MONASH University

WHAT IS A STREET GANG?

A VICTORIA CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis surveys the tacit knowledge held by forty-three Victoria Police Officers to determine what constitutes a street gang. The officers, from a broad range of operational policing positions within metropolitan and country police stations, provide both an insight into how street gang presence is recognised and evidence that community perceptions of safety, is influenced by gang behaviour.

This is the first research of its kind conducted in this country within Australian law enforcement agencies and the new knowledge gained will provide agencies who have the responsibility in addressing this phenomenon, with an empirically-based aid for determining what is or isn't a street gang.

Analysis of data identifies eight key themes of which three were primary to identifying gang presence – Core, Purpose and Grouping. These themes comprised twelve sub themes and were central to the development of a descriptor based on what attracted police interest, the bond that is central to the reason for the gangs existence and finally the composition of a gang.

This study recognises the importance of a multidisciplinary collaborative response, informed through education and training, to ensure there is an agreed approach to determine if a gang is one that is social or criminal, historically held up by inability for all parties to agree on a definition of what constitutes a gang. A key finding of this research is that a descriptor of a criminal gang is operationally preferable to that of a definition. This thesis contributes significantly to the capacity of agencies (police, justice, corrective services and non- government organisations,) to make accurate identification, providing a clear descriptor to answer the central problematic 'What is a Street Gang?'

DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other institution. To the best of my knowledge it contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

Patrick Boyle APM

Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ETHICS CLEARANCES

1. **Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC)**

   Organisational Development Department

   Policing Research Unit

   Approval Date - 27 April 2011

   Approval Number - RCC 606

   Refer Appendix 'A'

2. **Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)**

   Research Office

   Monash University

   Approval Date: 25 August 2011

   Project Number: CF10/0938 – 2010000475

   Refer Appendix 'B'

LIST OF APPENDICES

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AUS – Australia

ACC – Australian Crime Commission

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

Field Contact Report - [Form L 19] Submitted by Victoria Police Officers when a person is checked in suspicious circumstances.

Interpose – Victoria Police Case Management System

IPRMM – Integrated Planning and Risk Management Model – Informs local risks and therefore priorities.

LEA – Law Enforcement Agencies

LEAP - Law Enforcement Assistance Program - The primary information database that records all crime, criminal offenders and inter-links with other databases, including VicRoads Registration and Licensing but not Interpose

NGIC –National Gang Intelligence Centre (USA)

NYGC – National Youth Gang Centre (USA)

NYGS – National Youth Gang Survey (USA)

NZ – New Zealand

Operation Khaki – Victoria Police Asian Squad Operation responding to an affray in Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne

Operation Northbank – Victoria Police Operation to address street robberies in Melbourne Central Business District

RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police

Taskforce Echo – Victoria Police Taskforce Investigating Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs

UK – United Kingdom

USA – United States of America

VPID – Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The existence of street gangs in Victoria is becoming more widely known within the community, particularly through the media Community perceptions of public safety, rightly or wrongly are being affected. The present public concern is the capability and capacity of Victoria Police to deal both with the emergence of new crime threats to the community, and to identify and effectively use new policing tools and techniques. This view will be argued in the context of the evolving presence of street gangs in Victoria. The force has an opportunity to become a key agent for change via new methodologies for tackling this issue, through a collaborative multidisciplinary approach and the application of restorative and transformative justice.

As street gangs are an unknown quantity in Australia and at this point a growing concern not necessarily an immediate threat (Lozusic, 2002), we have an opportunity to address current issues and not be complacent. Victoria Police has recognized that youth (up to age 24 years) are overrepresented in our crime statistics, with this age group being responsible for 47 per cent of Victorian crime statistics (Victoria Police Child & Youth Strategy, 2009-2013). Not identified within this document is any link with this overrepresentation to street gang behaviour, even though the National Survey of Community Satisfaction within Policing (2011-12) indicates a 27% Victorian Community concern.

So what is a street gang? How are they identified, what are the problems that they present and what is the response to the problem? These are the first essential questions to be answered as "society needs objective investigations and evidence, not 'moral panic' – in short, facts, not fears" (Vigil, 2002, p.14). The primary purpose of this research is to provide

an empirically supported understanding of what Victoria Police frontline officers consider to be a street gang and determine a standardised operational approach to the identification and recording of gang membership / behaviour.

1.2 Academic Value

This research is the first of its kind conducted in Australia using the views of police officers as its source of data analysis and, in addition to contributing new knowledge to the field, its value will be to provide Victoria Police with the core foundation for collecting intelligence as to the presence of street gangs and identifying street gang behaviour. Although the thesis is written from a policing perspective, (tacit knowledge of the interviewed police officers) it is equally relevant in informing other multidisciplinary agencies as an identification and response guide. In addition, it will be the foundation for further research and debate into the street gang phenomena (Hagedorn, 2008; Petersen, 2000; White, 2008b).

1.3 Rational for this Research

As a senior crime manager within the Victoria Police Crime Command, I am interested in examining issues of gang culture in a policing context, as the concept of gang culture is a perplexing one and often difficult to define. Whilst I have worked closely in investigative team environments throughout my 38 years of policing, including 11 years specialising in the field of street gangs, I have a sense of what the demands of a policing environment involve and it is hoped that this knowledge and experience, married with research, can be used to understand the evolving street gang phenomena.

I was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to conduct research in England, Hong Kong, Canada and America for eight weeks, on the topic of Community Strategies to Prevent Further Entrenchment of Criminal Youth Gangs (Boyle, P., 2005). Interviews were conducted with academics, police officers, social workers, probation officers and legal

professionals, experienced in the research, prevention, detection, apprehension, and prosecution of street gang members.

Previously, I have also undertaken research and analysis with other law enforcement and non-government agencies in Los Angeles including the Los Angeles Police Department, the California Gang Association and with Father George Boyle, a Jesuit Priest and founder of Homeboy Industries, a centre focused on support for gang-involved persons, was also undertaken. These opportunities informed me in developing the foundations on which the current study has been built.

Due to the limited knowledge of police officers to recognise street gang presence, (Grossman & Sharples, 2010; White, 2008a) the researcher developed a basic introductory training session to aid in gang identification. This session has been presented throughout Australia (AUS) and New Zealand (NZ) to all police forces, the Australian Crime Commission (ACC), the Australian Institute of Professional Intelligence Officers, Department of Human Services and the Department of Justice – Youth Corrections. These sessions further supported the proposition that investigative, correctional and social support agencies were struggling with understanding what they were dealing with.

This was the motivation for undertaking this thesis, whilst remaining mindful that the debate on the issue is complex and divided. Firstly, minimal research has been undertaken within Victoria with regards to police training and the police interoperability with other professionals in the investigation and management of street gang behaviour cases. Secondly, there is a general perception within Victoria Police literature, that Victoria Police has little or no knowledge about street gangs. Thirdly, street gang investigations require a multidisciplinary focus therefore, police training needs to reflect this position. Finally, street

gangs are causing much uncertainty and misunderstanding amongst professionals dealing with youth behavioural issues.

1.4 Understanding the Unknown

There is a perception that youth gangs are an emerging problem although there is little empirical research regarding how gangs exist, in what form, and the criminal offences committed by them (White, 2004). Australian research by White, Perrone, Guerra, and Lampugnani (1999) has provided some indicators of social dynamics of group formation and racial tensions through marginalization. Their analysis suggests that political and economic conditions exist for the potential growth of gang behaviour. But what is a gang and how is it defined? Police officers regularly identify gang activity and persons associated with gangs based on their opinions without following any standard operational assessment. These opinions are the subject of this thesis, to determine what police officers consider to be representative of gang activity or involvement. The research will also consider characteristics such as gender, age grouping, ethnicity, and territoriality as identified by participating officers as being pertinent to gang identification and compare these data with findings of research conducted in other jurisdictions both nationally and internationally.

1.5 Responding to the Knowledge Gap

The primary purpose to this research was to illuminate the void in police intelligence holdings relating to street gang presence in Victoria by gaining baseline tacit knowledge from police officers' exposed to street gang behaviour, define the police role in these cases and identify the deficit in knowledge and skills required to appropriately collect intelligence and respond. It was evident that there is a significant knowledge barrier and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach as revealed in the United States of America (USA) studies

(Decker & Winkle, 1996; Klein, 1995; Valdez, 2005) was seen as focal to the success of any strategy to address gang issues.

A Victoria Police priority is to address recidivism by criminal offenders and the organisation is responding to this issue through the introduction of the Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine (2012). This model requires officers to be pro-active in their intervention but in the case of street gangs, this 'one size fits all response' may not be effective if officers do not understand street gang behaviour. As with any criminal investigation, competent and confident police intervention and questioning is paramount combined with an understanding of the culture and dynamics associated with the matter under investigation (O'Connor, 2011).

This research seeks to identify police training requirements in order to improve service delivery by Victoria Police. It also has wider applicability with our community partners.

1.6 Gang Presence – A Growing Concern

The existence of street gangs in Victoria is not a recent phenomenon. Both historically and currently, street gangs have a strong geographical identifier to their formation. The exact number and size of street gangs is difficult to quantify due to their lack of structure, fluidity and an ad-hoc identification of members and associates by police. There are a number of factors influencing the evolution or formation of a street gang, referred to as 'push-pull' factors. The 'push' factors repel people from mainstream society and the 'pull' factors draw them toward the criminality of the street gang culture (Decker & Van Winkle, 2006).

Within the USA, it is estimated that there are 29,400 street gangs consisting of 756,000 members within 3500 law enforcement jurisdictions, (National Youth Gang Survey, 2010). These figures are based on replies from 85% (2158 agencies) of the 2254 surveyed.

This survey reports that these statistics are unchanged in the past 5 years indicating that any

response is not having any real impact. In contrast, the 2011 National Gang Threat

Assessment, undertaken by the National Gang Intelligence Centre (NGIC) reports that

1,140,344 are members of 30,313 street gangs within all 50 US states.

The difference in estimates is based on varying methodologies: one uses survey data

evidence collection and the other uses multiple data point extraction to corroborate the

intelligence gleaned. The evidence derived by the NGIC is from Law Enforcement Agencies

(LEA) and open source, along with online reporting through a repository and dissemination

hub at NGIC. An additional 709 LEAs were also surveyed compared to the National Youth

Gang Survey (NYGS) figures. Both reports discuss the impact gang presence has on the

community, particularly relating to violent crime and more noticeably homicide, with the

figure of 2020 deaths in 2010 (National Youth Gang Survey 2010, April 2012). These

statistics from the USA, though in conflict, reveal the extent of the problem that is

confronting LEAs.

Australia, in comparison, has no empirical evidence as to the presence of street gangs

(Lozusic 2002; Perrone & White, 2000; White, 2004), including numbers and types of crime

committed, though Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCGs) activity is recorded. Australasian

Police intelligence indicates that there are an estimated 40 (OMCGs) in Australia with 6000

members and increasing, (Detective Inspector I. Campbell Victoria Police, personal

communication, May 9, 2014) with concerns that street gangs are being cultivated as a source

of recruitment (T. Channer, Intelligence Analyst, Western Australia Police, personal

communication, February 28, 2013).

1.7 Community Perceptions of Safety

Dealing with the fear of crime has become a key issue for Victoria Police as much as dealing with crime itself. Improving community safety, whilst driving down crime, is seen as a core policing function. The perception of violent crime within the Victorian community (though not linked to a gang incident) was demonstrated recently by 30000 people silently expressing their concerns and outcry of the murder of Jillian Meagher at Brunswick (Wells, 2012).

An examination of persons within Australia indicates a perception that violent crime is on the increase and although homicide and armed robbery have been on the decline, assault figures increased by 40% Australia wide between 1998-2008 (Bricknell, 2008).The Australian Bureau of Statistics-Crime Victimisation Survey for 2011-12, shows a further increase on reported incidents of assault by 44% on the previous reporting year. The increase in incidents could be attributable to greater public awareness and confidence in reporting, particularly family violence, or there could be an increase because of other reasons as yet unknown?

Taking this into consideration males in 2009/10 were victims of assault at a rate of 837 per 100,000 compared to females at 675 per 100,000. Males were found to be usually the victim of an assault by a peer or stranger and women by a family member through domestic violence. Both genders were more susceptible to assault in the 15 -24 year age group at 1.760 victims per 100,000 (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2011). It is estimated that nationally, 51% of assault and 48% of robbery incidents are not reported to police, indicating inconsistency in the reported data (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011-12).

The 2011-12 National Survey of Community Satisfaction within Policing (NSCSP), reports that 27% of Victorians perceived gangs to be a problem in their neighbourhood. Though a 4.1% decrease from 2010/11, Victoria Police's national ranking for this problem at

fifth has not changed from the previous period and remains well above the national average. This community perception based data is not supported by any statistical evidence to validate this perceived problem only the occasional quotes by the media, researchers, and politicians, usually based on violent crime data rather than specific data on gang crime. Problematically, it has been argued that incorrect reporting by the media has caused myths that are accepted as fact (Campbell & Julian, 2009; Klein, 2007; Lozusic 2002; Perrone & White 2000; White, 2002).

Street gang behaviour is commonly linked to acts of violence (White, 2013) such as robbery and assault and these crimes also linked to perceptions of safety, usually occur on a street, road or footpath. The Victoria Police Crime Statistics for 2011/12 report that assaults increased by 1.3% in 2011/12, 23.6% of these offences occurring on the street, a decrease of 0.5%. Forty-two per cent of robberies also occurred in this location (1379) and though robbery decreased by 2.0% (3286) the figures have been a constant since 2007/08. Alarmingly 40.3% of robbery offenders were juveniles (Under 18 years of age). Armed robberies accounted for 48.6% (1597) of all robberies a 3.9% increase, a knife being weapon of choice in 50.7% of incidents, 17% being firearms an increase of 10.1%. Unarmed robberies accounted for 1689 incidents of all robberies, a decrease of 7.0%.

Two locations were regarded as the lowest perceived safety level, walking in the neighbourhood at night and public transport also at night, both public places and common locations for street gang presence. Victoria ranked above the national average in third place at 61.7% regarding neighbourhood safety and sixth for public transport safety at 38.2% and below the national average.

1.8 The Research Process and Questions

A grounded theory approach was applied by the researcher resulting in the collected data being analysed according to the methods used in the grounded theory model. An analysis was then conducted of each individual interview and themes were developed based on the interpretation of the tacit knowledge held by the police officers who had varied experience in this field. To support this research, eight questions were developed to explore the participants' understanding of what they considered to be a street gang. These questions also identified the circumstances and the participants' exposure to street gangs, the age, gender, and location of the membership they witnessed, and in addition, what would assist persons to confidently identify and record street gang presence. National and international literature in this field was then drawn upon and contextualised, particularly theoretical perspectives associated with crime and anti-social behaviour, communication and gang definitions were also examined including preventative strategies. The research includes the voices of the police as to their perceptions of street gang behaviour and includes their frustration and confusion in dealing with the persons they identified and the void in contemporary knowledge as to this phenomena within Victoria Police.

The forty-three police officers backgrounds were also analysed as to time in service, rank, gender, role and work location at the time of exposure to the subject of this research (refer Table 4.1). In addition, the average age, gender and ethnicity of those determined to be involved in street gangs was analysed (refer Tables 4.3 & 4.4).

The additional personal background data sought from the interviewees', the researcher considered had relevance in determining the context of how the police officers' varied tacit knowledge was gained, the relevance of rank and experience, the geographical locations of concern and the type of persons susceptible to gang involvement. This

information would contribute to the understanding of police training requirements and locations requiring a multidisciplinary response.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

1.9.1 Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter One explains the aim and rationale for the thesis, its structure and how the data was collected from various sources.

1.9.2 Chapter Two - Literature Review

Chapter Two is a literature review of national and international material that examines a number of theoretical perspectives associated with what is determined to be a street gang. It critically scrutinises literature that has studied the behaviour associated with street gangs, particularly those associated to community perceptions of safety – crime and anti-social behaviour. It then considers social assurance as to the theory of gang membership, with recruitment resulting in a sense of purpose and belonging and therefore social attachment through a sense of required identity, be it ethnicity, territory and or appearance. Also explored are the relevance of gender, entry and departure age from the gang and the relationship of leadership to organisation within the gang.

The role of social media and its dual purpose of communication and education are investigated in the context of gang culture and "youth status needs" (Klein & Maxson 2006, p.47). Linked to this are irresponsible media reporting resulting in public confusion and political response which outweighs the perceived threat to the community as supported by Australian research by Lozusic (2002) and White (2004). Finally it explores the organisational leadership required to address knowledge management through education and training within Victoria Police and the need for a collective community response.

1.9.3 Chapter Three – Methodology

This chapter explains the research structure used in this thesis. Constructivist grounded theory and positivism, provided a framework for the data collected through qualitative interviews and to support the emerging themes and theories elicited from the interviewees'.

The research aims, questions and methods used to collect and analyse the data including a debrief process with the interviewees' to validate the outcome of the interviews, is also examined. In addition, the process to gain authorisation from two ethic committees will be discussed.

1.9.4 Chapter Four - Description of the Analysis of Findings.

Chapter Four discusses the qualitative findings of the professionals interviewed who have experience and knowledge when investigating street gangs in Victoria. A contextual insight through a three phased analysis identifies the knowledge requirements for police who will be dealing with street gangs and associated behaviour.

1.9.5 Chapter Five - Discussion of Findings.

The aim of this chapter is to identify and draw conclusions from the qualitative interviews conducted with the police and applying the identified findings to the available literature. Identified opportunities are highlighted for Victoria Police to correctly assess record and respond to street gang presence.

1.9.6 Chapter Six – Conclusion

This chapter concludes and summarizes the key themes discovered during this research and in doing so addresses the questions formulated for this thesis. The limitations of the research and its strengths are discussed as to the need for further studies to support other perspectives as to what is a street gang.

The following chapter will review the varied opinions and evidence available within literature as to what constitutes a street gang.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a critical review of literature from Australia and overseas providing the reader with a level of understanding of the complexity in defining what is a street gang. From an Australian context, the level of research within this country "has barely moved beyond its infancy" (Perrone & White, 2000, p.2), White (2013) again confirming this statement. The researcher will provide a literature review of what is interpreted as a street gang. An examination of the Victoria Police contemporary policing approach and its relevance to this phenomena will be discussed in conclusion.

2.2 Background Details and Research Interest

The issue of gangs has attracted substantial media attention in Australia in recent times, mainly in the context of violence. For example, the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) and the Victorian, South Australian and New South Wales Police Departments, have recently been very overt in acting upon issues of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCG).This is also discussed by many theorists who sometimes link OMCG recruitment through Youth 'Street' Gangs particularly in NZ (Gilbert, 2013).The ACC in 2007 recognized the emergence of street gangs in Australia and gathered national and international experts to discuss the phenomena (Changing Face of Youth Gangs Forum).

2.3 What is a Street 'Youth' Gang?

The diverse concerns of those who have studied youth gangs mean that what they are looking at sometimes becomes conflated with what they are looking for (Pitts, 2008, p.9).

So what is a street gang? How a street gang is identified will determine the response to the problem (Gilbert & Newbold, 2006) and this is the first essential question to be

answered as street gangs are still arguably a growing concern since Lozusic reported her findings in 2002.

If there is no agreed definition or descriptor, how does an organisation like Victoria Police tailor a response? The need to address the definitional issue pertaining to street gangs is a priority as it will allow for a "useful and acceptable approach" (Klein & Maxson, 2006, p.4). Lack of consensus has plagued the field since Thrasher (1927) first published his extensive research of 1313 gangs in Chicago. Professor Robert White observes that the field needs to work out which way it is heading (2002) as also reported by McCluskey (2013).

My use of the descriptor 'street gang' is based on my experience and is supported by Cox, (2011); Petersen, (2000) and Pitts, (2008) who argue that to use the descriptor 'youth gang' is limiting the target audience - gang members - to a particular age group. The descriptor 'street gang' allows for the inclusion of all ages, and though the majority of membership will be in the 10-24 age group (Miller, 1992) it is a misnomer to use the term youth gang (Valdez, 2009). In addition, their behaviour and activities are linked to the 'street' and therefore the term street gang is more relevant and identifiable. This term was also agreed on by participants at the Australian Crime Commission Forum, The Changing Face of Youth Gangs (ACC Forum, 2007). It was accepted that this descriptor was identifiable with its origin in the USA and its replication had been observed in the United Kingdom (UK) and NZ, and more recently Australia (AUS). For the purpose of this research the definition of youth will be linked to the Victoria Police Child and Youth Strategy (2009 – 2013) which defines youths as persons aged under the age of 24 years.

The Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP) (Victoria Police, 2000) , records persons associated with gang activity as defined and determined by the police officers investigating, based on their opinions without formal operational assessment, and

further supports the need to have a common descriptor, if any formal research is to be

undertaken.

2.4 Street Gang – Surveying Definitions

The descriptor 'street gang' has always been linked to the USA and that is where the

difference starts as to its meaning to other countries and its comparable presence. Thrasher's

1927 Chicago study has led to a substantial library of material over the following nine

decades and this will continue with the evolvement of street gangs in other countries.

The 1974–75, National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS) was the first national research to

quantify the USA gang problem. Undertaken by Miller (as cited Curry and Decker, 2003,

p.18) and based on research he conducted in 12 large USA cities, he constructed the

following definition:

> *A gang is a group of recurrently associating individuals with identifiable leadership and*
> *internal organization, identifying with or claiming control over territory in the*
> *community, and engaging either individually or collectively in violent or other forms of*
> *illegal behaviour (Miller as cited Curry and Decker, 2003, p.18).*

A number of noted scholars in the USA, UK and Australia, Hagedorn (1988), Klein

(1971), Pitts (2008) and White (2013), have made significant contributions to the literary

knowledge bank and the answer to what is a gang, is still differed in opinion (Diaz, 2009,

p.10). Gang theorists Klein and Maxson (2006) illuminate the difficulty in defining street

gangs, and it is only now only through the Eurogang Conference, established in 1998, that

'some' scholars in this field came to a consensus on a definition for research purposes.

