket actors are relatively privileged and perhaps particularly capable of utilizing technology in the organization of illegal trade and resistance, as the unequal distribution of digital skills persists (e.g. Van Deursen and Van Dijk, 2014).

Methods

I began preliminary research on SR1 in June 2013. Frequent reading of the market's forum was supplemented with interviews with customers and vendors. The FBI shut down the market in October the same year, and following the subsequent introduction of Silk Road 2 (SR2), a central research question emerged: how did the pseudonymous online community overcome the crackdown on SR1? To answer this question, I initiated a systematic observation of activities in three discussion forums related to SR1. Most of the analyzed data are from the first three months after the FBI shut down the SR1 market in October 2013, when the SR1 forum was still available and a new SR2 forum was created, but I also included additional data from the three months following the closure of SR2, when a third related forum, the Hub, was available. From these two periods, I read all discussion threads that were deemed relevant to market actors' reaction and resistance to the market closures and had at least

10 posts. As themes emerged from the data, I returned to periods and threads of specific interest for more careful reading. All quoted users have been given pseudonyms.

I first selected and read 360 threads that were related to the continuation of the DNC. I then created a second subset of threads deemed most relevant to the study's research goals. This dataset contained a total of 3321 posts or 167 pages in Microsoft Word. In the initial stage of coding, I looked for the specific, e.g. talk about reconnection in SR2 ("Great to see you Doc"). In the subsequent round of coding, I looked for the general, and connected previous notes and codes to theory. Codes such as "rendezvous" and "home" often appeared in the same threads, and this relationship became the basis for the theoretical code "community." Three additional themes emerged from these data: technology, solidarity, and worldview. I quantified the proportion of DNC members who, in the selected threads, expressed solidarity with the community after the crackdowns, and/or expressed support of a shared worldview, but these figures are not robust estimates for the population. Rather, they document that a substantial group of cryptomarket actors had more than instrumental motives.

Table 1. Key events discussed in the study.

Early October 2013	The FBI shuts down the Silk Road 1 marketplace and arrests its operator. The Silk Road 1 discussion forum remains open for several months.
October/November 2013	Silk Road 2 is launched. First as a forum, then as a marketplace.
January 2014	The Hub, a market-independent forum, is introduced as a "safe haven" for cryptomarket actors.
November 2014	The FBI shuts down Silk Road 2 and arrests its alleged operator. It also seizes servers hosting several other darknet websites, including the Hub, and the Silk Road 2 forum.
December 2014	A group of actors use a backup to restore and relaunch the Hub forum. It is still online (October 2017).

Findings

The Community: I am here to help if and when I can

To get a sense of typical conversations in the DNC, I read the top 100 most-commented threads in each of the three forums. Three broad categories emerged from this analysis: social threads, practical topics, and conversations about drug use (Figure 1). Social threads were dedicated to leisure, e.g. threads regarding popular culture ("Favorite Movie Quotes"), threads for members to socialize and chat ("The Good Morning Coffee/Tea lovers thread"), and more specific topics ("Depression Hotline"). Practical threads discussed issues such as security. For example, DNC members shared and discussed security-related news ("Full evidence list released [in court case against SR1 founder]"), methods ("Idea for laptop killswitch—averting law enforcement raid"), and basic security practices ("Guide to Secure Email Providers"). Drug use threads included reviews of vendors and their products ("Official Meth Review Thread"), health and safety issues ("Ask a Drug Expert Physician about Drugs & Health"), and recreational drug consumption ("Best drug to deal w/a breakup?").

The threads were relational in tone even when the subject matter was primarily practical. One example is the so-called "spare coins" thread for micro-loans of Bitcoin, first created by SR1 actors long before the market was shut down, and revived in the other two forums. Cryptomarket customers will sometimes be a few dollars or cents short of an order, e.g. due to jumps in the bitcoin exchange rate, and instead of starting a cumbersome conversion of minuscule dollar amounts, they can borrow from community members. In a post-SR1 version of the thread, 86 different users requested, granted, or discussed micro-loans of bitcoin:

Sirmystery:	Gotta have the OSCT [official spare coins thread]. :) Sending good vibes tonight to all my homies.
Downtill:	Got some pocket change if anyone's short.
StarDust:	Evening fellow coiners. I am here to help if and when I can. Good to be here;D
Bluejeans:	I need to borrow a tiny amount to get an order to go thru.
Anthony:	PM it to me :)
Bluejeans:	Thank you very kindly Anthony!
Anthony:	฿0.01 sent to Bluejeans.
Bluejeans:	Well thank you again Anthony that actually worked! I took care of business and sent it back..should be back to you soon..thanks so much!!
Anthony:	And repaid :D Thanks, Bluejeans :)

Money can be a means of creating, transforming, and differentiating social relations (Zelizer, 2010), e.g. as people who lend money and pay their debts display trust in individuals and the community at large. In an environment of fellowship, DNC members helped each other overcome practical problems, e.g. by micro-lending.

Illegal markets have distinct cultural characteristics that go beyond risk-management (Dorn and South, 1990; Dwyer and Moore, 2010), and evidence of "social supply" between friends and acquaintances (e.g. Coomber and Turnbull, 2007) suggests a broader pattern of non-instrumental incentives in drug trade, at least at the delivery chain's final step. Some market actors even embrace a "cannabis culture" of altruistic values and non-commercial norms as an alternative to capitalist arrangements (Sandberg, 2012). SR1 actors did not reject profit-making: customers valued vendors who displayed a professional ethos (Van Hout and Bingham, 2014). However, the affectionate and supportive tone of the frequent, variegated forum communications suggest that many actors wanted a community, not simply an impersonal arrangement for efficient e-commerce. Commerce and personal relations are compatible worlds (Zelizer, 2010), and with the DNC, SR1 actors had successfully created a supportive community of illicit commerce.

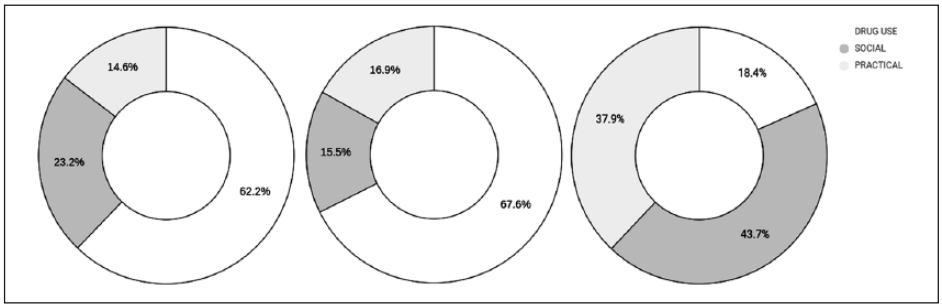

Figure 1. Top 100 threads (by N of posts) in SR1 (left), SR2 (middle), and Hub (right). The content of the SR1 and SR2 forums was proportionately quite similar, whereas Hub had fewer 'drug use' threads, presumably because the Hub did not facilitate trade.

Technology: If there is anyone out there that can recreate this impenetrable network you should go forth with it!

The FBI shut down SR1 in October 2013 (Table 1), but the market's discussion forum remained online for several months. Forum members were acutely aware that as soon as the servers in which

all usernames and discussions were seized or shut down, they would have to relocate. The community faced a "problematic situation" and could not continue as before (Mead, 1904):

Flwrpwr:	Can these forums be archived for the knowledge contained and maintained in some way?
Jumpee:	… mirroring the forums is very very important.
2C4me:	If there is anyone out there that can recreate this impenetrable network you should go forth with it! i wish i had the knowledge to do as such but my skills lie elsewhere.
SSBB:	We have choice in front of us now, we need to regroup and find a new home.

Archiving tens of thousands of web pages is a time-consuming task that requires a fairly high level of computer proficiency and few are capable of creating an "impenetrable network" for anonymous e-commerce. Like the majority of the DNC, 2C4me was dependent on the technological aptitude and creativity of other members.

Six days after the FBI shut down SR1 and arrested its operator, former staff "Indy" introduced a newly created forum and promised to build a new marketplace. Hundreds of accounts were created (Figure 1), and after nearly a month, a poster with the username "Dread Pirate Roberts" presented the SR2 marketplace:

> Dear Community. It is with great joy that I announce the next chapter of our journey. Silk Road has risen from the ashes, and is now ready and waiting for you all to return home: [URL to new marketplace].

SR1 vendors who could document their prior experience were given vendor accounts on SR2. This verification process typically depended on SR1 vendors being able to use the same digital signature that they had used in SR1, which was only possible because several individuals in the DNC had archived signatures from the SR1 website (for a full explanation of how digital signatures work, see Zimmermann, 1995). "Capitan" was one of several who assisted with the migration without having direct monetary incentives to do so. In October 2013, he launched a "vendor directory" on an independent URL:

> You can use the directory to search by vendor name … The primary reason for this sites existence is to help establish trust but most importantly to provide an additional layer of resiliency into the anonymous market place infrastructure and we work hard to make sure the data here is both accurate and regularly updated.