Confusion still reigns though amongst many avid scholars particularly in the United

States, where gangs are recorded in all fifty States (National Gang Threat Assessment, 2011)

and common consensus still has not been reached (Curry & Decker, 2003; Klein 2007;

Thrasher, 1927; Valdez, 2009,). A qualitative study of 44 male gang affiliated prisoners in the

UK (Harris, Turner, Garrett and Atkinson, 2011) also revealed differing views, adding further

to the mixed consensus on gang constitution. Australia is also not immune to this penumbra

(Perrone & White, 2000; White, 2002).

The following are the opinions of three USA academics Thrasher (1927), Decker and

Van Winkle (1996), Valdez (2009) and Hallsworth and Young (2004) of the UK as to what

they consider constitutes a street gang:

> *The gang is an interstitial group originally formed spontaneously, and then integrated*
> *through conflict. It is characterized by the following types of behaviour: meeting face to*
> *face, milling, movement through space as a unit, conflict, and planning. The result of this*
> *collective behaviour is the development of tradition, unreflective internal structure,*
> *esprit de corps, solidarity, morale, group awareness, and attachment to a local territory*
> *(Thrasher 1927).*

And:

> *A gang is an age graded peer group that exhibits some permanence, engages in criminal*
> *activity, and has some symbolic representation of membership (Decker & Van Winkle,*
> *1996).*

And:

> *1. Any group of three or more;*
>
> *2. That has some type of association;*
>
> *3. Common Identifier;*
>
> *4. Committing crime: misdemeanour or felony (Valdez, 2009);*

And finally:

> *The Gang - A relatively durable group, predominantly street-based group of young*
> *people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernible group for whom*
> *crime and violence is integral to the group's identity (Hallsworth & Young, 2004).*

What is a gang has been a perplexing question for some time and an agreeable answer

has not been one that has reached consensus in Australia, so as to move forward and collect

evidence based on a united decision. It is not a simple answer and one that is taken further by

Curry and Decker (2003, p.2) who suggest that two other questions need to be answered, "Who is a gang member" and "What is a gang crime".

In 1998, the first Eurogang conference was held in Germany and consisted of scholars from the USA and Europe who met to exchange gang knowledge with the idea of developing comparative studies (Decker& Weerman, 2005). To do so, an agreed workable definition was developed by them to ensure the focus of the research was based on applied measures:

> *A street gang is any durable, street-orientated youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part of its group identity (p.12).*

Part of the problem was determining an "operational definition" (Klein, Kerner, Maxson, & Weitkamp, 2001, p.12) due to the evolving nature of street gangs. How, why and in what circumstances are street gangs formed and what are their activities which supports Curry & Decker's (2003) question.

Pitts (2008) takes this discussion further as to prescribing a gang definition and prefers a descriptor. He considers that a gang definition is inhibited by demographics, history and the knowledge that as neighbourhoods change so does the social culture within it.

> *Definition by its very nature, restricts the focus of enquiry, whereas description and explanation imposes no such limits, being bounded only by the intellectual and imaginative powers of the describer and explainer (Pitts, 2008, p.10).*

Cox's (2011) literature review as to the varying definitions within the UK, US, Europe and Canada, dispelled any myth of gang absence in the UK. Her recommendations (p.19) stressed the "outdated theories" from the USA and the UK, promoting greater UK research to enable contemporary theories on gang existence and to establish a national definition and therefore a national approach. Pitts (2008) inhibitive theory as to the use of a definition, is a reminder, that the use of out-dated theories has resulted in "inappropriate responses" (Cox, p.i), as a descriptor allows the flexibility to suit local demographics.

As mentioned, some scholars have developed a single definition, whilst others have put their view into categories – a climbing scale or progression which tends to cover all factors (White, 2002).Various legislation throughout the USA does not agree in totality as to what is a gang, though there are some factors that are similar (Boyle, P., 2005; Cox, 2011). The stipulation within some USA legislation as to the characteristics that constitute a gang; name, structure, clothing as an example, enables a gang to operate outside those boundaries to escape prosecution.

Putting a distinct identification as to what is a gang is problematic. Does a gang differ from that of the USA, UK, NZ, or AUS? Yes it does, and there lies the problem. The influencers behind the formation of those gangs in those countries differ as does the types of crimes committed and how crime and behavioural issues are the core element of why they are distinguished as a gang.

2.5 The Core – Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, Appearance and Recruitment

2.5.1 Crime and anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behavioural issues, violence and criminal activity in social spaces, are constant descriptors used to differentiate a gang from a peer group. Research undertaken in Brimbank, Victoria, Australia by Grossman and Sharples (2010) of 500, 15-19 year olds, supported the views of the police officers I interviewed, that these behaviours were key factors in defining a gang from a group. A third of the Brimbank participants also reported personally encountering this behaviour and a fifth of them being victims of violence in public. Klein (1971) supports this delinquency view of gangs as being a tangible make up of a street gang, as does USA law enforcement in response to the NYGS (2010).New Zealand research by Gilbert and Newbold (2006) recommend caution in this finding. They consider that as criminality is seen as the problem therefore the response is left to the responsibility of

the police instead of a coordinated community approach to identify the symptoms of gang

formation (McCluskey, 2013; Newton-Small, 2011).

White (1999, 2007b) explains that social space and young people's presence in a

group increases detection, this aligned with a rebellious behaviour towards social norms,

draws the attention of the public and therefore perceptions of safety. Lee (as cited in Lee &

Farrell, 2009) explains that the " 'discovery' of the fear of crime" (p.32) was the outcome of

a scenario based, victimisation survey, conducted 47 years ago and is one that is still

measured today. To respond to public concern, McAtamney and Morgan (2009) suggest that

due to the varying reasons and complexities that lead to anti-social behaviour, the "symptoms

and cause" (p.5) must be examined so that a response based on local community perceptions

can be developed.

McGee, Wickes, Corcoran, Bor, and Najman's (2011) longitudinal study of children

from birth to 14 years of age in Brisbane, Australia, showed that a predictor of anti-social

behaviour was linked to familial factors, school attendance, signs of early child aggression

and the availability of associated programs to assist, and how this differed for individuals and

families when comparing neighbourhoods (Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Battin-Pearson, 1999).

These predicators were also common findings in remote indigenous communities with links

to gang membership (Cunningham, Ivory, Chenhall, McMahon & Senior, 2013).

Other studies have also suggested that gang membership is linked to higher crime

rates (Curry & Decker, 2003; Thrasher, 1927; Valdez 2009; White, 2002) and that violence is

an important tool to reinforce their status and belonging (Spergel, 1995).White in support of

this theory, found that; "violence is a major shaping factor in the genesis of youth gangs. It is

also a major defining feature of the activities of these groups" (White, 2008b, p.140).

Research in criminal behaviour and its link to human evolution and genetics has compared

the violence of street gangs to that of the behaviour of chimpanzees to explain human

criminal behaviour, according to Wrangham and Wilson (as cited Ayling, 2011).

Recreational violence or violence for violence sake was a constant report by the

interviewees. Harris, et al. (2011, p.20) refer to this activity as being in furtherance of the

social cohesion they thrive within the gang and a "forced choice" requirement for validation

and sustention of membership. Klein (2007) looks to violence as a "unifier" (p.52) and

considers that it is a lesser part to their overall criminal activity but essential to serving status

and identity. Klein speculates that unification, through violence, may not be as high in

Europe due to lower recorded violence levels compared to the USA.

The reverse to this theory are the notions of actual enjoyment of the act itself, the

status of being feared and legitimising violence based on protection and financial need

(Medical News Today, 2007). White (2008b) discusses the prevalence of violence in a

person's life transpiring to normality, and a "natural enjoyment" (p.152) the gang being in

furtherance of the means to express that violence, collectively resulting in mutual benefit.

Protection of territory was witnessed as a leisure activity through the ritualization of inter-

gang fighting to maintain respect (Kintrea, Bannister, Pickering, Reid and Suzuki, 2008,

pp.12-20).

Recent reporting in the Age newspaper (Oakes, 2012) supports the concern that

robbery victims, though compliant, are still the subject of group violence by the perpetrators.

In a controversial approach, contrary to the norm, Victoria Police Deputy Commissioner

Cartwright confirmed that though this violence was not restricted to one ethnicity, it was

prominent amongst the Sudanese and Somali youth. Assault in particular by both these

ethnicities constituted 29.5 per cent and 24.3 per cent respectively. In addition, their rate of

offending at 7109.1 (Sudanese) and 6141.8 (Somali) per 100,000 far exceeded that of the

broader population at 1301.0.

Prior findings by Owen & Sweating in 2007 discovered that violent victimisation has also been linked to offending behaviour in young people in the UK (p.48).Their qualitative research involved 46 males and females aged 14-18 years, who had been violent offenders, victims of violence or the victim and the offender. In depth interviews exploring the pathways of their lives that had brought them into these categories, supported their prior literature reviews. Common to each category were negative experiences, such as being bullied, parental relationships, role models, high crime neighbourhood, and gang membership. Another form of self-legitimised violence was displaced retaliation, the perpetrator achieving a sense of justice by assaulting an innocent person as also discovered by Grossman and Sharples (2010) in their Melbourne based research.

2.5.2 Appearance

Gang membership can revolve around common needs and interests and these are varied according to White, et al. (1999). Social acceptance, a sense of belonging and comfort in being with those of like cultural identity are some of the familiar need factors for any individual. Common interests can extend to clothing, music, stylized hair, sport, and tattoos to name a few. These interests and needs are indicative of society but perceptions now weigh in, as to what people interpret from witnessing this in a group setting. This indicia Valdez (2009, pp.75-94) describes as "symptoms of membership" (p.75) and though most will display indicia, it is not always the case. There lies the problem of persons being singled out as a gang member because of indicia and others not, due to a missing perceived identifier.

These persons who do not meet the community, law enforcement or academic criteria are what Valdez (2009) considers as being part of his "10-10-80 theory" (p.57), which proffers that gangs have a minority membership and are involved in 8-10% cent of most of the violent crime. Formal academic studies and resulting models he considers is only

representative of 80% of the gang population, and the unknown membership who are the most active, represent the balance of 10%.

Unfortunately, perceptions of safety weigh strongly within communities and appearance can contribute to those perceptions. Group gatherings coupled with behaviour and style of dress, results in stereotyping by police, media, and the community (Lozusic 2002; Perrone & White 2000; White, 2002). This perception is challenged by Klein (2002) as to reality, explaining that there are a number of factors that have to be considered before a conclusion is reached and are not limited to; membership numbers, ages of its membership, self-recognition, and continuous participation in criminal activity so as to categorise the type of gang witnessed.

Clothing and what it represents, be it the idolisation of sporting heroes, actors or musical performers, has over time had a strong influence on youth, resulting in them portraying who or what they want to represent (Boyle, P. 2005). This is where the meaning behind the representation becomes blurred. The blurring effect is the interpretation of the witness who may combine this symbol of identity with various other characteristics; hand signs, language, music and all too often ethnicity.

All of these characteristics are questioned by Shelden, Tracey and Brown (2004, p.18) and they explain that 'perspective' differs in varying social settings, particularly ethnicity. Their research discusses the different interpretation and or heightened concern by witnesses including police, which may not be justified. Gilbert (2013) discusses this heightened sense in the response by police in NZ who imposed "blanket policing" (p.263) by misinterpretation of fashion against that of deliberate uniformity to mark presence. Valdez (2009, p.78) also discusses the various adaptions of clothing to fulfil a purpose - fear and intimidation, against that of social cohesion, trend; or lawful purpose as in the case of policing, nursing, fire brigade or the military.

This outer representation, be it hand signs or clothing can be representative to the markings and behaviour of animals and plants (Ayling, 2011). She discusses Felson's example of a wasp's markings that is used to warn off predators referring to symbolism through appearance by gang members "can help an ordinary boy attain a higher level of obnoxiousness" (as cited by Ayling, 2011, p.311).

2.5.3 Recruitment

The survival of a gang is based on recruitment and this can also be the case with an individual's need for the gangs existence, so they can be protected and therefore survive. The reasons are usually due to high anti-social influences, which include parents, neighbourhood, peers, and their educational attainment (Hill, Liu, &Hawkins, 2001). Hill's et al. (2001) 16 year longitudinal study of 808 youth in Seattle to find causal factors of why some youth join a gang and others don't, also found that violent crime and the use of drugs by gang members far exceeded that of non-gang members. One hundred and twenty four of the youth interviewed became gang members and were particularly vulnerable to membership at aged 15 upon entering high school.

Shelden's et al., (2004, pp.79-81) research also revealed various recruitment strategies by gangs:

> *Self-promotion through a social event where potential members are invited and evaluated mainly on bravado or skill sets they needed;*
>
> *Tradition and therefore, persons being placed in a position of obligation due to generational factors and local community protection (supported by Cunningham et al., 2013); and,*
>
> *In times of urgency due to dwindling numbers and therefore vulnerability to takeover, coercive pressure is used via threats and intimidation to them or their family.*

The question as to a gang's purpose is varied but essentially there is a bond within the group based on mutual friendship and this bond is sometimes cemented by the use of badging

and therefore identity. In furtherance of a gang's identity, territoriality can have a role to play linked to ethnicity based on cohabitation.

2.6 Purpose – Bond and its Link to Ethnicity, Badging and Territoriality

The initial bonds of the gangs derive from the response to exclusions.

(Klein, 2007, p.50)

2.6.1 Bond

A sense of shared purpose or belonging is constantly referred to throughout literature as the starting point of membership within a gang (Klein, 2007; Valdez, 2009; & Vigil, 2008) Whyte's 1943 study of a slum in Boston, USA, home to Italian immigrants who formed various gangs, found that "the lack of social assurance on the part of its members contribute toward producing a very high rate of social interaction within the group" (p.256). He found that this also fostered a sense of obligation to each other resulting in group cohesion.

Spergel (1995) found "The gang represents an available structure of social attachment and connection during a period of adolescent identity crisis" (p.168). The vulnerable nature of these individuals is further explained as "personal disorganization" (p.163) due to the limited development of social interaction skills and behavioural control.

This sense of a need for familial cohesion and friendship is usually associated with varying factors or culture, resulting in doubt of self-worth, making gang entry attractive as you are amongst others of similar breeding. Thrasher (1927) and White et al. (1999) explain that the gang is a way of addressing their perceived cultural and structural problems and can be comforted by being with persons of like culture or ethnicity.

2.6.2 Ethnicity

When discussing migration, van Gemert, et al., (2008) reveal that though migration has been linked to gang formation "albeit often implicitly" (p.5), it is the second generation

of immigrants that are more involved in criminal activity than the first and subsequent. Vigil (2008) in support of this finding, states that this group has a tendency to rebel and band together as they do not feel that they are being accommodated due to cultural repression.

Whilst this observation is an American setting, Mukherjee's (1999, pp.118-120) research on ethnicity and its link to crime was unable to confirm if these facts were similar in Australia due to there being no national data. Victoria police being the only state authority at that time recording ethnicity at arrest and on the national database based on imprisonment (p.49).

Another barrier to data collection was the concern of sensitivity and the possibility of "misuse or misinterpretation" (Mukherjee, p.120) of this data leading to the risk of criminalising ethnicity. White supports this concern, as any police or community response tailored to such data must be sensitive to the "implicit and explicit social issues" (2004a, p.1). Campbell and Julian warn that, "The use of ethnicity as a predictor of behaviour can trigger a dangerous process of creating assumptions about refugees that simplify a set of complex processes" (2009, p.11). The facts are though, that 25% of the Australian population is born overseas and 20% have a parent in that category (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Mukherjee (1999, pp.120-122) responds that by not doing so, we are left with unfounded assumptions and though he lists ten points of justification for the collection of data, the inability to recognise the vulnerability of younger members of ethnic groups over others, has a strong relation to addressing gang deterrence. The need to recognise vulnerable ethnic youth is reinforced by Deputy Commissioner Cartwright's concerns (Oakes, 2012) supported by Victoria Police statistical evidence.

The marginalization of Mexican immigrants in the USA was the impetus for Moore (1991) and Vigil's (1988) extensive research on Chicano youth (Mexican American) who

were economically isolated from mainstream Los Angeles, positioned in a housing project

called the barrio. Friendship groups as with any age grouping were primary and developed

into a normal practise of hanging out and though gang membership was not forced, fear and

confrontation from others propelled them in. Structure and hierarchy within the gangs was

not evident though age had some minimal bearing.

2.6.3 Territoriality

> *A Social system through which control is claimed by one group over a defined*
> *geographical area and defended against others (Bannister, et al.2008, p.9).*

Usually a gang is from a like neighbourhood which has facilitated the partnership due

to common meeting places or school and this has brokered the friendship (Decker & Van

Winkle, 1996; Thornberry, Krohn, Lizotte, Smith & Tobin, 2006; Whyte, 1943).Whyte

(1943) explores inhabitancy in its relevance to territory as not always being the case, as some

who do not have access to this local partnership can come from neighbouring areas to join.

Territoriality has been identified as one of the roots of gang behaviour in the USA but

its significance is just starting to emerge in the UK (Bannister et al. 2008, p.15). Presently

over 200 locations across the UK are tackling territorial behaviour issues through Anti-

Territorial Projects which involve diversionary, education, culture and conflict resolution

programs. Six locations were selected by Bannister et al. to research territorial behaviour as

to its constraint on youth and its impact on communities.

Their research revealed varying factors associated with territoriality and not all were

negative and gangs were not the only expression of territoriality. A sense of pride and respect

from others, its' link to culture, historical roots and friendship and with this solidarity, were

common. This sense of solidarity in the locations studied, led to gang violence based on

border protection, mainly by boys aged 13-17 years and males in their 20s who used

territorial control for criminal purposes. Klein (2007) when comparing territoriality in the

USA and the UK reports that gang access to firearms in the USA results in severe outcomes (95% firearm homicide link). The UK due to stringent firearms laws does not have such a causal link to homicide, the most common weapon of choice being a sharp instrument (Home Office Statistical Bulletin, 2010/11).

Though gangs have been associated with territoriality it does not mean that all gangs are territorial and it is another form of misidentification based on demographics (Young as cited, Bannister et al. 2008).

2.6.4 Badging

What can be part of the identity process is badging, an identifier linking you to the gang that you adopt as part of your ownership to this exclusive membership and usually replicated from American gang culture. Commonly it is the gang name, your nickname within the gang, clothing, tattoo, graffiti, or any agreed identifier. Valdez explains it as, "An extension of a way of thinking that is based in the gang psychology" (2009, p. 75). Though common, it cannot be relied upon as evidence of gang membership.

The distraction in thinking based on indicia is common and Valdez (2009) qualifies street gang presence as behavioural and a tendency for some to now move away from these physical identifiers to camouflage their presence and this supports his 10.10.80 theory. K. McCluskey (personal communication, March 19, 2013) adds further to Valdez's non indicia theory, witnessing in Glasgow that poverty did not allow for American stylized identifiers and she relied totally on behavioural presence, particularly acute violence.

Street culture, being the inclusion of various street gang characteristics with strong emphasis on dress, hand signs, speech, and music, White describes as being just one part of what could be gang related behaviour. He is also mindful of social fads through copycat behaviour and stresses the importance of also noting "criminal, conflict and retreat activity"

(White, 2002, p.2). The reasons or purpose of these activities are varied and not necessarily limited to the gang's sole purpose.

The street gangs in NZ are given the title by the police of 'ABC gangs' (Hewitt, 2007) as they shorten the name of their gang to an acronym. As some street gangs in Melbourne have used postcodes to signify their name and territory, Hewitt reports that the telephone prefix is the alternative in NZ. The display of hand signs, the wearing of baggy pants combined with baseball caps and coloured bandannas and using the language of the rapper culture are found to be a common gang feature in Manukau, NZ, (Callinan, 2007). Symbols or words representing the name of their gang or their motto on clothing or through graffiti were features of numerous gangs.

Gilbert and Newbold (2006) reported that since the 1990s, NZ youth gangs have copied the Los Angeles gang setting and they predicted if these gangs mature, they may be more violent and organised than other youth gangs in past NZ history. This has continued to present day with prison records of 609 imprisoned street gang members compared to 399 in 2011(Johnston, 2013). Klein's (2007) research supports Gilbert and Newbold's concerns, by comparing present day to his over four decades of experience in this field and the changes since Thrasher's research in 1927.

Unfortunately badging, particularly clothing, all too often is seen as prima facia evidence of gang involvement. History has shown this has been repeated when persons dressed in clothing not of the norm is sighted, resulting sometimes in moral panic. Zoot Suits in the early 1940s were a badge of rebellion and worn by Mexican Americans who did not want to fit in and by others in a display of extravagant style (Vigil 2008, Diaz, 2009).The wearing of the suit by a few, "stereotyped an entire community" resulting in an "us versus them attitude" culminating in the Zoot Suits Riots on June, 3rd 1943, lasting seven days (Valdez, 2009, p.103). Diaz, (2009, pp. 78-79) found that the riotous response to the display

of lavish oversized clothing by Mexican Americans when fabric was limited, was an excuse

to disguise racial hatred due to the misguided belief that these citizens were avoiding

enlistment in the war effort, culminating in fights between military personnel who stripped

and beat the wearer.