Another buttressing of the DNC was the Hub, a market-independent online forum. Speaking on behalf of a small group of staff, the Hub's moderator introduced the site nearly 10 weeks after SR2 launched: "We felt the need to build something that would bring stability, continuity and guided decision making to our community." Other examples of tech-related labor put in for the DNC include mentoring of encryption practices, manual verification of identities, and the management of forums, all of which were often described as volunteer work (James of the Hub, in a job-ad for moderators: "Occasionally we receive donations towards our hosting fees and if there is something left over we split it up between the mods but this rarely happens").

Online communities are vulnerable as server space and maintenance is typically in the hands of a few individuals. The DNC was particularly vulnerable due to the legal status of the trade it supported, but resourceful members were nonetheless able to construct a new market, migrate to new forums (Figure 2 and 3), and build a "Yellow Pages" directory for online pseudonyms.

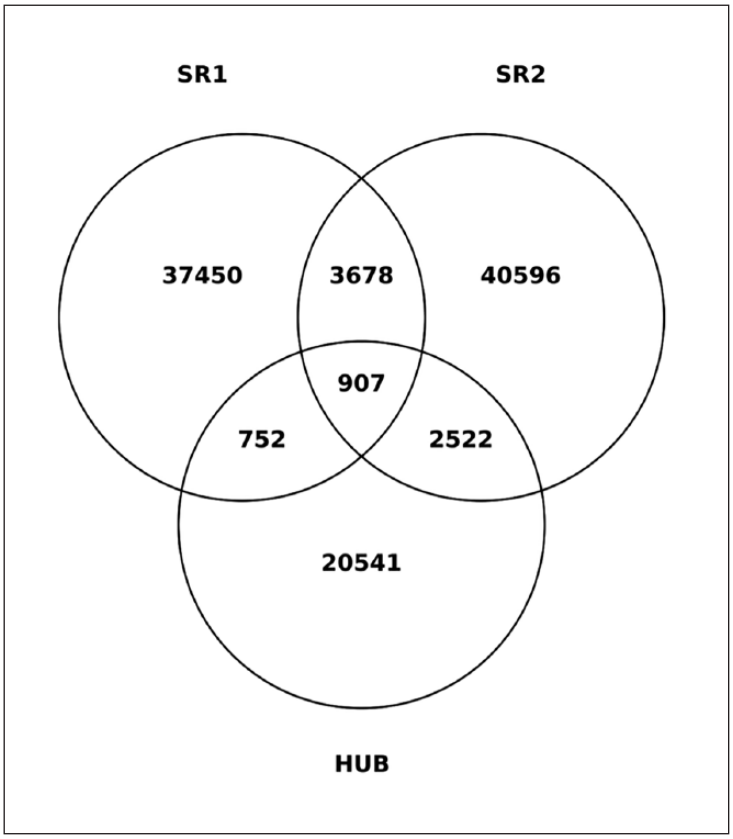

Figure 2. Similar usernames registered in three forums. These data do not tell us precisely how many members did in fact migrate from SR1 and onwards, in part because many elected to change their usernames but still remain part of the DNC, but they suggest that there was a substantial movement following the crackdowns.

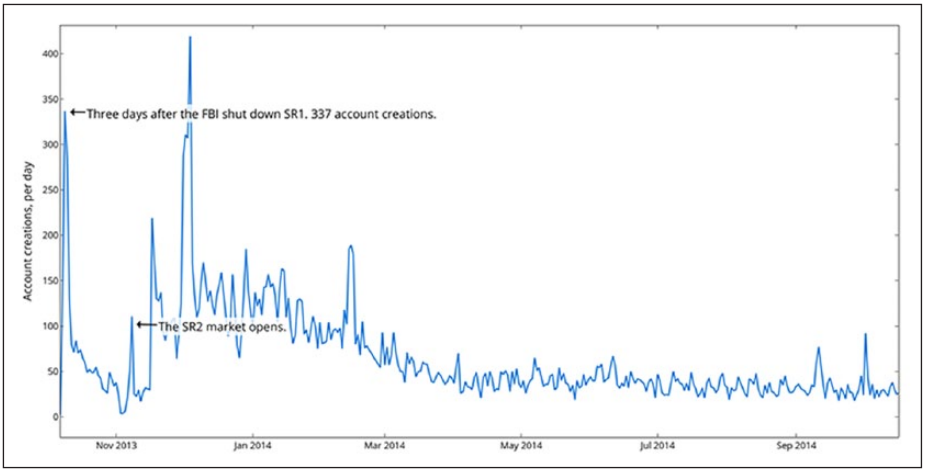

Figure 3. Account creations in the new SR2 forum (N per day).