2.7 Grouping – Gender, Age, Period of Gang Endurance and Membership Numbers

2.7.1 Gender

It is commonly agreed that gang membership comprises mainly males (Valdez, 2009;

Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence as cited Perrone & White, 2000). The outcome of

USA research conducted with police officers, social workers and academics have had mixed

thoughts on the impact or influence of girls within gangs or the presence of sole girl gangs

with varying views of 5% - 15% of the street gang population, (Boyle, G., personal

communication, July 25, 2008; Miller, 1975; Valdez, 2009). The NYGS (2010) shows a 5% -

8 % constant since 1998.

The role of the girl within male gangs is seen primarily as supportive, gathering

intelligence and as sex objects. Crimes committed by them tend to be one of property more so

than violence, they are subject to substance abuse and they tend to mature out of the gang life

earlier than males or abandon the lifestyle due to pregnancy (Moore, 1991). Interestingly

also, was the presence of girls within gangs that were not members but were attracted to its

existence or a person within the gang.

Father Greg Boyle of Homeboy Industries in Los Angeles (personal communication,

July 25, 2008) found that girls represented 5% of the overall gang population, "Stand alone

girl gangs are rare – they mainly belong to the guy gangs or are gang molls, those who date

the guys from the gangs". He considers that girl gang members have no defined role but are

almost always instigators, stirring up trouble and cajoling the males to act or respond to a

situation, questioning their manhood as they taunt and coax them to take care of their enemies.

The common thread of girl involvement in the gang life is similar to that of a male being a sense of belonging, self-esteem, protection and a need for family (Miller 2001; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Protection in the case of girls is particularly linked to sexual abuse in the home, the gang being an escape from this victimization (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). Poverty, family life, minority status are also familiar backgrounds for both genders (Shelden et al. 2004, pp. 61-67).

It appears that most of the research conducted on youth gangs has ignored or trivialized the presence of girl gangs (Cyr and Decker, 2003; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001,) and this has been persistent since Thrasher's research in 1927. Most of the limited research pertaining to female gang members (Laidler & Hunt, 2001) has been conducted by males and comments about their sexual behaviour (Salisbury, 1958) and the term by Thrasher (1927) "gang shag" (p.166), was revealed during interviews with male gang members. Their sexual behaviour has signified them as "bad girls" (Laidler & Hunt, p.657), and not their criminal role within the gang. The reliance on information that girls associated with gangs were only pawns for the male gang members to conceal weapons or for sexual activity is stereotypical.

Curry (1998) and Petersen (2000) found imposing a male view of female gang involvement as had been the case of Thrasher (1927), results in a non-feminist view and could be simply overcome by asking the subject of the gendered research themselves, resulting in a non-sexist view. Curry and Decker (2003) discuss the Thrasher "myths" (p.114) that impeded thinking for decades as to the role of girls within gangs.

Apart from Miller (1998; 2001) there is little information collected from female gang members as to their perspective on this topic. Petersen's (2000) study of 34 females detained

in a youth training centre in the USA, to examine their perspective of the difference between what is a gang and that of a peer group, is one that is unique in the area of female gang research. The catalyst for her research was that most gang policies were one of reaction, instead of the implementation of preventive measures.

Her ethnographic approach by placing herself as a volunteer within the institution built rapport and trust and resulted in a snowball affect where participants were inquisitive subjects and her findings credible. Perspectives varied with gang and non- gang members but the common theme was that criminal activity was the key element of belong to a gang but for purpose and not just for the "hell of it" (Peterson, 2000, p.147).

2.7.2 Age, endurance and membership

The age grouping within a gang can be quite broad and therefore the term street gang over youth gang allows for ages outside that of what is commonly defined as youth (Victoria Police Child & Youth Strategy, 2009-2013).Though it is agreed that the age of those within most street gangs is within the definition of youth, throughout the twentieth century the crux of any street gang definition has referred to the youth age group (Ayling, 2011).

The NYGS, 2010 reports that three of every five gang members are 18 years and over, a 15% reduction since 1998.Valdez (2009) reports that the average age of 14 to 30 years, are those that are regularly in police contact (60-75% of contact) though as young as eight and as old as 69 years has been recorded.

The ability to estimate street gang endurance or presence cannot be calculated in an Australian setting due to mixed messages as to what is a gang (Boyle, P., 2005; White, 2002). Inspector Jason Hewitt of the NZ Police commented, "They can form overnight and be gone the next day. Some of them we hear of once and never hear of again" (Callinan, 2007, p.32) further qualifies Boyle, P. and White's findings.

A Seattle study (Hill, et.al., 2001) from 1985 – 2001 of 808 youth, revealed that 13-18 years was the most likely entry age for gang membership and particularly at age 15 on entry to high school. Of the 124 who joined a gang, their membership time varied from less than a year, 69%, 16.9% for 2 years to 0.8% remained for 5 years. The factors that were present for those who endured past the first year of membership were those youth who exhibited violence, anti-social behaviour, and strong peer association.

At present Australian figures on gang presence is limited to Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (OMCGs). The strong focus on targeting and collecting OMCG data is due to their ever growing presence within legitimate industries; tattoo parlours, heavy transport and liquor retail. Their expanded presence is due to limited police attention over a significant period of time, particularly in Victoria as policing relied on incorrect opinions as to their link to organised crime (Commonwealth of Australia 2008, 28 October).

What is known and what is not known regarding street gangs is usually cyclical in response to media attention based on incidents of violence and robbery. Press releases naming street gangs spread across the Victorian Metropolis cannot be relied upon as to current presence and numbers and nor can Victoria Police intelligence due to an absence of classification processes. As Gilbert professes, "an informed view of the gangs is both necessary and overdue" (2013, p.vii).

2.8 Leadership – Its Relevance and Relationship to Organisation within the Gang

Some of the best work on leadership has arisen from the study of street gangs and other informal groups (Nicholls, 2002, p.33).

Leadership as an influence can be viewed in a panoply of settings: military, religious, political or tragedy, emergency or terrorism. Social psychologists, in their study of group processes, discovered that gang leadership is unpredictable. It is less likely to be based on physical strength or criminal prowess, than opportunism, verbal skills, and interaction (Klein

1971; 1995). Gemmill and Oakley's (as cited in Barker, 1997) view on social process

supports Klein, defining leadership in this context as "a social process … of dynamic

collaboration, where individuals and organisation members authorize themselves and others

to interact in ways that experiment with new forms of intellectual and social meaning" (1992,

p.124). Each gang member at some point may perform a leadership function (Gastil as cited

in Barker, 1997).

Ethnographic research by Ivory in 2009 (as cited Cunningham et al., 2013) in

Wadeye, Northern Territory, Australia, revealed that indigenous gangs had strong leadership.

Leadership selection was based on interrelationship, strategic thinking and importantly,

fighting skills. Cunningham, et al. discovered that within this selected population, the entry to

a gang was also linked to family "they didn't want to join a gang but had to due to kin

obligation" (Cunningham, et al. p.4).This sense of obligation led to the protection of territory

resulting in violence and also made exiting from the gang problematic. The familial link can

also be seen within organised crime (Australian Crime Commission, 2013) where violence is

used to settle family disputes on honour and status.

Decker and Van Winkle (1996, p.275) explain that many street gangs have situational

leadership due to group dynamics; others moving on from the gang or sub groups within the

gang, as autonomy from authority are a gang priority. The allegiance to a sense of family and

friendship within the group is the norm and leadership comes into being only based on

influence due to situational requirements, or 'fit for purpose'.

The common theme of influence is their acceptance by their peers as the leader and

there has been no form of bureaucratic process or discussion, they are just looked upon as the

person at that time that others have decided to follow. The leadership role is not one of self-

interest but in the interest of others. Burns (as cited in Nicholls 2002, p. 32) labelled this

"mutuality" of interest leadership, coercion or the exhibiting of authority is absent.

Vanderslice (as cited in Bryman, 1996) examined a similar collective and termed this situation as not leaderless but "leaderful" (p.284). Age graded leadership (Klein, 1971; 2007; Vigil, 1988,) is also commonly situated in gangs as a functional 'fit for purpose' position. An informal manner of leadership and supports the notion of spontaneous behaviour in response to an incident or issue rather than formal or organised planning.

Klein (2007) argues that any gang suppression tactic should be targeting the gang as a whole not centred solely on leadership. Klein and Maxson (2006) stress that gang leadership is not stable and there is a need to focus more on the commitment levels of the members to each other or others within the gang, therefore discovering the group politics and policies. Leadership based targeting will result in further cohesion as the gang recognizes this as an attack against everyone. In either case, targeting a leader will result in an eventual replacement and the gang continues on.

2.9 Communication – Social Media and its Dual Purpose

Globalisation through technology has allowed others to cross international borders not previously accessible (Ma Rhea, 2002), resulting in new cultural learning from those wanting their tradecraft to be known, inquired about, resulting in transference. Papachristos (2005), describes this "digital proliferation as having unlimited global potential" (p.4) and the difficulties of how its consequence is dealt with. Ayling explains that whilst most street gangs do not last, those "institutionalized" are evolving into criminal enterprise, availing themselves of all available tools including technology and therefore "internationalized" (2011, p.1).

Movies, music, and internet games, where it is played out exaggerated and glamorised (Hagedorn, 2008) was recorded as early as 1958 by Time magazine journalist Harrison Salisbury, who reported that teenagers were displaying "bravado and evil that are gleaned from television and the movies". Websites are dedicated to displaying the internal culture of

the gang and its iconography: photos, tattoos, hand signs, rules and regulations. Recruitment, communication, planning events or bragging about crimes committed, is a tool of this medium.

In the case of street gangs the term "cyber banging" (Valdez, personal interview, May 2, 2005) or "cyber gangs" (Valdez, 2005, pp.563-564) is synonymous with websites that are causing the diffusion of gang culture through iconography (Papachristos, 2005). Klein and Maxson (2006, p.47) in their pioneering research of gang culture over the past 40 years, add to this theory of gang diffusion through the internet by linking "economic and cultural marginality and youth status needs" as also being relevant factors.

These changes have impacted on the level and type of demand for policing services. Changes in technology and applied science provide the opportunity for new tools and practices for dealing with safety and crime problems. They also unfortunately present a new set of threats to society and its police. Information technology constitutes a new medium for old crimes and generates an opportunity for new forms of crime (Victoria Police Organised Crime Strategy, 2005-2009). In support of the findings from this strategy, Tassone, Martini, Choo and Slay's (2013) research on mobile device forensics, reveal that phones are now more representative of a personal computer, allowing rapid access to the 15 petabytes of new data generated every day.

In the early 1990s, there was a plethora of media and political outcries regarding the presence of ethic youth gangs in Melbourne. This moral political panic was lacking in substance as there had been no systematic research on ethnic youth gangs in Australia and as such, the political and media concerns were empirically untested (Lozusic, 2002; White, 2004).The media added to this hype through further glamorisation of this culture, resulting in replication and or modelling (Ayling, 2011, pp.18-20) going beyond that of mere adolescent interest. Incorrect media reporting causes further public confusion as to those gangs that are

actually criminal networks and those people that are dabbling in this phenomenon due to varying social factors and who eventually leave. The Australian media and political chants of the 1990s have returned to present time and as a consequence, appropriate research is required to address or allay fears.

Cox (2011) in support of the Australian scholars (Lozusic, 2002; White, 2004; Ayling, 2011) has found in her UK literary research that media frenzy coupled with community panic has resulted in an outrage out of the norm of the social setting. This has conceived government responses that have not addressed the needs of the individuals identified as being the cause of the perceived epidemic (Cox, 2011).

This is also being replicated in Australia, as perceived gang presence has brought political and social interest along with funding to 'solve the problem', as witnessed in the 2010 federal election with the leader of the opposition promising a 200 strong gang taskforce if elected, to address the growing concern (Coalition Election Policy, 2010). In 2013, the coalition suggestion has been acted on by the Labour Government (Jones, 2013) with state forces being required to put into place a National Anti-Gang Task Force. Simon (as cited in Pitts, 2008) describes this reaction as "Governing through Crime" (p.30), a means for the government to exploit media frenzy without necessarily assessing the actual problem. Lee concurs with Simon, "Politicians of varying hues are willing to politicise our fears" (2008, p.39). Both the UK and Australian responses are brought to bear by 'common theories' from alleged gang experts as to how or why these gangs were formed but neither are empirically supported.

The word 'gang' is also unfortunately further confused when used quite loosely in Australian folklore for Ned Kelly, with a romantic hue for Robin Hood, or when played out in the 1957 Broadway play, *Westside Story*. Gilbert and Newbold (2006) in their historical review of gang presence in NZ noted the strong American media influence in the 50's. Youth

targeted movies; *The Wild One* (1954), *Rebel Without a Cause* and *Blackboard Jungle* (1956), were either banned or censored as it was considered that they influenced juvenile crime.

Their findings reflect Cunningham et al. (2013) whose Australian research found indigenous gangs commenced in the 1980s due to a protective alignment to family and further evolved through music, movies and American gang influences. Valdez (2008) reports, that USA gang behaviour is the global model for gangs.

2.10 Experience – Knowledge and Awareness of Police

Since Sir Robert Peel created the first police agency in London in 1853, the core functions of policing have remained generally unchanged. Law enforcement, emergency management, public safety and order, and community policing are all reflected in policing today. The Victoria Police Blueprint (Victoria Police, 2012-15) is built on how service delivery will be accomplished and the action that will be taken to develop its people within the organisation to achieve those aims. The strategy underpins an organization that exhibits the characteristics of a capable organisation. Victoria Police has recognized that youth (up to age 24 years) are overrepresented in our crime statistics with this age group being responsible for 47% of Victorian crime statistics (Victoria Police Child & Youth Strategy, 2009-2013). Not identified within this document is any link with this overrepresentation to gang behaviour.

Chan (1999) acknowledges that there is a close relationship between the demands of police work and the existence of culture that manifests in the team orientated norm of policing. She explains that police culture is seen as functional to the survival and sense of security among officers working under unpredictable conditions. This bond provides a sense of reassurance that their colleagues will 'do their bit' in their working environment and assist

them when confronted by threats, external to the team. Unfortunately, that cultural paradigm has also been linked to police misbehaviour due to racial tension with African youth undermining public confidence in Victoria Police (Kaila, 2013; Milovanovic, 2010; O'Brien, 2013). Chief Commissioner Lay has reacted swiftly to address this concern with the introduction of a strategy, prepared and researched in consultation with the Victorian community. The paper 'Equality is not the same. Victoria Police Response to Community Consultation and Reviews on Field Contact Policy and Data Collection and Cross Cultural Training' (Victoria Police 2013) is a three-year plan to address the identified cross-cultural concerns and strengthen community expectations and trust.

Grossman and Sharples (2010) identified that police should understand the importance of the knowledge to differentiate between a group and a gang when dealing with public order. This is particularly important in a cultural setting when the presence of a large group is considered the norm in a Sudanese setting and not necessarily a threat. This awareness could be overcome through cross developmental training with police and young people both learning from each other as to boundaries (Victoria Police 2013).

Knowledge, awareness, and how to identify, and therefore address, gang behaviour and those responsible is not limited to the Victorian setting. In NZ, where gang presence in its various forms was born in the mid-1950s (Gilbert & Newbold, 2006), Gilbert (2013) discovered ignorance in NZ police officers who were acting on limited knowledge and presumption in response to the 2000 LA style gang culture they had not come to grips with.

2.11 Response – To Identify and Address Gang Presence

Street gangs are really an unknown quantity in Australia and at this point are a growing concern, not necessarily an immediate threat (Lozusic, 2002). As such, there is an

opportunity to address current issues including symptoms and not be complacent (Gilbert &

Newbold, 2006; McCluskey, 2013; HM Government, 2011).

Brand and Ollerearnshaw (2008) identified the need to understand that responding to

gangs and their criminality can only be effective if underlying drivers are understood (Ayling,

2011, White, 2007a) and addressed through a holistic intervention as police top down

responses will have a short term impact. Hewitt an Inspector with NZ Police (personal

communication, June 7, 2010) said that suppression alone in response to external pressures

was not the correct approach. Gilbert (2013), in his interview of Hewitt, questioning his hard-

lined response to an escalation in street gang related murders in 2006 was told, "we needed to

do something" (p.213).

A holistic approach has also been the psychology of the Strathclyde Violence

Reduction Unit (VRU) formed in Glasgow in 2005 in response to the United Nations

identifying Glasgow as the murder capital of Europe (Newton-Small, 2011).The courts,

charities, health education and councils were all identified as having a role in funding and

developing programs aimed at the young, as for too long it had been referred to the police to

address. By 2007, violent crime had been reduced by 49 %, "You have to start at the very

young as once they are past 13 there is not a lot of hope" K. McCluskey co-director of the

VRU (personal communication, March 21, 2013).

A strategic aim of contemporary law enforcement agencies is to provide a safe, secure

and orderly environment for their respective communities. However, many have concluded

that strategies based solely on law enforcement approaches are no longer sufficient to tackle

current and future crime and safety issues (Gilbert and Newbold, 2006). Indeed, the focus is

moving to the view that the community has a collective responsibility to create a safer

environment (McCluskey, 2013).

The Victoria Police 3 Year Strategic Plan, Victoria Police Blueprint 2012-15, has reinforced this approach and has a five-point focus on 'Effective Police Service Delivery, Improving Community Safety, Working With Our Stakeholders, Achieving Through Our People and Developing Our Business'. Indeed, evaluation against the five key focus areas of the Victoria Police 3 Year Strategic Plan is highly centred on police service delivery measured by priorities, outcomes, and actions.

Only one quantitative and partially qualitative evaluation has been conducted within Victoria Police by the State Intelligence Division to identify street gang presence in Victoria (The Nature and Extent of Youth Gangs in Victoria, 2008). The potential influence of this study could have been quite significant in conducting research to further support the data uncovered but it appears to have not been given a high priority and left till another day. One explanation is maybe that law enforcement agencies have adopted a disproportionate focus on crime reduction strategies as opposed to community confidence and reassurance strategies. In turn, this has resulted in evaluation approaches that have tended to focus on quantitative measures, usually associated with reported crime trends (Newburn, 2003).

Bammer (2010), in her research on policing serious crime, discusses dealing with the unknown and that the approach of addressing this issue is not through evidence of reduction. She discusses the requirement for understanding unknowns and developing alternatives to address them. Bringing together experts to exchange knowledge and experience to address the "myriad unknowns in social and environmental problems" (p.1) were her findings with Smithson (2008).Their research found that unknowns are handled in different ways by different disciplines and the challenges are not met through a singular approach but through group thinking.

This type of group thinking will also enable planning into the future to improve police practise through academic partnerships "designed to improve policing practice, including

initiating investigations and being the lead researchers, which is facilitated by masters and

PhD programs" (Bammer, 2010, p.5). The application of a "club sandwich approach" (p.158)

through the application of policing knowledge, research, evaluation and application will be

essential when dealing with uncertainty and is applicable at all ranks within policing.

Changes to the way in which police operate will have implications for the knowledge

skills and tools police possess. Intelligence driven policing requires an intellectual and

technological capability to collect, manage and analyse information and to put it to use in

operational decision-making (Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine, 2012). This is further

supported by Tait (2002), whose view is that as a crime trend is identified, responses need to

be developed as a priority so as to prevent such crime from becoming entrenched in the

community. This view can be taken in the context of street gangs. Problem orientated

policing requires police to be able to identify, analyse, and solve problems. Sherman's (2002)

view, is that evidence based policing requires an organisational capacity for research and

development through which to identify new, improved and validated policing practices.

Strategically, the identification of better policing practices through research, and their

dissemination through education and training, points to the need for alliances between

Victoria Police and the higher education system. Police will need to build on the recognition

of policing as an established applied discipline, within a police-teaching faculty, researchers,

learner journals, and associations (Bradley, 1996; Wood & Bradley, 2009).

Victoria police recognizes the need to embrace open-ended partnerships and alliances

with diverse groups and communities. There is a need to draw upon a wide range of skills and

competencies to achieve objectives. Importantly, the learning from the partnership process

can be invaluable and, if handled appropriately, the continuity of the relationship can extend

past the project timeframes (Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference, 2008)

It is important that the approach to this phenomena is holistic, going to the source to find answers (Petersen, 2000) so appropriate policy is developed from qualitative interviews with gang members past / present and non-gang affiliated youth so all perspectives are covered. Petersen's research is empirically rich and theoretically formed. It is obvious that her research is born of frustration that policy affecting others is not discussed with those who are the subject of it. Her view, that by not seeking consultation with the primary source, social issues are not addressed, as the outcome will be one of only "addressing the symptoms" (p.139).

2.12 Policing Leadership – To Address Reluctance and/or Concern of Police Officers.

Understanding the dynamics of global change and its impact on organisations is a constant dilemma that managers increasingly face. The ability to adapt to these changes and maintain effective leadership is integral to their personal success and that of the organisation (Waddell, Cummings & Worley 2007). Just as a business grows through advertising, thereby promoting its image and product, such is the case with the street gang phenomenon. The customer in this case is the deprived youth who is looking for change in his/her life; fulfilment, power, a sense of family. The gang is the product that appears to meet a need, not to purchase but to live the image. To some it is a phase in their lives and therefore the total package of gang involvement might not be the case. They might not want the whole package that can come with a gang lifestyle but just some of the elements to live out for a time.