Solidarity in the DNC: I really cannot imagine my life without being a part of this community

Of the 1071 users who participated in analyzed discussions after the crackdowns, 411 expressed solidarity for the community and its members. The reaction to the news of the SR1 shutdown was saddened and affectionate in tone:

MRsneaky:	I didn't think it would affect me the way it is. I'm truely feeling for DPR [SR1 founder] and this community. I feel like a piece of me has been taken. I never thought I'd feel so strong about ppl I've never met….but at the end of the day I've spent countless hours on here and I really feel like this is my community. I mean I come here for questions and I love to help ppl. If the forums go down I don't know what I would do. Long Live SR!!!!!
Cloudboom:	Fuck. I spent so many hours here, same with all of you, just reading everything, getting to know everyone and making money without dealing with punks, I hope everybody regroups.
New_Lax:	Silk roaders unite!!!!
SSBB:	Here I am again, inextricably drawn back to the place that I love, I really cannot imagine my life without being a part of this community.

The DNC is "my community," said MRsneaky. He was "truly feeling for" the arrested SR1 leader and the DNC. Cloudboom, New_Lax, and many others spoke of the DNC in present terms: it is a community of living people who have spent "countless hours" together and "feel strongly" about each other. They needed to "unite" and "regroup."

When people gathered in the new SR2 forum, they had managed to do just that:

Sir meatloaf:	Congratulations brothers and sisters! Silkroad for me is not just a place to buy drugs, It's a community, It's home.
Doc:	Welcome back and stay safe everyone.
Jessy:	Great to see you Doc :)
Doc:	You to Jessy :)
Kingston Candy:	Doc! Good to see you!
Doc:	And the same goes to you my good man :)
Crespo:	Oh my fucking god. I just feel so… at home when logged in.
Mukulele:	My brothers and sisters, we are home again. To the crew, and to the community, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.
X:	I'm home, thank you–strength and honor brothers and sisters.
Mellon:	Welcome Home Family. I must admit it feels much more exhilarating than I had expected it would. For the life of me I could not find solace in either refuge we had to land in. … WELCOME HOME, WE LOVE YOU FAMILY.

DNC members spoke of the community as "home," its members as "brothers and sisters," and the larger group as "family." Those who built the new site were lauded and familiar usernames were greeted. "Mellon" dismissed other markets and forums—"solace" wasn't found there. Actors expressed through words, and by signing up for the new forum, a desire to be part of the community.

A while after the Hub launched, its staff introduced an online archive of the original SR1 forum:

James: I am proud to present to all of you interested in the complete Silk Road forum backup. … I hope you all find it useful, a lot of hard work has gone into it.

Soultroll: Thank you James. I read my old vendor review threads … and started to cry. Yes, I am a sensitive troll. All the great feedback I had. All the wonderful people I met over the years. All the good memories of SR1 came flooding back and I got overwhelmed with joy. A true community feeling. I really belonged and did my job oh so well. I long for those days again. I'm going back for more. Thank you again. Oh the memories….

BIG$$$: This sure brought back some memories.

Mama Bra: fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck fuck. James, YOU ARE A GOD!!!! Please provide a BTC [address] for those of us that want to make a donation to help pay for this bandwidth. This is ABSOLUTELY amazing.

VC31: I remember waking up that morning to see the announcement on twitter that SR1.0 had been closed down. I remember going onto the forums that morning trying to get in contact with the many members of the community I had been in contact with and built up some trusting online communication. I never knew how much the SR1.0 community meant to me and others sadly those days are far gone however this backup has brought those memories alive again Thanks alot for all of those volunteers that put in so much hard work.

The archived forum revived chapters of the DNC's shared history and its "true community feeling." Old threads "brought alive" memories of "good times" with "wonderful people."

Words and actions suggest that a strong sense of solidarity mobilized DNC members after the crackdowns. People with sufficient cultural capital were willing to do the technical work that paved the way for a mass-migration, and solidarity made people join. Like graffiti writers who momentarily reclaim urban space they have been excluded from through privatization and criminalization (Ferrell, 1996), DNC members reconstructed the communal space that had been taken away from them. In their shared loss and concerted bounce-back, there was sadness, joy, and solidarity.

Worldview: You can't kill an idea, that was proven today

In the analyzed discussions, 200 individuals expressed opinions that correspond to a particular worldview: state-led efforts to curb drug trade and use are excessive intrusions into people's lives. After the shutdown of SR1, several shared how cryptomarket trade and the DNC affected their lives:

Deported: WE LOVE YOU I've been around have been largely for medical purposes, you guys have helped me more than any psychiatrist has.

HunterT: I have decided to reflect upon all of the joy that SR brought to my life … Through the use of hallucinogens procured from SR, my wife and I have fallen back in love, I have faced and defeated many personal demons, I have mended many relationships in my life, I have came very close to self actualization, but most importantly, I was awakened from my slumber and reminded that I was worried about all the wrong things. I love all of you and I pray that we will find a way to carry on this dream.

SixEight: It has been an honor and a privilege to be a part of this community and it has changed mine and thousands of others lives forever. We must all take responsibility and work towards creating a truly free society, this place was a step towards that.

SSBB: We have a choice in front of us now, we need to regroup and find a new home … I thought I had posted my final post yesterday here I am again, inextricably drawn back to the place that I love, I really cannot imagine my life without being a part of this community.

Between the lines of these statements is the argument that there's something wrong with the way the state controls people when experiences that "change" and "help" lives are legally banned. The DNC is seen as part of a larger battle against structures that prevent people from partaking in relational and voluntary transactions. The "dream" is that they "find a way to carry on."

Indy, who was involved in the creation of SR2, described the shutdown of SR1 as an "infringement of our freedoms by government oppressors," and called for the community to "stand on the shoulders of this tragedy that has befallen us and raise high what still remains—our sense of community, freedom and justice." Indy was on track to profit from the rise of SR2, but if his enthusiastic involvement was a case of everyone being fooled by his rhetoric, then his worldview is still "real" in its consequences. The swift response from "Eight" sums up what many others expressed: The community, he/she said, "changed mine and thousands of others lives forever. We must all take responsibility and work towards creating a truly free society, this place was a step towards that." When SR2 opened, others responded in a similar fashion:

Camel: You can't kill an idea, that was proven today.

Mellon: Like the phoenix from the ashes we have risen again, newly invigorated and refreshed. … One more savvy about security, more conscientious about community and more determined than ever to win the fight for freedom.

Samurai: Glad to be apart of this history, I'm tearing up.

Pluto: As we see in this new dawn let us come together as one community … and rejoice in our freedom.

Cryptomarkets actors can purchase the substances they desire, and in the forums they can share and discuss practical, emotional, and physical experiences with "friends" or "family." This arrangement is currently only possible as long as law enforcement is evaded, and that, they said, is not how it should be, and therefore they "fight" for "freedom." Drug laws strip people of the ability to experience particular kinds of "joy," improve medical health and human relationships, and even defeat "personal demons."

DNC members put mainstream values of liberty and fraternity above the law. They wanted a "home," a place where they are free to make their own choices, and the means to realize subterranean values (Matza and Sykes, 1961) and alternative lifestyles. They condemned their condemners (Sykes and Matza, 1957) as unjust, intrusive, and outdated. Their efforts to protect the DNC were innovative responses to structural strain (Merton, 1938): they realized cultural goals that were important to them, and in different forms and shapes, everyone else.

Discussion

Punishment might extend divisions rather than produce unity (Mead, 1918; Garfinkel, 1956; Erikson, 1966) because few societies are as homogeneous as the populace Durkheim depicted in

his work (Garland, 1991). In late modernity's variegated societies, a singular exception is the online community. Online communities are polarizing and homophily-producing (Sunstein, 2009; Wojcieszak, 2010) because they are typically centered around key interests and concerns that are shared by all members, e.g. particular health problems (Preece and Ghozati, 2001; Maloney-Krichmar and Preece, 2005), online video games (Cole and Griffiths, 2007; Pearce et al., 2011), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Whiteman and Metivier, 2013), white supremacy (Wojcieszak, 2010), or, in this study, cryptomarkets.