The changing nature of policing means an organisation such as Victoria Police requires its leaders to be able to react to ever changing environments (Duck, 1993). The manner in which they do so will be the measure of their success and that of the organisation. Denial and complacency will not allow leaders to be effective. Why look when there is apparently not a problem. It's just behavioural issues that in time will change, a trend that had

to happen but will go away and linked to US themes exposed through various mediums.

Views also supported by some social scientists as being a phase of adolescent development

(Pitt, 2008). As Pitt's research (p.32) explains, the playing down of crime by youth gangs by

police leaders is not reflective of what the community or frontline police officers are

confronting. The USA has struggled with denial by persons in authority to effect change

since 1960 and Klein (2007) stresses other nations such as Europe should learn from this.

      Grossman and Sharples (2010) experienced this setting in Brimbank, Victoria,

Australia where the voice of local youth was not considered when extolling gang presence.

They found that by the police playing down young people's concerns, it risked alienation as

they perceived that their concerns were overlooked. Understanding where we are at present is

critical in helping to determine where we go to next. Nonaka (1998) explains that ambiguity

can lead to an alternative perspective and therefore "new knowledge is born in chaos"

(p.40).This knowledge can also be problematic, if the interpretation is to suit a personal

perspective resulting in purposeful denial. This was the situation in Canada in 1993, when the

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) ignored evidence of street gang presence,

dismissing it as minor. Community outcry in 2005 resulting from the death of two bystanders

in a street gang incident escalated the RCMP and local LEA response (RCMP, 2008).

      Victoria Police is entering murky waters when addressing gang presence and as such

the style of leadership should be one that can operate in two worlds, being the known and the

unknown environment. Duck (1993) argues that effective management of change occurs

through consistent communication at all levels, as this affects behaviour and therefore the

desired outcome. Her theory is that a holistic approach is required to manage change, rather

than dealing with issues in isolation. Kleiner and Roth's view is that "mistakes get repeated

but smart decisions do not" (1998, p. 137).

2.12 Conclusion

Though there has been significant literature written about street gangs, there is limited research from a policing perspective particularly within Australia. Former USA police officer Al Valdez (2009) provides opinion evidence based on his operational experience, complemented by a doctoral thesis. His police experience and research knowledge though extensive, aids this research and is compartmentalised and contextualised in its relevance to a Victorian police officers experience.

Hagedorn explains that, "If there is any constant in today's gangs around the world, it is their changing forms, how they can be categorized at one point in one way, and then a few months or years later they can adapt or become something quite different" (2008, p.31). Hagedorn's finding supports the evidence collected and examined in this chapter, that the flexibility of a descriptor against that of a definition is required when establishing street gang presence.

It was clear that the police officers interviewed during this research have met resistance and encountered problems when recording street gang encounters and were eager to have a tool to guide them through a recording process. Their collective responses have guided the literature review and this chapter provides a strong rational for their concerns and a foundation for the analysis of the research findings and this study. The following chapter provides a methodological framework for this research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In 1988, Hagedorn expressed his view of the validity of street gang research: Too Much Theory, Too Few Facts (p.26). This is still the case as supported by Cox, (2011), Pitt (2007) and White (2013).

3.1 Introduction

This chapter informs the reader of the process undertaken to gather the information required to address the question of what is a street gang. The researcher's approach to this question was to gain a voluntary insight from a Victoria Police Officer's perspective and compare that to national and international findings.

An initial concern with the methodology is that the information obtained during these interviews could be influenced by current opinions and not representative of officer's personal encounters. My personal experience as a police officer and whilst undertaking this research, reveals that police officers have been constrained and or influenced in their opinions due to media, politics of the day and fluctuating direction of the Victoria Police Executive. The call for volunteers to discuss their knowledge and experience, and that their opinion was valued and anonymous, ensured there was no perception of abuse of privacy.

An insight will be provided into the decisions for the selection of the methods used to collect and analyse the data obtained through qualitative interviews and its comparison to literature reviews at a national and international level. The reliance on comparisons to international findings, due to limited national research, is a point of concern that needs to be addressed.

The author was unaware what the research would reveal and maintained an open mind throughout the process, to ensure the revealed data was not contaminated by his preconceived theories. There was a strong desire to establish what street gang presence looked like from

those in frontline policing and how and why these officers came to that conclusion. It was considered by the author that street gangs were in their infancy but was that the case?

Numerous methods of analysis were discovered, considered, tested, assessed, and dismissed. A grounded theory application (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) allowed for thematic analysis and a helicopter view of the evidence derived from qualitative interviews. Analysis was made of these data with open coding to identify themes, assisted by axial coding to discover relationships and finally, selective coding to revisit the exposed data. The knowledge and experience of the interviewees' revealed theories that challenged the thinking of the researcher to critically explore literature not previously considered relevant.

3.2 Research Aim

The aim of this study is to contribute new knowledge and develop a standardised operational approach to the identification of gang membership / behaviour through the question: What is a Street Gang? This study, a case study of the Victorian Police understanding of street gangs, hypothesises that there is little consistent standard operational assessment undertaken in Victoria Police and that its membership hold significant tacit knowledge of gangs and gang related activity.

At present it would appear that there are significant levels of untested opinion and assumption in determining what is and isn't gang activity and the associated offences related to assault, criminal damage, armed robbery and knife related offences, which are crimes that is constantly drawing media and public attention.

Eight questions were developed to support this research and to assist the interviewees' to reflect on their experience and knowledge when providing their answers (Appendix E).

- What do you mean by a street gang?
- How did you come about this description?

- Are there street gangs in your current location? and if 'yes'

- How long have they been here?

- What are the genders of the participants in these street gang/s?

- What are the ages of persons you have identified having street gang involvement?

- What other descriptors do you relate to a person's street gang involvement?

- What would assist you to record street gang activity or presence with confidence?

3.3 Methodological Approach

3.3.1 What is a case study?

A case study is often determined to be a methodology in itself, as it is the study of the social through the analysis of a situation or case. This could be an individual, group or event and in particular understanding its "unity and wholeness" (O'Leary 2006, p.115). This has particular relevance to the question of gangs and the reasoning for their existence.

O'Leary's (2006) view that a case study is not a methodology but an object or approach to in-depth analysis is supported by Stake (2000). Stake explains that a case study can involve varied social settings, events, or phenomena and as such, most methodologies to collect data are eligible for consideration dependant on the subject. If a case study has clear goals and contributes to prior research, O'Leary considers that "credibility and worth" (p.116) are the outcomes for the researcher. Case studies are also considered as interpretive research that has a close relationship to ethnography due to its link to the study of an entity or groups through observation or interviews (Tesch, 1990). Ethnography will be discussed later in this chapter. This case study revolves around the information provided by the officers interviewed about what they understand is a street gang, based on their experience. The study is not about 'gangs' in the broader sense.

3.3.2 The question of framework

Based on this criterion, constructivism was selected as a framework. Guba and Lincoln (1989) identify credibility and worth as being the validity of the methods used by the researcher to gather their information, interact with their subjects and how they interpret the evidence. Charmaz supports constructivist grounded theory as the method used to "construct our grounded theories through past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (2006, p.10). Mertens' (2005, p.444) view is that constructivism through a qualitative design that is "contextual, inclusive, involved and emergent" will allow further questions to evolve from the data. O'Leary explains that there is value in not being specific as to how knowledge is to be gained. Her explanation is that each research question is unique and to discover your answers "there is no need to be pigeonholed" (2004, p.8).

Accepting this is the case, a reflexive researcher as O'Leary (2004) expounds, will need to have the tools to communicate their findings and the researcher considered that this could be achieved through positivism. The positivist approach to social research is one that is "empirical" and is explored through "deduction and observation". The researcher should be experienced in the relevant field; and importantly, "objective" ensuring derived knowledge is not flawed by personal bias that will impact the research (O'Leary, 2004, pp. 5-6). The researcher was also seeking findings that were "generalizable and transferable" (the ability to simplify the results, allowing the reader to contextualise the findings) and would contribute change in a social context (Mertens, 2005, p.4)

This framework was considered valid to the researcher's approach to understanding and discovering the sought answers. This assessment concluded that the collection of qualitative data from persons who had subject matter experience had strong relevance.

3.3.3 Methodological procedures

This research drew on the methods of data collection developed in ethnography. Ethnography is culture driven and has been found to be useful specifically when interviewing persons involved with gangs. The methods were relevant when inquiring into the relationship with gang iconography; clothing, hand signs, symbols and language (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). The most effective use of ethnography is for the researcher to have an open mind and be willing to accept that a theory that does not fit data must be ignored or modified.

Ethnography in this case is an exploration of a cultural group; Victoria Police, and therefore an interpretation of their point of view from their social traditions, experiences, and beliefs. The researcher, though a police officer, analysed practises from an inner and outer perspective when interviewing the volunteers (where he is seen as an inner member) and the necessity to place myself in a position foreign to the role and attitudes of police officers (as a Monash research student analysing their data from outside the organisation).

Phenomenology also had a role to play (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) so as to understand the street gang phenomena from one or more person's "inner world", (p.46) perspective. Subjective experience is centre to the inquiry and this separates phenomenological research from other forms of qualitative research (Patton 2002).

3.3.4 Data collection and analysis procedure

The question of what is a street gang is one that is complex and scholars continue to argue their findings since Thrasher in 1927, so any research to undertake what is a street gang in a Victorian setting, had to be context specific. The researcher considered a mixed methods approach could broaden the outcome of his findings (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2002), however, this method is disputed by Silverman (2005, p.122) who prescribes to adopting one path, citing problems of giving both methods equal relevance to the question.

When considering a research design for collecting data to understand what police officers define as a street gang, qualitative research supplemented by a literature review was concluded by the researcher as the most suitable methods. Triangulation and grounded theory will assist in supporting the validity of the outcomes of the research. By having more than one source of data to confirm another, combined with coding and analysing, theories are generated and emerge (Yin, 1991). Successive challenges to the data through re-examination define the theories. Triangulation involves the assessment of data from different methods and is particularly relevant to exploratory case studies (Yin, 1994). In the case of this research, the researcher explored the commonalities derived from the forty- three interviews and to supplement the qualitative data, a substantive literature review of available research findings, together with Victoria Police Policy, Government statistics and Australian and international secondary documents was undertaken to test the descriptors of gangs offered by the volunteers.

O'Leary interprets of grounded theory that it "may be flexible, iterative and emergent, but it is never ill-defined, haphazard, or ad hoc" (2004, p.98). Grounded theory, developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), provides the interactional method required to support qualitative analysis. They consider that the key is to generate enough in-depth data that can illuminate patterns, concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions of the given phenomena, is also supported by Strauss & Corbin (1998).

Qualitative interviews allow the interviewee the opportunity to relay and qualify their opinions, experience, and knowledge, through answers to semi structured questions, therefore establishing from a policing perspective what was considered relevant to the subject of discussion. Denzin and Lincoln's (2000) interpretation of qualitative research, is that it is deriving knowledge from personal experience and interpretation, not on theory. It was essential to the research that the participant's point of view was one that was influenced only

by their opinion through experience. Stanley (as cited in Letherby, 2003, p.69) supports this position and contends that the researcher and the researched need to be "reflexive, theoretical individuals: people who observe, categorize, analyse and reach conclusions".

The researcher was mindful of cultural bias and as much as possible put aside my pre-conceived ideas and theories established through considerable prior research. Consultation with my supervisor to ensure my approach was not influencing the outcomes was beneficial and reassuring, as supported by Mertens (2005). A shared level of cultural understanding with the interviewees' also assisted in interpreting the findings (Davis 1992). His view is that the researcher needs to have a contextual understanding of the experiences being relayed. As the researcher was dependent on being contacted voluntarily by those interested in undertaking the research, this approach minimised the issues of coercion, unwitting bias, and erroneous assumptions. These issues are discussed by O'Leary (2004) who explains the perils of researchers being selective in their recruitment with those who are like-minded, or limiting the participants to those who they assume are representative of street gang experience through exposure.

An aide memoire (Appendix E) was developed and assisted by the researcher's previous national and overseas experience and linked to literature reviews. It was utilized through all interviews, so as to guide and control the discussion and ensure that key points were elicited. The topic guided the questions and led to an open and semi structured interview, leading to rapport that the researcher considered essential, as is agreed by Williams (2003). Points of interest and identified themes throughout the interviews generated further questions and input from participants.

Representative analysis based on literature review of what constitutes a street gang was to be compared to the outcomes derived from the one on one interviews with the voluntary participants and the evidence revealed through consultation and visits with a wide range of

police forces both national and international. Law Enforcement Agencies within the United

States include; Los Angeles, Boston, Washington DC, New York and the Federal Bureau of

Investigation. New Scotland Yard (UK), Hong Kong Police, Vancouver Police and the Royal

Canadian Mounties were further points of consultation. Within Australia and New Zealand,

the author has consulted with and lectured to all Police Forces on principals of identifying

street gang presence.

By critically unpacking the literature on gangs and seeking views and opinions in

semi-structured interviews, one is engaging in an exercise of interpretation. This is

particularly evident when that interpretation is used in a specific context, in this case to

determine a descriptor of what a street gang is. This is not to say there are no problems

associated with such an approach. The design of an aide memoire (Appendix E) was essential

in guiding the interview, the researcher being mindful of emerging themes requiring broader

literature review (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

3.4 Methods of Data Collection

It is argued that to study gangs you must abandon all preconceived, false images, as

stereotyping obscures reality (Klein, Kerner, Maxson & Weitkamp, 2001).This was also a

point of reference in discussions with interviewees' to centre their opinions based on their

experience.

Participants were provided with a statement concerning the purpose of the research,

their involvement as interviewees' and the fact that anonymity will be guaranteed at all times.

Some parts of the interview caused self-reflection by the interviewees', exposing some of the

attitudes and biases of some of their superiors and these person's names are not known or

documented. Each participant was debriefed after the interview to ensure that there were no

concerns as to harm, if the questions were considered relevant, and any further avenues that

should be considered for research. Their positions were one of opportunity to relay information that was not being considered as valid.

The researcher's approach was one of curiosity, delving into the interviewees' experience and exposure and always supportive. This allowed them to further qualify and certify their knowledge, though some thought it was limited. The term street gang, was explained as to reasoning instead of the term youth gang, so respondents were aware that the age of the cohort was not a restriction. The interview concluded with the interviewee providing an overview of their career, including rank, time in position, current and previous work locations and where this knowledge had been gleaned.

A single interview was conducted with each interviewee between January, 2012 and June, 2013. The majority of the interviews (thirty-five) were undertaken between January 2012 and September 2012. Interviews varied in duration between forty-five minutes to one hour fifteen minutes. All persons spoke freely and some expressed relief that someone wanted to talk about the elephant in the room.

Wiersma (1991) explains that data generation through a qualitative approach, "context specific with the researcher's role being one of inclusion in the situation" (p.14), is valuable when attempting to clarify and interpret social contexts (Burns 1999, p. 22). Furthermore, the design of a tool is in itself an exercise in interpretation. Qualitative data took the form of written texts and recordings which represented actions, opinions, and events of people interacted with.

Testing the veracity and depth of tacit knowledge was the aim of the researcher and to encourage open discussion. Nonaka (1998) considers that tacit knowledge is developed and qualified by an individual's commitment to a craft and the personal knowledge gained through exposure. This knowledge is sometimes hard to articulate due to the fact that the

experiences have become the norm and accepted without second thought. Nonaka quotes the words of the Philosopher Michael Polanyi "We know more than we can tell" (p.27) in support of his theory of the difficulty of others to communicate tacit knowledge. Saint-Onge and Wallace (2003) opinion as is Shah's (2003), is that tacit knowledge is based on intuition, judgement, credence and assumptions, and guides behaviour and response.

From this diagnosis tacit knowledge is a belief, an experience, a journey travelled and when someone recognizes that and shapes it and takes the time and interest to explore and articulate a person's 'know how'', explicit knowledge is developed. Explicit knowledge is the articulation of tacit knowledge that can be distributed within an organization (Nonaka, 1998, pp.28-31).

Saint-Onge and Wallace (2003) define this as the "knowledge access and knowledge exchange" (p.16) process. This process developed by Clarica Life Insurance, Canada, accesses tacit knowledge from their employees (knowledge exchange) and provides a platform for the storing and access of explicit information (knowledge access). The process allows for others to not just access explicit information but also advice from the various sources leading to "productive inquiry" (p.17). This process gathers meaning and validity, contextualizing the problem for a solution. The significant tacit information gleaned from these officers is included in the Analysis and Discussion of Findings Chapters.

Literary comparisons were reviewed nationally and then expanded to noted theorists in the UK, USA, Europe, NZ, and South Africa. The limited noted relevant literature within Australia has been undertaken extensively by Professor Robert White. His research typifies the comments of many gang centric scholars that gangs as an object of study and intervention remain "highly ambiguous and amorphous" (White, 2007c, p.159). The "complexities of social belonging and social identity" (p.149) he asserts, restricts how to profile a gang. The

existing Australian research has not been undertaken in the setting of this research as it had been associated with speaking to those involved or on the fringe of gang involvement.

International literature provided a stepping stone to understanding the path that introduced others, for various reasons, into the gang lifestyle and the identifiers of gang presence. The context is not entirely replicated in a contemporary Australian setting, though some mimicking is present. The importance of history and its link to immigration could not be underestimated when addressing street gangs within the USA (Boyle, P., 2005, Hagedorn, 2008; Haskins, 1974). Hart (2000, p.27) supports this statement as being a basic requirement of any research student to understand their subject and the debate within the body of work already undertaken.

3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is a repeated process where the researcher is reviewing the evidence, as "it is not possible to learn about everything at once" (Mertens, 2005, p.420). In comparison to quantitative analysis, themes gradually emerge over the process resulting in a continuum instead of the rigid process of statistics.

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data began from the first interview and was concerned with identifying re-occurring themes and patterns. Data was sought to support those themes and gradually inferences were made about the data through the links that were formed (Patton, 2002). In analysing this data, an inductive methodology was used, as this research is discovery oriented to "develop theory about phenomena" (Johnson and Christensen, 2004, p.51). Data collection and data analysis was co-conducted permitting any necessary variations in the collection process, so that patterns of behaviour can emerge (O'Leary 2004).

Open, axial, and selective coding is three steps in the analysis of data from the grounded theory process (Strauss and Corbin 1990) and were used in analysing the interviews. The researcher having prior experience and knowledge was an aid to the process, adding validity to the outcome as "validity judgements are value judgements" (Messick, 1989, p.748).

Forty-three Victoria Police officers were interviewed about their experiences and perceptions of gang affiliation. The officers of both genders were from varied backgrounds and work locations covering various neighbourhoods within metropolitan and rural locations. Their positions covered all ranks from Constable to Inspector, with experience in frontline, investigative, and analytical duties. Some had previous experience in the UK and NZ as police officers that brought comparative knowledge to the research (Table 4.1).

Thematic analysis undertaken along with a manual system of open coding was designed by the researcher and over the duration of the various interviews, themes were exposed and categorisation took place. The key themes were progressively added to the aide memoire and clarification was sought from the participants when identified.

The next stage undertaken was axial coding, to form further relationships with the data discovered during the open coding process. Constant questions are asked between what you are discovering and then challenging the hypothesis that is being revealed. Strauss and Corbin's reasoning for this process is that it is a "constant interplay between proposing and checking" (1990, p.111). Themes were then broken into clusters under given headings. This way it was possible to observe the common responses and whether there were important differences between individuals, groups or across groups.

Stage three of the process was selective coding. Strauss and Corbin (2004) explain that this process is a revisit to the data, similar to axial coding but at a higher level, filling in

gaps in the validated data that require fine tuning and filtering, resulting in enrichment. This allows for the phenomenon to be presented in the researchers "own terms, language and emotions" (Denzin, 2001, P.79).

The data analysed was not restricted to the interviewee's answers to the aide memoire (Appendix E) as it was considered that the experience, rank, time in position, location of exposure and role performed at the time, was valuable data that had relevance and an opportunity that should not be ignored. This had not been a prior consideration and its relevance was exposed through the analytical process, qualified geographical 'hot spots' and validated the qualifications of the interviewee.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The intended research method of this study relied on interviews with police officers. As with any social scientific research, it is anticipated that ethical implications will require consideration. Indeed, Griffiths states, "Ethical issues cannot be avoided in research" (1998, p.134).

There were varied suggested approaches to gathering the required data for this research and the final approach has been based on the recommendation of the ethics committees within Monash University and Victoria Police. The decision of the Monash University Human Rights Ethics Committee (MUHREC) (Appendix B) as to accessing intelligence systems within Victoria Police was deferred to the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (VPRCC) (Appendix A). Prior to the submission to the VPRCC, the researcher followed Morse's (1994) suggestion of 'sounding out' the gatekeeper as to their tolerance to intelligence access and qualitative interviews with police personnel.

Given the recent media attention about privacy issues with respect to police members accessing databases, this project was not given permission to access either the Law

Enforcement Assistance Program (Victoria Police 2003) or Interpose, the relevant databases requested for this project. Babbie's view, is that where it is debatable, there can be ethical argument and as such all researchers should become "sensitized to the ethical component in research" (2008, p.61).

It was negotiated that the method of invitation to participate in this study will be to recruit participants via general access information points, the Victoria Police Gazette that is released fortnightly and the Victoria Police Intranet Site. Both were utilised to promote this research and called for persons to reply via email to participate in interviews on the subject with the researcher. Though the gatekeeper approach was undertaken to overcome any points of concern, the VPRCC process took 12 months to complete. The researcher had prior advice from the Monash University Candidature Committee to avoid further literature research whilst awaiting the VPRCC approval, as it may influence my viewpoint.