Pseudonymous DNC members became what Zhao (2005) calls "intimate strangers" or "anonymous friends," tied together in an online community that was as "real" (Chayko, 2008) as other cases in the literature: members expressed norms of support and reciprocity (Maloney-Krichmar and Preece, 2005), relations were meaningful (Cole and Griffiths, 2007), sometimes involving "extraordinarily high" levels of empathy (Preece and Ghozati, 2001), and actors agreed on central political issues (Sunstein, 2009; Wojcieszak, 2010). When the FBI shut down SR1 in 2013, DNC members expressed solidarity with their peers and affectionate commitment to their shared worldview, that people should be free to make their own economic choices. Technically adept community members and those who followed converted feelings of unity into concrete action and migrated en masse, through cyberspace, to new, transient locations.

Another possible interpretation of the post-crackdown reactions is that drug policies are out of touch with the zeitgeist. Durkheim (1982) observed that "the changing conditions of social life" have ripped the criminal "label" off certain acts (p. 79). His famous example is the sentencing and execution of Socrates, whose ideas were criminal at his time, but were later "needed" by Athenians because "the traditions by which they had hitherto lived no longer corresponded to the conditions of their existence" (p. 102). Contemporary crime scholars reject the Kantian logic of progress in crime and punishment, but like Durkheim they claim that crime cannot be seen independently from the institutions that control public perceptions of law and order, such as the police, the courts, and the media (Becker, 1963; Cohen, 2002; Hall et al., 2013). The inability of a government to enforce its laws can erode political authority and require drastic adaptive steps, e.g. reducing crime by decriminalizing certain behavior (Garland, 1996). Durkheim (1982) likewise argued that banned acts will be permitted when "the feelings that they offend" are countered by "opposing feelings" of sufficient strength (p. 99), as "any arrangement is indeed an obstacle to a new arrangement" (p. 101). At present, certain forms of illegal drug consumption have been normalized (e.g. Parker et al., 2002), and consolidating evidence of the failures of the war on drugs (Dorn and South, 1990; Baum, 1996; Hughes and Stevens, 2010) adds to the political and popular push for policy reform (Carter, 2011; Open Society Foundations, 2011; Ames, 2013; NYT, 2014).

Garland (2012) observed that people and groups continuously contest and negotiate possible moral beliefs and social relations. Dominant forms are the outcome of such struggles. The law protects social order and widely and deeply held rights, i.e. individual security, safety, and liberty, but "agreement in essentials is very different from agreements in specifics," and the details are contested (p. 57). Smith (2008b) noted that in a time of mass popular culture, a large public sphere, and intensified sensibilities, sensitivities and subjectivities, reflexivity over criminal justice grow (p. 15). Is prison time the best method for reducing drug trade? Should drug use be prohibited in the first place? DNC members value personal liberty, e.g. the "freedom" to do what they want with their own lives, over the law. Punishment "offended" their community and generated emotional, collective responses that strengthened social cohesion and collective condemnation of condemners (Sykes and Matza, 1957). People consciously and unconsciously "imitate" those around them (Tarde, 1903) and "nobody is ever truly self-contained or affectively sealed off from the contagious influence of others" (Pfohl, 2017: 3), e.g. as they learn attitudes and

values about the law's legitimacy (Sutherland et al., 1992) and crime's cognitive and emotional meaning (Katz, 1988; Young, 2003; Giordano et al., 2007).

Conclusion

Punishment's popular, emotional dynamics have been largely ignored since Durkheim wrote about them, although many of his abstract ideas are far stronger than the flaws of his work (Lukes and Scull, 1983; Garland, 1991; Smith, 2008a, 2008b; Garland, 2012). I add to this perspective. My Durkheimian take on the social consequences of punishment, for the punished group, shows that law enforcement interventions generated solidarity within the targeted community, and commitment to a particular worldview. These forces were sufficiently strong for DNC members to undertake three initiatives that helped the community survive. First, after the shutdown of SR1, a new forum was created, and many SR1 users migrated there. Second, backups of the SR1 forum and market, and collections of digital signatures enabled SR2 staffers to verify established SR1 users. These efforts, by paid market staff and unpaid volunteers, smoothened the transition between the two markets. Third, a market-independent forum, the Hub, was created in case of further shocks (it is still online, as of September 2017). When law enforcement shut down SR2, actors were able to reorganize there. The Hub also produced an archive of old forum conversations from SR1 and thereby extended the community's shared history beyond its original location. To explain these findings, Durkheim's argument on the function of crime and punishment was reversed. The punished community became, as a result of their punishment, affectionately united in symbolically meaningful and emotionally intense efforts to overcome the crackdown.

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