The VPRCC expressed concern that volunteers may be harmed through reflection on their past involvement in this subject and this was addressed through access to Police welfare services if required. The Australian Association for Research in Education, outlines four basic code of ethics principles with a common premise that all social research, 'should support, and should not harm, human flourishing'. Babbie (2008, p.64) discusses the implication of harming subjects psychologically, reminding researchers to avoid this risk by looking for subtle signs.

Even though there was a difference in status between the researcher and the participants, the fact that the participant chooses to contact the researcher, meant that there was no coercion to participate. They were assured that their opinions were valued and my role was not judgemental but one of seeking their knowledge and experience as they were the "dominant voice" (O'Leary, 2004 p.48). The volunteers were advised that this body of work

was not initiated or controlled by Victoria Police nor would they be informed of those who responded to the researchers call for participants to aid this research.

An expressed consent form was signed by all participants and their anonymity assured, (Appendix D) though all participants expressed that they did not have any concern re non-identification. The participants were also provided with an explanatory statement (Appendix C) advising them of the reasons for the research and intended outcome and that that the interviews would be digitally recorded to aid the researcher. This allowed the interview to flow without the interruption caused by the need to loose eye contact due to the written process, resulting in a more positive interaction.

It was essential as a researcher to embed myself in the research by utilising a reflexive stance, and therefore a true reflection of my involvement in the research. This would enable an insightful and reflexive account vital to qualitative research that is based on constructivist research principles (Liamputtong, 2007, pp. 7-9).

The majority of interviews were conducted in the police officer's work place, others based on convenience, and/or distance was at the researcher's office or over the phone. The researcher ensured that all interviews were conducted with honesty and integrity and assured the interviewees' that their information was valued and opinions respected. This strong interaction resulted in thorough, reliable, honest, meaningful ethical findings (Garman, 1996, pp. 18-19).

A debrief, designed by the researcher to allow the participant to review and assess the process in which he had been engaged, ensured Garman (1996) and Babbie's (2008) recommended outcomes were adhered to and achieved. In addition, debriefing provided an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of our interaction, allowed for rectification of any misinterpretation and a sense of meaningful outcome for both parties.

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the methodological approach taken to this study. I will now discuss the purpose and outcomes anticipated from this work.

3.7.1 Purpose

The design of the research methodology was to address the central question: "What is a street gang?" and to reach a conclusion as to what is a street gang, based on the evidence provided by Victoria Police Officers and comparing that to national and international literature. The cooperation of a suitable number of self-selecting participants was essential to the validity of the substantial amount of captured data for thematic analysis.

3.7.2 Outcome

The response to the request for assistance resulted in the interview of a broad spectrum of police officers, who had varied levels of exposure to the subject of the research. The veracity of the interviewee's knowledge expanded throughout the interview process, as the officers continually reflected on past experiences. Sometimes the particular reply may not have had relevance to the question at that point in time but built on a previous answer. This supported the theory of the participant's engagement having important relevance to the quality of the interview. The researcher adequately judges this theory based on professional experience.

Following from this, was the deconstruction of the elicited text by searching for the unformulated messages through grounded theory by the process of induction. This generated new data to compare through triangulation against evidence generated from literature past and present. The outcome of the process assisted in defining the answer to the purpose of the research and contextualised to Victoria.

Contextualisation was enhanced through evidence that was not originally sought but discovered through its relevance to the subject – geographical demographics. The locations as to where the participants discovered their learning would assist in centralising effort and response both from law enforcement and social responses.

The debrief discussions assured that position differential did not enhance or impede disclosure and that engagement was strong. This was reflected in the discourse between parties as one that was cooperative and an assurance that action would come from the research and not a shelved outcome. Nonaka (1998) explains that this approach allows the interviewee to have a "sense of identity with the enterprise and its mission" (p.25), whilst Kleiner and Roth (1998) consider the bringing together of persons who have like interests allows for "collective reflection" (p.143) resulting in dialogue for others to step forward.

The next chapter moves to a description of the analysis of the findings based on the qualitative outcomes of the police interviews. Emergent themes were then identified, categorised and examined and then through capstone analysis the central research question will be addressed.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTION OF ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Level One Analysis: Introduction

This chapter presents qualitative findings in response to the eight questions asked of the forty-three police officers. It seeks to understand from a Victorian Police Officer perspective, contextual and background information. The officers interviewed understood that the information required was to be based on their experience and exposure to persons that they considered were members of a street gang.

The rational for this research was explained to the officers and there was a sense of relief and openness during the interviews that they could finally speak about their experience without constraint, due to the prior denial that they had confronted with some of their superiors.

The officers listed in Table 4.1 were of Constable to Inspector rank and spoke of their direct dealings and accounts with street gang members from various ethnicities, age groups and locations across metropolitan and country Victoria. The officers varied depth of experience and rank allowed for and provided a rich overview of their exposure to this phenomena. Each question asked of the officers allows for opinion and also reflection on their answers so as to ensure they provide a complete insight of the characteristics of a street gang. In addition, they were given an opportunity to provide a view on what is required to confidently record and identify street gang presence.

Table 4.1 also details the participant backgrounds and experience, the location relevant to where the experience was gained and the exposure to gangs through what type of policing. It is not indicative of their current work location or their present role.

Table 4.1: Overview of Police Officers Experience and Service

Gender	Rank	Service Years	Location	Exposure
1. Male	S/Sgt	20	City / Springvale Box Hill Richmond	Investigative
2. Male	D/S/C	13	City	Investigative
3. Male	S/C	9	Camberwell	Frontline
4. Male	D/S/C	7	Broadmeadows Coburg	Investigative
5. Female	D/S/C	12	Ringwood/ City	Investigative
6. Male	D/S/Sgt	15	Altona / Broadmeadows	Investigative
7. Male	D/S/C	3 VICPOL 11 NZPOL	Frankston / NZPF	Investigative Life experience
8. Male	D/S/C	10	Frankston	Frontline
9. Male	D/Sgt	22	City / Horsham / Dimboola / Sunshine / Noble Park/ Dandenong	Frontline
10. Male	S/C	6	Richmond / Knox	Frontline
11. Male	Sgt	23	Flemington / Preston	Frontline
12. Male	D/S/C	23	City	Investigative
13. Male	S/C	4.5	Broadmeadows Epping	Frontline
14. Male	S/C	10	City	Analytical
15. Male	D/Sgt	35	Broadmeadows Brunswick	Investigative
16. Female	D/S/C	11	Broadmeadows	Investigative Frontline
17. Male	Inspector	23	City / Springvale Footscray	Investigative
18. Male	D/S/C	18	Oakleigh	Investigative Life experience
19. Male	Inspector	26	City Footscray Springvale	Investigative
20. Male	D/Sgt	23	Moorabbin	Frontline
21. Male	D/S/C	8	Flemington Werribee	Investigative
22. Male	D/Sgt	19	Flemington	Investigative Frontline
23. Female	D/S/C	9	City	Investigative
24. Male	S/C	7.5	Robinvale Broadmeadows	Frontline
25. Male	Constable	7 months	City	Frontline

Gender	Rank	Service Years	Location	Exposure
26. Male	Sgt	3 VICPOL 10 UKPOL	City Flemington	Frontline
27. Male	Constable	8 months	City	Frontline
28. Male	D/S/C	25	City	Investigative
29. Male	S/C	24	City	Analytical
30. Male	S/C	5.5	Camberwell / City	Frontline
31. Male	D/S/C	8	City	Investigative
32. Female	S/C	30	Ringwood / Knox	Analytical
33. Male	D/S/Sgt	23	Port Melbourne	Frontline
34. Male	Sgt	25	Flemington	Frontline
35. Male	Sgt	1.5 VICPOL 6 UKPOL	City / London	Frontline
36. Male	Sgt	18	Mildura / Robinvale	Frontline
37. Male	Sgt	17	Mildura / Robinvale	Frontline
38. Male	S/C	19.5	Oakleigh	Frontline
39. Male	Sgt	19	City –Transit	Analytical
40. Male	S/C	13	Prahran City	Life/Frontline
41. Male	S/C	5.5	City Geelong	Frontline
42. Female	Constable	4	Mildura / Robinvale	Frontline
43. Male	D/Sgt	17	Prison Melton Fawkner	Investigative Analytical

Note. P= No police officers nominating locations. L= Locations within each region

Table 4.2 summarises the participant backgrounds and experience, the location relevant

to where the experience was gained, and the exposure to gangs through what type of policing.

It is not indicative of their current work location or their present role.

Table 4.2: Summary of Police Officers Experience and Service

Gender	Rank	Service Years	Location	Exposure
(*n*=38) Males	Constable	652 Years Policing	Western – 6P = 6L	Frontline (n=20)
(*n*=5) Females	(n=3)	11 Years NZPOL	NWM – 32P = 15L	Investigator (*n*=13)
	S/C (n=11)	16 Years UKPOL	East - 8P = 5L	Analyst (*n*=4)
	D/S/C (n=13)		South 7P = 5L	Inv / Frontline (*n*=2)
	Sgt (n=8)		Transit	Inv /Analyst (*n*=1)
	D/Sgt (n=3)		Prison	Inv/Life Exp (*n*=2)
	S/Sgt (n=1)			Life/Frontline (*n*=1)
	D/S/Sgt (n=2)			
	Inspector (n=2)			
Total *N*=43	**Total *N*=43**		**Total *N*=34**	**Total *N*=43**

Note. P= No police officers nominating locations. L= Locations within each region

4.2 Analysis by Question

4.2.1 Question One: What do you mean by a Street Gang?

Crime was regularly a point of discussion amongst the interviewees' as being part of

the main ingredient of what constitutes a street gang, with theft, robbery, armed robbery, and

assault as common crime themes. Some regarded the crime committed as an interest or

pastime more so than a purpose of being together and assisted in obtaining items that suited a

purpose, greed. It was not part of the reasoning for their purpose but it resulted in a common

interest to do so, *"A background belief that brings them together. Criminality is only part of*

their pastime" (No.4). Robberies usually resulted in obtaining the latest phone, money to purchase alcohol and shoplifting to obtain sports or designer clothing and alcohol. These activities led to police attention that may not have previously been the case, *"You got it I want it as I cannot afford it. I look at them as packs" (No.15).*

The officers expressed their difficulty understanding the varied levels of unnecessary violence or rationale when victims had been compliant. The victim was always outnumbered, usually a soft target due to age, stature and location, and usually in the late night early hours. Some wondered if the item taken was really the benefit they wanted to gain, as some phones were of little value and not used. *"The theft is a by-product they want to do the assault" (No.29).* The violence could also occur before the demand was even made. Violence for the sake of violence it seemed. The need to put the community in fear: *"Assert their dominance in that area" (No.25). "Confident in doing things together they would not normally do alone" (No.16).*

The bond within the gang was noticeable as they were likeminded, aligned with a common interest and loyalty. This bond could extend to a name for the gang but naming would not exist within all gangs, as was the case with the Africans. It was not definitive as to that being the case, as there were differing opinions as to gangs naming themselves and or having a structure. *"A group of likeminded people who spend a lot of time together and have a common bond, thing or interest" (No.4)* and *"What they want to achieve and what they want to do and what they want to do at that time" (No.18).*

It is not known if this answer was based on lack of knowledge, the correct questions being asked or it just wasn't the case. Probably a combination of all mentioned. A sense of purpose or friendship and alliance was always evident in their answers as to the gang's purpose and being, *"More than a friendship, a purpose to be together" (No.2).* Having a name was not considered necessary, it was the gang's criminality, and how they perceived

them to be a danger to the community that was relevant to their decision. Violence attributed

to the group was the key to what differed one group from a gang, rather than just social

interaction.

Those gangs that identified themselves with a name, tended to promote their presence

to increase their profile. This message was expressed through graffiti by their name being

promoted in various forms, usually three letters, or a postcode applicable to their location or

just their name. One participant explained it quite well:

Names can be very much like a number plate on a car. Rip the number plate off

and the cars still there and the same people ride in that car (No.14).

Whether the gang did or didn't have a name was irrelevant *"Name of gang not always*

*a factor. Something in common" (No.5).*The criminal actions of the gang along with the

impact and outcomes drew the attention of the police. This coupled with a strong bond of

belonging to something with others, not showing signs of fear and that betrayal by providing

assistance to the police was not an option but expected and very evident. It was more than

just friendship it was a purpose and common interest. The dismissiveness of their actions by

laughing was also not lost on the police officers: *"Some were dismissive of what they had*

done and you lost them before you even talked to them and almost laughing at you" (No.23).

Interestingly, some officers did not perceive some groups that they had come in

contact with to be a gang, even though the group did. They had not considered them as a

threat or linked them to any criminality and replied, "*Almost sad to call them a gang. I did*

*not perceive them to be a gang but they did" (No.21).*Others did not recognise gang activity

until they were put into a position of investigating a series of serious offences and then

realised who the crimes were linked to, *"Never heard of till I started investigating" (No.16).*

The size of the gang was deemed to be more than two and ethnic based. Asian, (Chinese/Vietnamese) Middle Eastern (Lebanese), African (Sudanese/Somalian), Aboriginal, Indian, Maori and Pacific Islander ethnicities were mentioned. Anglo Saxon membership was present in some of the ethnic groups (usually Asian) and there was limited knowledge of purely Anglo Saxon groups. Another hybrid group that was witnessed was Pacific Islanders and Africans, though others witnessed differently and it appeared it was a rarity.

Asians tended to meet within a school environment and most were well educated and from wealthy families. They were also known to fight mainly amongst gangs of same race to establish dominance. One Asian gang had a set of rules and an ode to their gang. The 240 word ode described the path that they have chosen, their comradeship, blood and tears shed when fighting others, hoping to not get caught but when everything went wrong they at least had each other. Self-promotion through the use of the internet via Facebook and YouTube to discuss activities, taunt and recruit was common.

Maoris and Islanders were a mixture of locally born and or displaced from usually NZ due to behavioural issues. They in particular had close family ties and attended Church each week. The Aboriginal groups remained together and appeared to be in development and committed crime in isolation. It was considered that there was a changing of the guard in that the African had replaced the Asian in notoriety and level of violence.

Leadership within the gangs was again not always recognised or known and there was limited knowledge as to its presence, *"Not necessarily any structure or leadership" (No.29)*. Those that did, put it down to the person within the gang having the most influence be it physical stature or age, as was the case with the younger Lebanese (10 years old) who looked to their older brothers or cousins for acceptance, *"Look towards their older cousin to see if they are good enough" (No.23)*.

This evidence demonstrates the presence of an intergenerational aspect to gang presence in Melbourne through the replacement of those who have moved on or gone to jail. *"Two generations to a gang. As the older ones grow up, others step up to the plate when others move on or go to jail" (No.6).*Reference to this concern was with those ethnicities that are not new to Victoria and is concerning for those groups that are new arrivals.

The notion of one or more persons directing or controlling who stood in for the other when one was not present was relayed, showing a form of organisational structure and management *"The kids would use that history as a rite of passage because of my parents and grandparents. It became a theme" (No.33).*This control was through respect or fear. This was evident within Asian gangs' who were seen to have noticeable leadership more so than the African groups and to be not as confrontational with the police as the latter. These gangs were also known to have inter-gang rivalry that was the reverse with the Africans. In the case of Aboriginals, who were usually homeless, they stuck together in a fight but were singular in criminal offending. Leadership as the norm was seen to be quite informal and someone would oblige dependent on the situation, *"Normally a leadership group but this would suit occasions to step up to suit" (No.31).*

4.2.2 Question Two: How did you come about this description?

Fear, avoidance, reluctance, and dealing with the unknown were views expressed by the interviewees' regarding some of their more inexperienced colleagues' approach to dealing with street gangs, in particular the Pacific Island and even more so, African youth. *"What people see and what we see are differences of opinion" (No.9).* It appears that officers have been expected to be able to appropriately manage any situation, when they have not been appropriately trained in the skills required to interact with particular ethnicities, avoidance being better placed than confrontation.

Current concerns with police officers being presented on civil suits relating to the abuse of Human Rights did not help either. "Am I next" and "the boss told me to stay away from them" were common replies. Some African Youth regularly called their bluff and produced the racism card when it suited them, particularly on arrest.

To assist in overcoming this concern, participants expressed the need to be more aware of how to approach the confrontational attitude of numerous ethnic based gangs particularly, Lebanese, Pacific Islander, and African youth. In addition, the identification of relevant recording and collection tools was required, as there was minimal evidence available for referral. This along with legislative tools such as consorting and the ability to photograph were seen as necessary preventative measures along with appropriate sentencing. This will be further discussed at question eight.

One interviewee (No.35) had quite a depth of experience, from policing the problem to trying to address through strong community interaction. A local council committee was formed to oversee a holistic response and an invitation was extended to a gang representative. The participant identified someone as very influential within a gang and that person was appointed as their spokesperson. According to the interviewee No.35, the committee's intentions were to be proactive but over time, the gang representative used the gathering to gain information to use to the gang's advantage, which impacted on the committee's purpose.

These youth were heard to say that they *"Shuffle the deck around here" (No.34)* and if they did not want certain officers working there they would have them moved on. They would make that known on the street and new police officers were singled out, as it became part of their game to taunt them by taking photos of them whilst seated in their vehicles, *"Smile Pig'' (No.34).*

An interview with an ex NZ police officer put another perspective on the gang phenomena and how it is viewed by those who have lived in its presence in all aspects of their daily and working life, growing up with those who are now members. His view was quite different to most of the interviewees' and his extensive exposure tended to give him a different perspective to the identifiers of street gang presence, as what he was seeing was just a bunch of "Wannabees" and at the other scale was what he perceived to be the true gang, ethnic gangs and organised crime. This officer's knowledge and experience over an extended period of time gave him the confidence to talk with these groups and transferred that experience to his duties in Victoria.

> *I see an ethnic gang and an organised crime gang, and the youth gangs I do not class as a gang. The youth gangs I just see as a group. They are just wannabes (No.7). When I was growing up in NZ there was two ethnic gangs the Mongrel Mob and the Black Power and they were just Maori (No.7).*

4.2.3 Question Three: Are there Street Gangs in your Current Location?

The gangs were linked to Broadmeadows, Flemington, Sunshine, Footscray, Camberwell, Caulfield, Springvale, Richmond, Reservoir, Ringwood, St Albans, Werribee, Keilor, Carlton, Robinvale, and Mildura.

Though each gang usually lived in the suburb and country locations mentioned, it was also the case that some adopted a suburb by travelling to that location to join the gang linked to it. The names of their gang usually had an affinity to the suburb but their territory was a location within the suburb be it a railway station, shopping centre or an area within a commission housing estate. In two cases it was a basketball and a volleyball court in a city and country location, *"Nobody else would go there. They tied the bench by chain to the*

building because the council would keep moving it to stop them hanging out there" (No.11).
In some cases, it was just a designated meeting point to move off from i.e. railway station.

Territory could extend to the central business district (CBD) and this occurred usually on weekends. Gangs would align themselves to a nightclub particularly if it had a cultural theme (Asian / African) or a restaurant. Travel to the CBD would be by train and this is where the sense of territory extended itself on the path into the city, soft targets located on route as their victims were isolated: *"Nefarious out for trouble. Not there for any collective good" (No.40).* The CBD, though used for social gathering and entertainment, was also where crimes of violence would occur. *"Meet up in the city late at night and commit assaults, thefts and armed robbery together" (No.41).*The escalation of conflict, due to the over presence of multiple groups and the abundance of vulnerable targets leaving licensed premises, were a common occurrence. This was usually linked to the over consumption of alcohol by all parties.

4.2.4. Question Four: How long have they been there?

The estimate of the average time that various gangs had been present relied on varying factors. The interviewee's time in a specified location, their position and or time in service contributed to their knowledge and estimates when speaking of a particular gang's presence. The average at the low end, varied between 4-6 years and mid-range 7-12 years. Some discussed gang existence based on life experience and historical factors which stemmed back 30 plus years with common replies of *"Always been here" (No.9) and (No.8).* In addition, the size of a gang on average was 4-5 members at the low end leading to 30-50 in some cases.

One experienced analyst view was based on the demography that he was responsible for and witnessed that short term gang existence was the norm and during that time, there was

high violent offending. *"Experience tells us they do not have a long life but a strong life. When here they are really hard, high offending, violent, and you think where did they come from?" (No.39).*Once these gangs moved on from his police service area he had no vision as to their existence and presumed they had disbanded. This theory of disbandment was sometimes brought into question when alerted by correctional authorities that a gang known to him was operating within the prison system: *"Prison crew contacted us about (gang name withheld) as they are forming inside the prison system and causing the same dramas by recruiting inside" (No.22).*

4.2.5 Question Five: What are the genders of the participants in the Street Gang/s?

Street gangs consisted primarily of males and, though females were identified within gangs, their presence was usually social. Alarmingly though, female aggression and intimidation towards police was greater than the males, and they hindered police intervention when under the influence of alcohol. Female bravado was also noticed when accompanied by male gang members and the belief that they would not be arrested. *"Provided they have the numbers the females will step up quicker if they have the backing of enough males" (No.14* and *"Physically intimidating to police when intoxicated" (No.25).*

The girls were also used by the males for the concealment and protection of drugs and weapons, due to the belief that there was less chance that they would be searched, *"Protect and recipient of the property. They were always a hindrance" (No.16).*Though social interaction was a common answer for female presence within a gang; the officers reporting from an analytical perspective considered that the presence of girls within gangs was growing. Their data reported findings of 30% presence were common, 30-50% within Sudanese gangs and that their tendency within this group for aggression was in excess of the males. The evidence pertaining to girls was further supported by a social worker who had worked closely with one of the officers interviewed. He also considered that some of the new

and emerging male members were worse than what he had previously experienced and held

real concern for the future.

Gender and ethnicity were commonly mentioned together in the interviews. Girls

were involved in Asian, Pacific Islander, Maori and African street gangs though not

mentioned within the Middle Eastern street gangs: *"Allegiance but treated bad by their own*

as second class citizens by males" (No.15) and there was no knowledge of any girls in

Aboriginal street gangs. The gender, age and ethnicity of the persons listed in Tables 4.3 and

Table 4.4, were confirmed and recorded by the police officers when persons of interest were

spoken to during field contacts.

4.2.6 Question Six: What are the ages of persons you have identified having Street Gang

involvement?

The average reported age of the male street gang member was between 12 – 16 years

(average 13 years) across all ethnicities (Table 4.3). Of concern, was the presence of a child

aged 5 (Caucasian) but their presence linked to a role only can be viewed as a specific case.

The presence of males aged 10 years within Lebanese groups was mentioned on numerous

occasions. The oldest person mentioned was a male aged 38 years who was a member of an

Asian gang.

Table 4.3: Male Street Gang Involvement, Age, and Ethnicity

ETHNICITY	AGE VARIANCE	REPORTED AVERAGE AGE
SUDANESE /SOMALIAN	13 years – 20 years	15 years
ANGLO SAXON	14 years – 21 years	16 years
VIETNAMESE/CHINESE	14 years – 36 years	18 years - 19 years
LEBANESE	10 years – 23 years	15 years
MAORI/PACIFIC ISLANDER	12 years – 25 years	16 years

Notes: Youngest Reported Entry Age – 10 years Lebanese / 12 years Maori / Pacific

Islander; Oldest Reported Membership Age Late 30s – Vietnamese; Average Reported

Membership Age Across All Ethnicities (Excluding Vietnamese) - 15 – 16 years

A girl's reported average reported age tended towards 16 years with the oldest being

in their twenties (Table 4.4). The youngest being Maori at age 13 years, this same ethnicity

having the oldest grouping. The age grouping across ethnicities will be discussed within the

level two analyses.

Table 4.4: Female Street Gang Involvement, Age, and Ethnicity

ETHNICITY	AGE VARIANCE	REPORTED AVERAGE AGE
SUDANESE/SOLAMILIAN	14 years – 20 years	16 years
VIETNAMESE/CHINESE	15 years – 17 years	15 years
MAORI/PACIFIC ISLANDER	12 years – 21 years	16 years
ANGLO SAXON	14 years – 18 years	15 years

Note. Average Reported Age Across All Female Ethnicities - 15 years

4.2.7 Question Seven: What other descriptors do you relate to a person's street gang involvement?

Mimicking USA themes – communication, appearance, and badging, along with territory, ethnicity, crime, anti-social behaviour and a sense of bond, were the common repeated themes: *"Group of young people basically creating havoc in the community through assault and anti-social behaviour. Criminal behaviour may not seem to some but it creates fear" (No.11)* and *"Group of people who share the same lifestyle and values. Hang out in public places. Confident in doing things together they would not normally do alone be it crime and intimidation" (No.16).*Some of these answers were quite specific in nature but others had broader implications and meaning to others. I will discuss some in detail and break these down for further questioning and analysis.

Communication came in many forms, language, hand signs, gestures, music and social media. It also had a link to clothing, as to what it was portraying to others and reflected on perceptions of safety within communities. Participants were not fully acquainted as to the reason for its use and whether it served a particular purpose: *"Red neck scarf for the Bloods but the Crips was not obvious to me re colour and used hand signs to me when we photographed them. I did not question what it meant. I thought it was just them being stupid" (No.41).*

It was noticed that Pacific Islanders, though having their own cultural interaction through language and gestures (the use of the word 'cuz' and the raising of their eyebrows as a greeting), were also using the term 'nigger', accompanied with hand signs and various other forms of rapper speech.

Announcing themselves as a Crip or a Blood and the wearing of clothing of associated colour (Blue or Red) was also common within this ethnic group. When these persons were

questioned as to the use of the Crip and Blood identifier, their only answer was that it means Blue and Red. A number of Australian borne Maoris' were also witnessed replicating gang culture from NZ upon returning from familial visits.

Hand signs were also a common form of communication to greet or acknowledge others or portray who they were by way of replicating the letters of their gang. It was seen as an announcement of whom or what you represent. Photos and videos on YouTube collected by the participants always showed the gang members displaying a hand sign. Some of the hand signs were quite simple as by curling the thumb and index finger in the shape of a C or 3 extended fingers for a W (middle finger curled in).Not all officers had seen this form of representation nor had an understanding if it represented anything at all. To most it was just childish behaviour and nonsensical: *"Language copied from Rap music and hand signs in social media sites but not sure they understand or has relevance to their gang"* (No.14).

FTP (Fuck the Police) was written on walls and sung as an affront to the police officers and also in their presence, in one inner suburb housing commission area and sighted in a country location. Other graffiti with the words Thug Life with the number 187 were common sightings in the same locations. It is not known nor was it usually asked of the gang members if they understood its relevance but it was commonly seen in gangster rap videos: *"They did not understand what it meant. Copy Cat and glorify and end up in violent situations because of it"* (No. 23). Graffiti sightings of three letters and or numbers and postcodes and the calling out of these letters and numbers, were also seen to be representative of gang affiliation.

Clothing drew the attention of the interviewees' and reinforced by the complaints and thoughts of the public. In a number of cases, the dress was very clean and neat, reinforcing a sense of pride but still portrayed intimidation to others. *"I think it empowers them first and foremost for the same reasons that OMCGs do for fear and intimidation"* (No.19).Though

clothing was a strong tool to establish presence, it came in many forms and colours *"All wearing the same clothing so to get the same powerbase as what we do" (No.39).*

Typically, the colour red to signify Bloods and blue to represent Crips (more commonly used by Pacific Island / Maori gangs) would be displayed in many forms, a bandanna, hoodie, designer clothing, large peaked cap, baggy pants, certain brands of sports shoes along with how the clothing was worn. Black also to represent blue and in one case, the carrying of a white bandanna to symbolise peace or non-alignment, were a break from the norm. The theft of designer clothing as part of the initiation into the gang and to symbolise their group was another. Common was the wearing of clothing representative of USA rapper culture along with wearing distinctive chains on their necks. Others were aware that this type of display attracted the police and pushed away from it.

Anti-social behaviour was the main theme that was highlighted throughout the interviews and came in many forms and was based on community perceptions of safety. What the public saw as a threat and or a feeling of discomfort, *"They treated the street as their own and no-one else belonged in it" (No.40).* Police were responding to numerous calls relating to this behaviour and it was also reported that kids had avoided school to escape confrontation.

This sense of intimidation was achieved in numerous forms, being boisterous, physical stature and strategically placing themselves at entry, exit points to railway stations, shopping malls or the housing commission, *"Look for a busy spot to where people would see them and have to go past them" (No.13)* and *"Bring attention to them by just hanging around in a group and create an alarm in the community" (No.21)* and *"Want to put the community in fear. Assert their dominance in that area even though police present" (No.25).*

Noticeably, things changed even more during the youth riots in France (October, 2010) and police were forewarned what was to happen *"We are going to make France look like a walk in the park" (No.34)*. Aggression, anti-social behaviour and taunting increased with the merger of two gangs from neighbouring suburbs coming under the one banner. The older boys within the gang (16 years) recruited younger members to further bolster their numbers.

This behaviour was not restricted to the public as the police were also tested as to the reason for their presence and authority. Police officers reported returning to their vehicles to find every piece of internal and external glass smashed and the theft of their ballistic vests and other equipment. This was seen to be part of the exertion of the gang's authority. Reports of baiting police into a reaction and drawing them into isolated locations where they would be outnumbered were discussed.

> *They stole a torch once and taunted the Sergeant by flashing it during the night (No. 34). We were called to fights in the park and saw fifty of them tooled up with weapons lengths of wood waiting for us, we were going to be lured in. We were worried about the future and getting set up when responding (No.34).*

It was common for those interviewed to talk of a no fear attitude towards the police and confrontational, even telling the police they do not care, baiting a reaction. This strong anti-police attitude was particularly referenced to the African and Middle Eastern gangs, *"The gang members did not want to be treated with disrespect but they treated us that way" (No.34).*The Asians were found to be reasonable to interact with, though extreme escalation levels of violence usually to those of like race and the use of knives was always evident. The tendency towards weapon use by Asian gangs was such a concern in a country location that representation from local Tongan and Aboriginal gangs spoke to the police regarding their concerns.

Anti-social behaviour extended to the disrespect for woman and particularly female police officers by those who had experience dealing with Lebanese gangs. Being spoken to and having to answer questions of a female officer was an affront to them. "*Lebanese were threatening and had no respect for female officers*" *(No.16)*.

This was totally the reverse with the Maori / Pacific Islander males and it was common to hear that they feared their mother's reaction resulting from police intervention, "*Maoris would take on male officers but not women*" *(No.16)*. Oddly this same group had a strong sense of family and regularly attended Church together, yet continued this hostility. This description aligns with this group's behaviour, "*Group of people who are closely associated and loyalty to one another but engaged in anti-social behaviour and leads to violent crime through that loyalty*" *(No.10)*.

Social media streams, Facebook, YouTube and Chat Rooms were seen as tools to promote presence, taunt, plan fights and recruit and were a cause for fear through intimidation. One gang, such was the importance of having access to this medium, assaulted a young male then threatened him with further violence unless he developed a web page for them, as they were not capable due to their illiteracy, "*A male was recruited to set up a web page as they were illiterate. He was being stood over and assaulted to do it. His Somali mother came to me*" *(No.34)*. Strong gang themes and violence shown or spoken in gangsta rap videos appeared to be the guidance for emulation by numerous gangs in the production of their own videos depicting their pact and what they represent.

The use of social media for self-purposeful reasons was not its only application as it was also used to find open invitation parties where their attendance would usually result in violent incidents, "*Look on Facebook for open invitations to parties and they would harass people and also do graffiti*" *(No.8)*.Taunting other gangs on Facebook resulted in agreed prearranged locations to meet and resolve the dispute. These disputes would usually arise

from a misinterpreted glance, an incident involving a female or just to display strength, *"Facebook downloads and chat rooms each paying out on each other, otherwise considered weak and they had to show muscle"* (No.23).

On sighting other gang members or as the result of incidents within nightclubs, texting others to gather numbers and weapons were the norm. The probable detection of weapons prior to entry to licenced premises was a deterrent, though access could be achieved from a nearby vehicle or delivered to the location via text. The spontaneous gathering of numbers was seen as a pathetic act by the interviewees' as the numbers always grossly exceeded their intended victims by two-three knowing that they would win. After the incidents, there would be increased activity on suspects' phones and various forms of chat rooms where it was common place to either brag or to ensure others do not talk to the police. *"They then retaliated by beating up 5-6 by 15. It was a pathetic act on a rival gang and struck whilst they were weak. They had a whole lot of numbers by text and calls to get people there"* (No.23).

Recruitment was seen to be cultivated through the school system where friends would introduce others. This was very evident with Asian gangs and notably a number were well educated including at university level and membership remained at an older age compared to others, *"A number had good support from family and high education some at Uni. The weaker ones just go along as its all they know and the stronger ones are the more violent"* (No.23).

The promotion of a gang through various forms of social media, print and television tended to give the gang infamy, which drew persons to their membership and prolonged their presence. It also allowed for younger gangs to form and align with the older gang, thereby creating a stepping stone for the future. Popular meeting spots also allowed for recruitment through exposure.

Their knowledge of the law, particularly how it operated relating to youth, was used to their advantage, *"They realise the ramifications with their age" (No.23).* Legislation that had a direct relevance to them was relayed to officers that approached them, *"Well aware of the law especially control of weapons act and search and move on powers" (No.6).*

4.2.8 Question Eight: What would assist you to confidently record street gang presence?

This interview delivered various answers surrounding intelligence, education, and specialisation. The lack of intelligence and its collection was telling and with this was the confidence that was placed with some participants to collect it and therefore a need to, *"Increase members awareness and confidence" (No.19).* Not knowing what should be recorded was seen as an impediment and this could be put down to the limited knowledge and therefore guidance that is available. All were supportive of a prompt card that could be used and submitted with relevant descriptors and the reason for the person being approached: *"A prompt card is great and overtime they would get used to it. The form must be used as an indicator. Also allow for free text narrative and include, this is what a descriptor is and then include what it isn't" (No.17). "Education and intelligence is what we need to gather. Prompt card for the junior members is the way to go and develop an understanding" (No.18).* This would assist in the reduction of complaints as an accurate record would be provided as to what, why and when. The present Victoria Police Field Contact Sheet (Victoria Police 2000) which is completed and submitted by officers when contact is made with a person of interest was not considered suitable as an aide for recording gang presence.

Repeatedly mentioned was the lack of support in addressing the response to Street Gangs: *"Fluctuating force attitude needs to change re the gang culture – banning us from using the word gang" (No.12).* Denial of its presence was frustrating to frontline officers and the use of the word gang was not to be used in discussions with the media. When it came to an ethnic group involvement in gangs, members were told to tread lightly in their response,

"Reluctance to talk to them due to direction from local command. They would use to their advantage" (No.22). This frustration also extended into the community, who were fully aware of what was occurring and advised an officer, *"Never been worse, we do not see the coppers anymore" (No.34).*

Denial was not seen as the way to treat a knowing public that they had to deal with. Though there has been progression in this area there is still a feeling that the word gang is to be avoided and that many superiors *"Still have their heads buried in the sand'' (No.6).* It was the opinion of most that Victoria Police had caused the problem by not recognising and acknowledging what was occurring. *"It is just like ignoring the first signs of cancer. You'll be alright and then six months later you think, maybe I should have gone to the Dr when I first saw that" (No.39).*

A champion for the cause was seen as a positive step to correct others denial or misinterpretation of the current situation. The confidence to record gang presence without it being frowned upon due to fluctuating opinions of their superiors did not instil the motivation required to speak to various gangs. A unit that specialised in this field similar to Taskforce Echo was also considered necessary so that questions could be asked, intelligence pooled and acted on effectively. *"Unless someone is given ownership nobody will do anything about it" (No.20).* Encouragement was seen as a key to the response to collecting gang intelligence and this would come through feedback on the information provided. *"We have no idea of the impact of their behaviour. Took me awhile to recognise as no intel and we could have been onto them earlier" (No.16).*

Training and education to understand what is and isn't gang presence was considered crucial to any future response to this issue along with this the knowledge as to how and why certain questions should be asked of gang members: *"Attention to detail has been a problem" (No.2).* Blunt questioning was seen as not having the same effect as using an interactive tool

to illicit the same answers required, 'going through the back door': "*Understanding so to be able to record" (No.37) and "Our biggest worry is the lack of knowledge surrounding gangs" (No 39).* The officers with overseas experience considered that we were working in silos and our dual intelligence systems (LEAP & Interpose) were restrictive in their access and knowledge how to use, mainly in reference to Interpose: "*National Intel Model UK where everything was entered and they got something back. Benefits of having a culture of evidence gathering and the outcome of the intelligence benefits" (No.26).*

One officer that I considered had broad experience in dealing with gangs and had developed various responses, considered that the frontline officer is the person who needs to change things and central to this was their attitude which would come through correct leadership "*Guidance and knowledge plus experience, nothing greater" (No.36).*

4.2.9 Summary of Level One analysis

This section presents a rich and contextual insight into a Victoria Police Officers experience and opinion as to what constitutes a street gang. It provides a valuable perspective as to street gang presence in Victoria and reports on responses given by the participants to the eight questions.

The next section describes eight emergent themes derived from my Level Two analysis namely: core; purpose; grouping; leadership; communication; experience and awareness of the officers; response and organisational leadership.

4.3 Level 2 Analysis of Emergent Themes: Introduction

It is evident from the responses to the questions in the interviews outlined above that the breadth of knowledge across the Victoria Police Force as to the existence and presence of street gangs is varied. Each interviewee's experience was gained in different ways be it analytical, investigative, observation or in a prior life outside policing. In depth

understanding was limited and those that did have some understanding had attended training that I had conducted. As an outside / insider researcher, I could see that this training assisted in the translation of what they were observing, allowing them to make a reasonable judgement. Is it actually a gang they are witnessing or is it just a peer group? Should this group be monitored or not was then the next question.

The answers to the questions discussed in section 4.2 revealed various themes that were then grouped into closely aligned clusters for ease of analysis. The clusters were developed from the eight questions asked and are themes that were revealed as a constant.

The first theme I will discuss is one that was identified as the core ingredient of the gang formation, crime, anti-social behaviour and appearance and its survival - recruitment.

The second theme is the original *purpose* of the gang being a bond and its link to ethnicity, badging and territoriality.

The third theme is based on *grouping* being gender, age, period of gang existence and membership numbers within the gang.

The fourth theme is the relevance of *leadership* and organisation within the gang.

The fifth theme is the method of *communication* that is used by a gang, its dual purpose and includes social media.

The sixth theme discusses the varied *experience* and awareness across the interviewees.

The seventh theme is the *response* required to correctly identify and address gang presence.

The eighth theme is the *organisational leadership* required to address reluctance and or fear / concern.

4.3.1 Theme One – The Core

The first question as to what police officers considered to be a street gang was in some cases answered with minimal response, limited to a behavioural answer of anti-social and or criminal behaviour and a noticed sense of bond amongst its members, *"Bond together due to an anti or dislike of police attitude"(No.12).*

Though the answer to this question tended to be further expanded in the seven questions that followed, it gave me some relief as to their actual knowledge through exposure. Some members struggled with the fact that some of the youth identified themselves as being a gang, though they didn't, *"Their dress was gangster look. Loose fitting singlets etc. Copying from TV" (No.40).*

Those that expanded on their descriptor spoke of varying levels of organised and or opportunistic criminality. Most common was the offence of robbery and or assault. Outnumbering their victim in isolated locations to address the need for popular items and cash to fuel entertainment, usually alcohol was a repeated conversation, *"They picked soft targets where they know they would win"(No.41).*

It was most concerning to them, that the victims of robbery, though compliant, were still subjected to violence that questions whether the true intention was to take property from their victims or was it masking their actual need for recreational violence or both? Some of the items taken were never used and again it raises the question if this was just a pastime or to gain infamy, *"Wanted more and got it through intimidation and violence" (No.29).* In particular, this was evident in the behaviour of Pacific Island and African Youth.

It seemed that anti-social behaviour was mentioned so often, that to the youth involved, it may have become just a part of their normal behaviour, a part of their daily routine so as to be seen by others as a threat, due to the constant exhibiting of this behaviour.

The combination of presence, attitude, verbal, and non-verbal communication also caused avoidance of locations by the local community, "*Do not have the community in mind. Do not care about what other people think and what effect it has on other people" (No.6.).*This simple planned activity led to their attention, promoted their position, and achieved their objective of dominance.

Representing what you are can come in many forms and what was often mentioned was clothing. Collective dress linked to a sense of pride in what you are wearing should be encouraged but in this case the persons caused fear through their presence and this was amplified by their agreed dress code. Dress was seen to be an important part of their culture – empowerment through unison and what it may stand for and as such, a powerful tool aligned to presence. You could question as to whether this behaviour is anti-social but appearance caused fear and concern without the need of committing further acts and brought police attention so some gang members changed this practise, *"Pushed away from clothing as attracting attention of the police" (No.1).*

Recruitment was evident amongst the Asian, Maori, and Pacific Island youth. The Asian gangs recruited through the schooling system at high school level and a number remained members into university. It is not known if further recruitment took place at this level of education. The Maori and Pacific Island youth had an extra recruitment pool through a regular influx of new candidates from NZ and the Pacific Islands. Families in despair, as to how to correct or protect their children from local criminal influence transferred this concern to family in Australia. This resulted in either further exposure to the problem they were trying to escape or others influenced by the imported behaviour *"One or more people direct or control what they do. Either respect or are scared of" (No.22).*

4.3.2 Theme Two - Purpose

The bond within the gang appeared to be a rite of passage that was tested through their loyalty to the gang and their likeminded approach to everything they did. The bond through cultural identity was also very evident but this was sometimes contradicted by allowing other cultures to join them, essentially to build numbers and took place in various ways through single membership access or the merging of another gang. Hybrid presence was not as evident within African and Lebanese groups and limited Caucasian gangs were identified though there was evidence of presence usually within Asian gangs. Outside of culture, some also had no affinity to the suburb the gang was aligned to and joined only due to the kudos it afforded them.

The bond can extend to badging the gang through an identifiable name. Its relevance to the gang could be based on territory, postcode, or ideology and regularly influenced by USA themes such as Bloods and Crips, usually adopted by Maori, and Pacific Islanders. The promotion of the gang by writing on street surfaces an acronym of three letters or numbers relevant to their name was common, *"Carry knives, matter of course, sign-language, body and handshakes. See someone coming and they would show a sign to say which side they are on" (No.9).*This badge of membership not unlike policing and or other emergency services signified what they are and represented. This, all linked to a location (territory) in the vicinity of their home, can become blurred as to its relevance as gang boundaries sometimes extended.

This extension was facilitated by the transit system where the gang's dominance through intimidation was played out on passengers whilst on route to their destination, usually the central city of Melbourne. On arrival, the furtherance of their control was through the adoption of locations within the metropolitan entertainment zones, particularly by Asians' and other gangs who would frequent the precincts of nightclubs to prey on weak targets.

Territoriality was also witnessed in simple forms of demarcation or presence symbolised by graffiti strategically placed in sheltered areas or within housing complexes, *"The area came under one banner of (name withheld) and remained the same through a merger. We had some older kids in the 16 age group and when they set up they had older kids get involved" (No.17).* These were considered by the local communities as no go zones and avoided where possible, though there was not any evidence of the outcome for passing through these locations. This behaviour was alienating them from their own community through fear.

4.3.3. Theme Three - Grouping

There was limited evidence to indicate how individual gangs are formed, for what period of time or any monitoring undertaken. This is important if we are to understand gang behaviour – why did it form why did it dissolve? Did those within the gang all move on or was it only some? If they left the gang, what was the reason and why is the gang no longer an attraction for them?

Most of the information provided as to gang presence was based on reflection and not always, based on the present situation within that locality. Due to promotion, transfer, change of role and or limited recorded intelligence if any, the interviewees' could discuss only what they knew at the time of being in position. Some were currently dealing with the problems associated with gangs and others were still in contact with colleagues at locations where they had gained their experience and so were current in their knowledge. On average, street gang presence was considered most noticeable since early 2000 and growing in presence and attention with the size of the membership commencing at 4 - 5 persons.

As was evident in the discussion above, Tables 4.3 and 4.4 gather the collated information relevant to gender, and age grouping as it relates to reported ethnicity. The

youngest reported age of entry between genders was only slight, 10 years for males and 12 years for females.

It was evident that gang membership is predominantly male and that female involvement was mainly through social interaction and drawn attraction when members were in attendance at licenced venues. Females were also part of a fit for purpose model, being used to conceal weapons, drugs, or stolen property. There was evidence from an analytical perspective that female membership was growing, with some gangs having a perceived 30% representation in particular within Sudanese gangs.

4.3.4 Theme Four – Leadership within the Gang

Knowledge of the presence of leadership within the gangs discussed was not as evident as required to make an informed opinion. Physical stature, age, and fear of persons within some gangs had a bearing on the assumption of how leadership took place. This was noticeable amongst Lebanese and Maori gangs.

Asian gangs appeared to have a nominated and seconded person when the main was not present but it was not known how the selection was made by their peers. It was discussed and agreed that most members within a gang did not want to be led, as that was what they were escaping from, being told what to do.

If this was the case, then any theory as to these gangs being organised would also not have merit. Most crime was committed by chance, opportunism through the availability of a weak single target. These victim types were on the increase in the areas surrounding the entertainment hubs of Melbourne and it could be construed, that there is a degree of planning, knowing that a target would eventually arrive, as these gangs did not reside or were based within the CBD. It was common that a gang would respond in numbers to any threat or

agreed activity except for an Aboriginal gang in inner Melbourne that tended to commit crime by themselves.

4.3.5 Theme Five - Communication

To have an understanding of any culture, you must be constantly exposed to it and this was not the case with a number of the participants. Most considered that the communication tools utilised by the gang members was based on the mimicking of their idols (gangster rappers) be it their dress style or speech. Rarely did they consider that these tools were more than just that. It was worthy to note that they were actually noticing the varied forms of communication but unfortunately did not question why.

The combination of presence through the outward display of commonality, attitude, verbal and non-verbal communication, essentially caused fear and concern without having to commit further acts. Fear through presence resulting in community avoidance of the area, became notoriety and a powerful tool with limited effort.

This communication strategy extended to social media sites to recruit, taunt, brag, and arrange fights and included texting to increase presence in response to an incident or deliver weapons.

4.3.6 Theme Six - Experience

Experience by members was mixed and, as such, it is healthy in the replies given, as they are from different perspectives, experience, and knowledge. Some had extensive understanding and had been constantly exposed to gang behaviour whereas, with others, it depended on the location where they had or presently worked.

Time and location allowed them to compare suburbs where this problem did or didn't exist and therefore reflection of the style of policing required in each setting. This extended also to members who had served in the UK and NZ who drew on their comparisons to what

they were witnessing in Melbourne. In both locations, the crime and anti-social behaviour was in advance of what was occurring in Melbourne and so was the response.

4.3.7 Theme Seven - Response

Intelligence was seen as one of the critical factors to address the response to street gangs. Presently, limited intelligence is available due to minimal knowledge and understanding to correctly identify gang presence resulting in reduced avenues of inquiry in response to gang related incidents.

It was agreed that an effective response in the short term would be a prompt card listing key identifiers and questions (Appendix F). This would be used to confirm in the positive or negative, a groups presence as being gang related. LEAP would then need to be able to accommodate this information to reduce any double recording along with a certification process to address misinformation.

Fear of the unknown was seen as a key problem particularly in the inner city, as junior police officers considered that they were being tasked to address gang behavioural issues without the right tools or experienced person to learn from in this difficult theme. A specialised unit was seen as invaluable for members to ask questions of subject matter experts. This has been the key to the success of Taskforce Echo that was established to respond to OMCGs.

It was considered that limited knowledge and experience could be addressed through training, education, intelligence gathering tools, appropriate recording methods and a specialised enforcement resource.

4.3.8 Theme Eight – Organisational Leadership

There was an obvious sense of frustration linked to the limited direction and or acceptance by their superiors regarding street gang existence. Most directed that the word

gang was not to be used in any media statement. This followed with no go patrol zones so that the concerns of increased complaints by the persons being stopped and questioned would be avoided. This approach eventually resulted in lost community interaction and therefore others suffered from the behaviour of a few.

This was typical of what had been the experience in the USA when a survey was conducted by the NYGC to collect information on the number of Street Gangs and membership. Police officers were directed by their Chiefs to reply in the negative due to fear that an admission would cost them their position, the member's conscience caused them not to reply, resulting in a flawed overview of actual gang presence, defeating the purpose of the survey. This hierarchical attitude in a country where gang presence was first identified in 1850 in Hell's Kitchen, New York City and is exported throughout the world.

There was a need for a Champion who accepted that gangs were present in Melbourne and this support initially came from the then Deputy Commissioner Sir Ken Jones. His response was that it was nonsensical to deny gang presence to a knowing public but it was also to be measured based on facts not fiction. His simple message was, "If it looks like a duck, walks like a duck, quacks like a duck, it is probably a duck" and was the first step towards acceptance of gang presence.

4.3.9 Summary of Level Two analysis

The categorisation of the responses to the questions by the participants into emergent themes, allowed for further exploration of their opinions. This secondary analysis supports and explores the reasoning behind the categorisations and provides the essential evidence to develop the collective response required to address street gang presence.

4.4 Level Three Analysis: Introduction

The final level of analysis, Level Three brings together the findings of this case study to address the central research question: What is a Street gang? To understand how to address the growing concern relating to the street gang phenomena we must firstly interpret what knowledge we have and is that knowledge sufficient to develop a response.

4.4.1 Symptoms Management

Presently, the evidence stemming from the interviews reveals that Victoria Police develops a response to address an outcome stemming from behaviour, which is generally short, sharp, and effective. I have termed this approach 'symptoms management'. This approach seeks to enhance community perceptions of safety, which may have an impact in the short term, but over time, may escalate the problem, due to other factors not being considered.

The 'police response' is based on limited tacit knowledge and this knowledge is the basis for the sanctioned approach, designed to achieve an outcome - address crime and anti-social behaviour as referred to in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1: Police Response
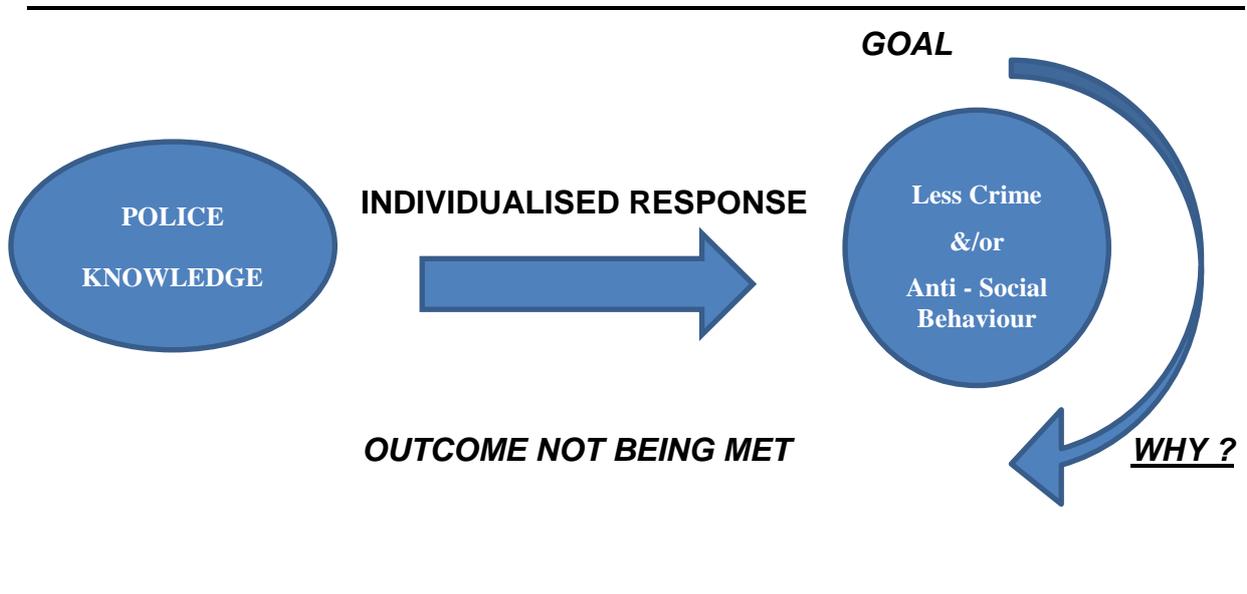
The two problems central to the issue being the 'characteristics' of the gang and the 'process' that brings the gang together as detailed in Figure 4.2, is not necessarily understood by the police participants or considered relevant when developing a response. Though there was an awareness of what could be considered as the two identifiers of gang presence, the appreciation of what they represented and their reasoning was limited or non-existent. The varying levels of experience were quite noticeable and confirmed when explored as to what they understood to be its relevance to gang behaviour. Though what they were witnessing was correct, it could not be expanded on. The why, what, where, when and how were limited or unknown.

To have an effective approach to an issue it must be holistic and this was not the case, as the police response was 'Start and Finish' but nothing addressing the journey that resulted in the crime taking place – the outcome. What caused this problem that is being responded to?

4.4.2 What is the police knowledge base?

The basic elements of the police response as it related to street gangs that could be discussed with some confidence was knowledge, experience, awareness, command attitude and the time in place of the gang. The characteristics, demographics, territory, ethnicity, age, size of the gang and gender information varied across the respondents.

Some respondents gave quite detailed responses and discussed observations with confidence. All were keen to provide their knowledge but the questions really had many seriously reflecting on what they actually thought they knew. They realised, as the questions continued, the importance of what they had witnessed and not explored.

Its relevance had no real prior meaning until tested and as mentioned, some did not even consider the persons they were discussing to constitute a gang, though they did upon

reflection. Understanding relevance is crucial to identifying and responding to gang presence. How do you plan and respond if you do not understand the relevance of what you are exposed to. Are these characteristics part of the commencement of the process of gang formation and have we missed crucial evidence that could have assisted in addressing or deterring an eventual violent alignment? To answer the question: What is a Street Gang? It was necessary to map out the police knowledge base in a meaningful way.

Recruitment, organisational structure, communication, badged, appearance, bond, attraction and fulfilment, were all elements of the gang process. These tend to constitute the make-up of the gang. How it is to be seen, how they want to be seen, how they recruit others based on this image projection and maintain their gangs existence. From the Figure 4.2, the mapping of the police knowledge base showed clearly that not all processes have to be or are present.

Figure 4.2: Police Knowledge Base of Street Gangs

POLICE RESPONSE BASE	CHARACTERISTICS	PROCESS	OUTCOMES
Police Knowledge Police Officer Response Experience Awareness Command / Support Existence Time CAPSTONE	Demographics Territory Ethnicity Age Size Gender	Recruitment Organisational Structure Communication Badged Appearance Bond Attraction Fulfilment	Crime Anti-Social Gang Behaviour *TO STOP THIS*

HOW MUCH DO VICPOL HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT THIS?

EDUCATION REQUIRED OF POLICE

TACIT POLICE KNOWLEDGE OF GANGS   *RESPONSE TO GANG ACTIVITY*

4.4.3 Police Response Base

The police response base (Figure 4.2, above) is the core facts pertaining to each interviewee and their knowledge, opinion and experience when addressing street gangs. Their collective perspective to my questions, revealed the *characteristics* of what they considered to be a street gang and the varying *processes* undertaken to be part of its membership. The minimum *outcome* of membership was anti-social behaviour that indicatively led to crime, usually associated with an act of violence.

Though their opinion was what I was seeking as part of my primary objective to discover what they considered to be a street gang, they also revealed the anguish and

frustration that they had experienced and witnessed in responding to street gang behaviour. This in part, was dealing with the in your face anti-police attitude of a number of gang members (comments by interviewees' No.12, No.16, No.23, No.25 & No.34) but more concerning to them was the lack of support from their superiors and concern for their confused colleagues.

The officers voiced their concerns that the community were fully aware of gang presence yet Victoria Police were referring to them as groups and this was evident in numerous newspaper articles and radio interviews, passed on through the ranks by their direct supervisors that this was how they were to be addressed. Do not mention the word 'gang'. It seemed to them that Victoria Police was dealing with the unknown and so were in denial as it could not be the case that street gangs had suddenly appeared without anyone knowing.

As has been revealed in the interviews, the typical street gang comprised ethnic minorities so could this be part of the reasons for the denial? They did not want to have to deal with the reaction of any announcement or response as being considered racially-based. It would be easier to respond to the incidents but not the issue. This interpretation can be further supported by the reporting and recording requirements of the time in response to crimes, which did not allow for identifying colour of skin or race.

Inexperienced police officers were seen to be confused by this and not performing the role of constable as is expected of their position due to apprehension. This coupled with the stature of some of the street gang member's representative of our African and Maori Youth, their confrontational behaviour and disrespect for police was an understandable concern. Along with this, was the belief that that they will be reported for harassment and allegations of racial prejudice "You are only stopping me because I am black" was a common reply. This coupled with the belief that they will not be supported by their superiors.

So there can be a tendency of avoidance, which is a concern, as they should not be placed in this position of hesitation. Who or what then suffers? The community they are meant to protect? – yes but also the respect in which Victoria Police is held. This respect can be seen in the days before and after Police Remembrance Day (29th September), the community displays the police blue and white checked ribbon, remembering those who have paid the ultimate price but also as a sign of support for the duty they perform. This respect should not be weakened due to inaction by our officers due to misguided direction.

Chief Commissioner Ken Lay has already expressed that at the forefront of his mind is the confidence of his members and that of the Victorian Community - no more mixed messages. An example of this can be seen by the report to the media of gang behaviour stemming from African youth violence in Melbourne and backed up with substantial data.

The response to this behaviour in the Melbourne entertainment hub was the launch of Operation Northbank. The pooling of experienced detectives and uniform police officers to address public perceptions of safety is warranted but it is a police based response and does not take into consideration the central issues, 'characteristics and process', as referred to in Figure 4.2 and is designed only to address the desired outcome – crime reduction and perceptions of safety, and not the elephant in the room.

4.4.4 Characteristics

The characteristic of the gang is the mould or the framework from which the gang evolves. The participants were in unison in their belief that a street gang was ethnic based, resided primarily in the northern or western suburbs, typically male (female presence on the increase) and average reported membership at 15-16 years of age. The gangs typically resided in suburbs that had or did have a linkage to public housing and accommodated immigrants and or the unemployed. They were also linked to suburbs that neighboured these locations.

There were rare occasions that it was cited differently, and related to two gangs who were Caucasian and resided in inner eastern Melbourne and no longer exist.

Throughout history, it is shown that the refugee or immigrant has been the catalyst for gang formation. Survival through group protection has been typical in the USA as was the case with the wave of Vietnamese refugees in the 70s into Australia and the arrival of persons fleeing the Horn of Africa region since early 2000. The only exception is the presence of Maori and Pacific Island Youth searching for employment or a reprieve from problems linked to associates from their homeland.

Common within the African, Pacific Island and Maori population, was the theme that the mother was left with the responsibility of correcting behaviour and there was little evidence of male guidance or correction (though the Pacific Island and Maori groups had the advantage of referral to extensive family members within their countries and Australia). Families separated when fleeing Sudan and Somalia and arriving in Australia through humanitarian aid supports this statement, as the support and guidance normally available through grandparents, uncles and aunts is absent. This disruption of family structure is supported by 2006 Census Data revealing that only 6% across both ethnicities is over 45 years of age.

4.4.5 Process

The process is the relationship that is formed as part of the gang's transformation into establishing its identity and purpose. Agreement is part of the process otherwise there is ultimately no retention, leading to eventual termination of the bond and ideals.

In the case of the Horn of Africa youth, there was little known of their process only that they were seen to be confrontational, particularly when in a group of 5 or more and a tendency for a short fuse. This may explain the continuance of their aggressive behaviour

when their victims have been compliant. The fuse has been lit and they have no ability to put it out. There's no reasoning behind it. The objective to steal an item is achieved but is that the real objective? Was it their intention to steal that item in the first place, or is that just an excuse to commit violence on their victim? Is this recreational violence enjoyed or is it a means to attain or maintain respect from their peers? Is it to instil fear as fear is power? This last question is the most worrying. The answers will not be known until further research is conducted by interviewing these subjects to find out why.

The stature of the Islander youth has built up an image plus folklore, that they have used to their advantage and could be part of the reasons for their after violence during soft target street robberies, so as to reinforce that image. Most were spoken of as being respectful and gentle giants when isolated but gain confidence in numbers or is it that they have to maintain that image in front of their peers, nobody daring to do otherwise?

Even though these ethnicities are committing violence against other people there's intra-violence. They're fighting amongst themselves as well. This could be explained by boredom or maybe a power struggle? A lot of the time it's just boredom, they haven't got a job, they're on the dole, there's a lack of supervision, leadership, love. The next minute they mix in with a group, and suddenly there's your friendship, there's your love, there's the family they don't have at home, a bond. This leads to an identity by badging what you are. A gang name in some cases but not always. Is that what it's all about really or is there more?

Clothing, language, hand signs, graffiti are seen as some of the identifiers of gang membership in the USA but when you look at those things and start looking at what's happened in Australia, you see similarities, though not in its entirety. You see a bandanna a cloth hanging out of a pocket, its red or blue but that doesn't always mean that they're in a gang. Our youth copy something because it's popular, and they want the image. But then we've got to make sure we're not confusing that appearance with those whose intentions are a

fashion statement and to those who want to be seen for what it actually represents. One is style and the other is fear. That's why in the latter case they are wearing those clothes, to give that image - look at me I am someone to be feared.

The knowledge that Australian youth have regarding gangs is only limited by what they discover and interpret through social media. Strong gang themes and violence shown or spoken in gangsta rap videos and in selective computer games, appears also to be their guidance for emulation and in some cases the production of their own videos depicting their pact and what they represent. It was regularly used to promote their existence or criminal acts and lure others to join them. This was their own sense of fulfilment and justification for what they are. Was it that they had to be seen and acknowledged, otherwise there was no purpose?

Common reasons for gang membership in the USA are: generational; start a gang; tricked into joining a gang or it's something you've got to be involved in because there's nothing else left for you (Valdez, 2009, pp.19-25). Generational entry is very evident in NZ and gradually becoming so in Melbourne. Some offer into the gang for safety and then part of that process is to undertake an initiation, may be to steal something, a car, clothing. The gang leads to things you wouldn't normally get access to and can be as simple as an image and or money. From there, you're in. You are part of the gang. What happens in that gang is determined by what yours and others needs are. If you're not at home, and you've got nowhere else to go, what are you actually going to do to survive? You're going to steal, commit robberies, assault people.

There are so many things you can be influenced to do and if you don't commit the offences then there may be a reprisal from within the gang. Your then back to the beginning - the reason why you are in the gang has now been lost and you have nothing, it's just as it was before. In the gang, you have a sense of ownership, a misguided sense of respect. But they're misinterpreting that respect, it's actually fear.

4.4.6 Outcomes

This is the product of the gang, anti-social and criminal behaviour. This is the difference between a gang and a peer group, the reckless or deliberate acts of crime. The characteristics and process as they relate to a gang have no relevance if these behaviours are not present.

The consumption of cheap mixer drinks, lyrics that motivate the listener and refer to gang philosophies and activities, combined with the access to weapons in numerous forms, has been enough to support false courage. This deadly cocktail, results in numerous incidents of violence and the community reacts by demanding a police response.

4.4.7 Summary of Level Three analysis

This analysis identified that the characteristics of the gang and the process that brought it together, (refer Figure 4.2) is essential knowledge when developing an effective operational response. The participants provided varied knowledge on these two key points and on reflection agreed on its importance in identifying gang presence.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed, analysed, categorised, and then explored the interview responses to the question - 'What is a Street Gang? It revealed the significant tacit knowledge held by the participants and the importance of the utilization of that knowledge when addressing street gang behaviour, instead of a reactive response and outcome based strategy as detailed in Figure 4.2 (above).

Of the eight themes identified in the analysis, three - Core, Purpose and Grouping are considered essential to answer the principal question. In particular the Core revealed the main elements of gang composition as reported by the participants; appearance, anti-social behaviour, crime and recruitment.

The 12 sub themes will be further explored in the discussion chapter and the researcher will examine the need for an early multidisciplinary response to emerging street gang behaviour and the training required for all responding authorities to identify street gang activity.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from the qualitative data and literature presented in Chapters Two and Four and provides detailed analysis. The discussion will focus on the key findings extracted from the forty-three police officer interviews, whose experience totals 652 years of policing including 11 years in New Zealand and 16 years in Britain. This evidence will be broken into themes and sub themes, and conclusions will then be drawn from the themes to identify opportunities for Victoria Police to adopt a position on the question of this thesis - "What is a Street Gang?"

Presently there is progressive organisational change to the manner that police had previously dealt with the gang phenomena which in the past had been limited in strategic thinking and primarily reactive - individualised responses to quell each 'problem'. The previous approach was revealed in the analysis of the interviews as a 'denial' of the street gang phenomena. Evidence of this can also be found in the previous response to the threat of Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs in Victoria, which has seen a significant turnaround in operational response from the evidence presented by Victoria Police at the Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission in Melbourne in 2008, evidence presented considered OMCGs not to be organised crime.

The chapter contains eight primary themes supported by sub themes and the conclusions then drawn as to the meaning of the findings. Theme one analyses the core identifiers that is perceived by police as street gang presence. The sub themes explain the background to that perception and are the following: crime, anti-social behaviour,

appearance, and recruitment, factors that influenced police awareness and conclusions, encompassing crime and behaviour.

Theme two explores the question as to purpose and looks at the factors of what has drawn individuals to the street gang and includes the sub themes: bond and its link to ethnicity, badging and territoriality.

Theme three analyses grouping and the data revealed within the following sub themes: gender, age, period of gang endurance and membership numbers.

Theme four explores the relevance of leadership and its relationship and influence to organisation within the gang.

Theme five analyses communication and a gangs purpose for using social media.

Theme six captures the experience of police officers examining their limited knowledge and awareness to address the gang phenomena.

Theme seven addresses the response required to address street gang presence and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach.

The last theme explores the importance of policing leadership in its support to frontline policing.

5.2 The Core Identifiers: Crime, Anti-Social Behaviour, Appearance, and Recruitment

Police officers interviewed recalled numerous behaviours that they witnessed as common in their interactions with those persons they considered to be gang members, which drew their attention to them. These observations would provide valuable insights for future training as it provided the core elements of perceived gang behaviour.

5.2.1 Crime and anti-social behaviour

Anti-social behaviour was the crux of 32 of the conversations with the participants, who stressed fear and intimidation caused by gang presence, provided the gang with empowerment. A loose affiliate of like-minded individuals who form a peer group for social or cultural attachment - a common interest but sometimes their activities are deemed anti-social and inevitably draw attention to them. The question is differentiating the peer group who is perceived as a gang due to a lapse in behaviour, against those whose original purpose has swayed to reinforcing presence through delinquent behaviour, be it anti-social and or criminal (White, 1999; 2007b).

Place yourself in this unenviable position of avoiding public locations because you know there 'could' be persons gathered there that you have previously encountered or warned by others "don't go there". You do not know if your suspicions will be confirmed but it is better not to take the chance. This group may not have approached you but their mere presence and behaviour has been factored in your decision to avoid possible confrontation. Is this a reasonable decision? Would you or have you made the same decision, avoidance being the preferred strategy?

Your decision is also influenced by media reports of excessive violence, violence for violence sake it would appear and confirmed by alarming youth crime statistics (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).The decision of avoidance is even now more sound, as it is corroborated by other evidence allowing you some comfort be it one that is to avoid perceived confrontation.

The difference between the two groups originally discussed is the normality of their anti-social behaviour against that of a lapse in behaviour or misunderstanding. Concerning, is that normality has led to a sense of enjoyment in causing fear through behaviour and presence

(van Gemert, et al. 2008) and extended to crimes of violence that are blurred between actual

financial need or recreational violence and dominance. Normality was also revealed as

weekly church attendance by pacific island youth to then later commit acts of violence. When

violence dominates their life and that of the group, White's (2008b) interpretation is that this

constitutes a street gang as they have moved from "difference" to "deviance" (p.143).

Haskins (1974, p.10) findings are that this shift is caused by a combination of "loneliness and

nobodiness – the complete anonymity" and by being in the gang you are somebody.

Anti-social behaviour, coupled with what is perceived to be linked to those who

identify with this behaviour, can manifest in various ways. These perceived identifiers can

also be confused between a peer group and a gang and is dependent on intention. Unified

appearance is one example, be it clothing, tattoos, symbols, stylized hair, including language

and hand signs, its reason are interpreted by the individual and the witness in different ways

based on the setting (Klein, 2002) as to the reality of gang membership.

5.2.2 Appearance

An individual or group who had a common identifier or symbol of group unification

was commonly suggested by 33 participants as an indicator of gang entity. Clothing, or how

it was worn, was considered the most popular indicia usually based on mimicking USA

themes particularly clothing which was blue or red, representing the colours worn by the Crip

or Blood street gang originating from the USA. Interesting, was that the officers did not have

an understanding of the history of the existence of these gangs, nor what they represented and

this included the persons they spoke to.

This then also questions the interpretation of the officer's classification of this group

wearing similar clothing as a gang and those who are not like in appearance but are

essentially a gang. It raises the question of 'single fact interpretation' without other

behavioural evidence and missing actual evidence of gang presence due to tunnel vision and or the 'blinkers effect' of not looking. The mere fact that someone wears colours representative of a Crip or Blood does that alone define them as a gang? It questions the presence of other socially accepted group identities linked to like clothing, such as policing, health, military or sports clubs, are they then a gang? The difference with the latter is community acceptance against that of perceptions of safety.

The officers interviewed did not limit their interpretation of a gang to just appearance, though 10 did not discuss this at all, which questions either their observations or the groups they encountered did not adopt this symbolism for numerous reasons including social disadvantage (McCluskey, 2013) or to not draw police attention.

Regrettably, most of the 33 participants did not question the persons they encountered as to the reasoning for their appearance and just accepted it was a gang identifier. This evidence would have been valuable to this study and it is considered that questions were not asked, as the value or relevance of that information was not considered. Questions of this nature would have supported or challenged their interpretation of what they encountered and may have assisted in the reasoning for a person's recruitment into a gang.

5.2.3 Recruitment

Knowledge in this area was unfortunately limited to six participants who linked recruitment to family, peers, culture, schools, and railway stations. None were able to drill down to the cause only what they were witnessing through their interaction and in some cases, the questioning of suspects during criminal interviews.

Transit hubs were seen as places where others gathered as a meeting spot and 'hung out' and seen as ripe for influencing vulnerable youth who gathered at these locations, due to limited access to social amenities and activities. The introduction of Protective Service

Officers to patrol every metropolitan railway station will have a deterrent on that recruitment method and is presently also accredited to increased community perceptions of safety where they patrol (State Government Victoria, 2013).

Vulnerable youth within growth corridors who do not have transport hubs or appropriate government support due to public service cuts (Cummins, Scott, & Scales, 2012) will seek other locations to congregate. Of additional concern, within these growth corridors is the settlement of immigrants who will be attracted to affordable housing and like ethnic communities, who already face cultural integration barriers due to racism on both sides and acceptance of societal norms including laws. These concerns will position some of these immigrants to be exposed to drivers of criminal behaviour and seek solace and protection within their own communities, as historically has been the case. In 2010-11, Victoria had the second largest settlement of immigrants in Australia, at 26.9%, who settled in the north-west and south-eastern growth corridors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010-11).

Schools, though indicated in this research as a recruitment source, the only evidence provided was restricted to an Asian gang where recruitment took place at university level. It does makes sense that school grounds are a valuable source for peer recruitment as suggested in USA research by Hill, Liu & Hawkins (2001), their research indicating that upon entry to high school was the susceptible period but there is insufficient evidence to support a conclusion within Victoria.

Family and peers were considered as strong influences in recruitment, also witnessed through street contact and supported by the loyalty to those within the group. Children as young as 10 years of age were seen associating in the late hours with older family members and behaving in a manner a lot older than their years. As recruitment is required to maintain a gang's existence, there is therefore a need to identify suitable education strategies through case analysis and this is required within a whole of government transparent approach.

5.3 Purpose: Bond, Ethnicity, Badging and Territoriality

Theme two explores the question as to purpose and looks at the factors of what has drawn individuals to the street gang and includes the sub themes: bond and its link to ethnicity, badging and territoriality. Thrasher explains that the gang function offers, "A substitute for what society fails to give; and it provides a relief from suppression and distasteful behaviour. It fills a gap and affords an escape" (1927, p.33).

5.3.1 Bond

A bond, be it social, friendship, like interests, culture, similar familial backgrounds and or community rejection, was noted by 31 of the participants as a common characteristic within gangs. This union came in numerous other forms and appeared to be a rite of passage that was tested through their loyalty to the gang.

This rite in some cases drew alarm within their own community and was alienating them as one officer explained. The community in one inner city social housing setting were also reduced to limited police interaction due to concern of retaliation by the local gang if seen together.

The participants were not able to discuss with any detail the backgrounds of the individuals they had encountered but based their conclusions on what they were witnessing, primarily a bond resulting in group cohesion, brought about by various reasons unknown to them but family and culture being one common view.

Cultural appearance and family is not an unreasonable conclusion for cohesion and is one that is expected but the warning bells for the officers were the behavioural clues of anti-social activities and rebellion towards police and or authority. The rebellious bond was further reinforced through location, group appearance and or a name that the researcher describes as 'badging'. The purpose of these signifiers was not unknown to the participants

but time was not taken to ask the typical questions of 'whys and how's' that would confirm their assumptions. It just seemed a question of what would the police officer do with this information in any case, due to their complaint of dismissive concern by superiors, so any gleaned information became tacit to the member.

A reasonable conclusion can be drawn that for a gang to exist, a bond is crucial to its longevity, as without a sense of purpose and belonging there is no reason to continue the interaction. Spergel (1995) explains that the 'bond' is an answer to their confusion as to social identity coupled with doubt of purpose or self-worth, the gang drawing vulnerable people together, resulting in a sense of identity supported through street socialization.

White (2008b, p.143) also discusses the need to "valorise" due to the "othering" process, which he identifies as those persons born in Australia but of ethnic parents and still determined as non-Australian. The gang in this case is considered as a means of protection from outside hostility and bigotry and not necessarily criminality.

Understanding the background and purpose for what has drawn this vulnerable group together is therefore a crucial first step in addressing and appropriately responding to what is identified as gang presence. The response should be designed to break the bond that leads to the anti-social and criminal behaviour and not necessarily the friendship and what was the original purpose of their union.

5.3.2 Ethnicity

Who you hang around with is likewise shaped by ethnicity, among other social factors. Whether or not you are considered a member of a 'gang' is partly a matter of perception (and, indeed, whose perception) (White, 2008b, p.140).

The bond through cultural identity was evident to 31 of the officers and the most noticeable of concern were of Middle Eastern, Asian, African, Maori, and Pacific Islander

ethnicity. The three latter groups were of particular concern due to their propensity for violence, for violence sake, coupled with their intimidating stature and demeanour.

Literature reveals that migration, particularly the second generation, are commonly linked to criminal behaviour due to cultural repression (van Gemert, et al., 2008; Klein, 2001; Vigil, 2008; White, 2008b) and this understandable within the African population who had fled persecution and war and consisted of 70% of the refugee intake under the Australian Humanitarian Program in 2004-2005 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2008). So how is this relevant to Maori and Pacific Islanders? These groups are not fleeing repressed or war torn countries. What is their excuse for using violence and intimidation?

Discussions with present and ex NZ Police Officers revealed quite a number of this group were born in Australia, others sent to Australia to protect them from influences at home and for better opportunities. Though possibly good family intentions, can the outcome be partly blamed on the separation of family and trying to assimilate? Did they now consider themselves outcasts or were they now placed in an environment worse than what they were escaping? How do you explain an Australian born Maori youth visiting family in NZ and returning to Australia emulating a perceived gang legend? These are questions for further research within this particular group but some of their challenges are not dissimilar to the African population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2006) particularly familial, separation and limited guidance.

People looking in, without the experience and knowledge, cannot differentiate between what is and isn't a gang (White, 2008b) but when witnessing particularly non-Australian groups of youths together, there is a strong perception that it is a gang. The researcher has, on numerous occasions, been called upon by the media to discuss street gang activity, particularly relating to an 'ethnic youth incident' involving violence. The immediate journalistic relationship to gang involvement is that the perpetrators are ethnic, it was a

group, and there was violence, so it must be a gang. Interestingly there was no media contact when similar incidents involving Caucasians occur. Perhaps there is no financial gain from this reporting as opposed to a story on ethnic conflict as propositioned by Gatt (2012), a story she considered the public wanted to read as it confirmed their thinking. Campbell and Julian in their research on African refugees in Tasmania, support the financial gain theory, explaining that, "controversy and emotion (especially fear) 'sells papers' it remains an unnerving influence on public opinion" (2009, p.22). Irresponsible media reporting that glorifies gang exploits, Haskins explains, "Make respectable citizens uncomfortable, if not downright afraid" (1974, p.7).

White (2008b) concurs that the media are irresponsible in their fixation with the reporting of ethnic youth gangs and explains that ethnicity is both central to group formation and to the gang phenomenon in contemporary Australia. How one group grows from one identity (non-gang) to the street gang, White explains is based on purpose. Numerous factors have bonded the group, including territory, ethnic identity and social interaction but the emergence to gang formation is not just limited to illegal activity and violence, as both groups could have these features, it is the admission of gang membership and the "type and extent of violence in which they engage; thus, group identity is still crucial to the key focus of group activity" (p.149).

Though cultural identity was strong within most gangs, this was contradicted in some cases by allowing others outside their ethnicity to join them. It questioned the purpose of cultural identity and again the reasoning for territoriality. These hybrid gangs were noted with the mixing of Pacific Island and African gangs and Asian gangs with Caucasian presence, but both were not a common occurrence. Again, further research is required to establish reasoning for this affiliation by both parties of this union.

The importance and relevance of history to address a problem is common, through revealing the past to address the present and future, this approach is no different with street gangs, yet it is not occurring. As history is recorded for most events, this should also be the case when Victoria Police, government, and non-government organisations are dealing with street gang issues. It is an important factor when addressing and understanding gang behaviour. If you do not understand the background and history of the gang, how can you really address the problem? Police intelligence recording practices tend to glaze over history (Victoria Police Intelligence Model, 2007) which can result in important points not being considered as part of the intelligence process (Boyle, P., 2005).

Victorian street gangs are replicating most but not all USA themes and questions are asked of the researcher in his role as a sworn police officer "Why are they doing that? Why are most gangs ethnic based?" Some answers to questions are within history so to understand the street gang phenomena, there is a need to delve into the past (Hagedorn, 2008) to avoid repeating mistakes and to enhance Victoria Police's capability to understand the present. Martin (1993) supports this view by explaining that the future is controlled by exploring the past; "change by looking in, not out" (p.117).

Haskins (1974) and Valdez's (2009) research of American gang history dating back to the 1900s, revealed answers to identify youth at risk of gang involvement. Ethnicity, class distinction, poverty, racism, and bias resulted in the earliest forms of territoriality. Like communities protecting each other from those they determined were a threat, rivalry resulting in violent retaliation.

Does this all sound familiar? The behaviour and reasoning for gang formation replicate history, so there is a need to understand the past so as to recognise and address behavioural patterns leading to gang formation. Further challenges to Victoria Police will be the ever increasing diverse population, again challenged by migration from various sources as

was the case in the 1950s with the arrival of the European settler and the Vietnamese in the 1970s.Victoria Police has been diligent and sensitive in its collection of 'ethnic data' and used evidence only when challenged on behavioural concerns by African youth (Oakes, 2012). One police officer discovered, "*They feel shunned by local community, as much as they might try they need to look at each other as a point of survival. Seek solace in the gang till things change and they can see it has" (No.33).* Hagedorn's assessment supports this statement, "Gangs are shaped by racial and ethnic oppression, as well as poverty and slums, and are a reaction of despair to persisting inequality" (2008, p. xxiv).

Pitts (2008, p.5) poses another theory as to gang formation that "social class offers a more salient explanatory schema than race". Then there are those who are neither discriminated due to race, poverty or social standing but are formed from middle and upper class communities and crave risk and power and opportunities that can bring financial reward (Johnson, 2004). As can be seen the reasons for gang formation are not limited to ethnicity alone and by doing so is simplistic and can lead to stereotyping.

5.3.3 Badging

The word badging has been used by the researcher to explain various methods to record 'identity' and presence via a name and this then being announced verbally or visually through markings on their body, clothing or walls or hand signs. This symbol of unity is recorded in numerous forms; letters, numbers and though 36 officers noted badging, there was limited information provided as to its relevance, though some names had relevance through a territorial link.

Commonly it was mentioned that the individual announced themselves as a Crip or a Blood, usually Maoris or Pacific Islanders but the rationale was not known. Officers rarely explored reason, just acceptance that most of this ethnicity identified themselves by either of

these names. The officers considered having a name was irrelevant to whether they were a gang, as it was behaviour of people that escalated their interest. Though understandable, this was a missed opportunity to delve and create conversation through interest.

Badging is a form of identity and through this loyalty, friendship, and trust is formed and with this a method of communication through gestures, hand signs, monikers, symbols and graffiti is developed. There is a blurring between badging and appearance, one not necessarily being there without the other. The difference is that appearance is a perception of many things. The declaration of a name is the confirmation of a formation, a body, a group who are like-minded as one participant explained, *"Recognising themselves by name, trying to promote and or have recognition to up their profile" (No.34).*

Identity is discussed by all gang scholars and it is agreed that persons involved in a gang are looking for a sense of ownership and that identity is established through acceptance and then membership into the gang. The name of the gang is now symbolised with you being part of that gang and therefore part of what you are striving for has been completed. Thrasher's view is as relevant today as it was when he conducted his research into gangs in 1927, with regards to symbolisation for the individual of gang membership. "Gangs represent the spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exist" (p.32).

Police officers must understand what the gang name symbolizes. Is it territorial, is it hatred or crime based, does this gang pose a threat or is its purpose social? There is a need to break the code of relevance as to purpose, so all markings or symbols linked to the gang, must also be considered in its message.

It is also a misnomer that all gangs have a name and this was the response of the participants regarding African gangs as no gang name or identifier could be linked to them,

though they were considered a gang due to their criminal activities, notably violent behaviour and also appearance and presence. This is not to say that the group did or didn't have a name, it was just not known or promoted or maybe not asked by the officers. The limited number of officers that had any contact with African youth had mixed reactions when they approached them. Interestingly those 'claiming' they had been boy soldiers in Sudan were standoffish and those who actually had been victims were humble in their conversation with the police.

Badging is one part of the gang process in its evolution and should not be relied upon as gang formation unless other factors are present, such as admission. But what of admission if the police officer does not consider it is a gang as officer No. 21 experienced? Importantly, he recognised all the associated identifiers and determined at that point in time what he was witnessing was not a gang. This reinforces the importance of education and awareness through training, which contributes towards appropriate recording of intelligence through validation.

5.3.4 Territoriality

> *Territoriality is a kind of 'super-place attachment'; while there may be benefits of mutual support by getting involved there is also a darker side, which potentially leads to violence and isolation from the wider community (Kintrea et al. 2008, p.4).*

Territory was understood by the participants to be a base or location where a 'gang hung out' usually linked to the suburb where they lived, but this was never explored, it was just accepted by 33 participants that these persons they identified were from a particular area and that some symbolized that within their gang name. The reasoning for symbolization was not known or considered.

Territory was used by officers to locate those of interest and to identify those within their patrol area who were 'locals' as is required of any astute officer. But what of those who travel to join a gang in a suburb not aligned to them and protect that territory or adopt the

name of a gang to which is aligned to a location that they have no affinity to? What was the attraction for these persons? It cannot be just linked to the location, so is it the people who reside there and or their culture that has drawn them and what are the benefits they derive from this? Whyte's (1943) explanation is one of cohesion that is missing within their boundaries so it is sought elsewhere. Kudos is also an explanation where there is a need for identity, as a gang can bring with it notoriety through the status of membership (Kintrea et al. 2008, pp. 13-14). Safety in numbers due to social marginalisation and racial vilification are also factors to be considered. Of concern, as something arising from this analysis is that when the need for cohesion is then blurred with group criminality and so it becomes one of mutual benefit that either could not be achieved singularly.

Territory can also be aligned to the officers interviewed by the researcher because it is where they gained this insight into these gangs 'within their territory'. The police officers relationship to territory is one of protection through community service to the area they are responsible for, though some might actually also reside there, this being most common in country locations. So, in the case of dual residency and workplace, it could be considered that a police officer may have a heightened sense of protection and security for their family, community and themselves.

Territory can be used as an intervention and disruption tool through the targeting of those identified locations to reduce recidivism, instil community confidence through crime prevention and assist in identifying other vulnerable persons (Kintrea et al. 2008, pp.43-48).This would be more effective through a joint agency approach as this would be an ideal way to identify and refer persons with anti-social tendencies resulting from various stressors including, alcohol, mental health and societal rejection. For this to be achievable, the unsolicited sharing of information between agencies would be paramount.

There are significant questions as to the relevance of territory and its link to gang membership as there is confusion as to what territory actually is and how it manifests. Is it a suburb of residence, a location within that suburb that a gang has adopted or is territory what is deemed at the time or place as yours? An example of this is the displayed dominance of persons within a train carriage en-route to a desired destination, instilling fear in the passengers whilst in transit. How is territory different in context and operation when it relates to a crime syndicate in comparison to a street gang? These are all questions that require research.

Typically territory is commonly linked to a suburb which is defined as having the conditions required for the emergence of street gangs due to social ill harmony determined by a combination of factors including culture, infrastructure, social housing (Kintrea et al. 2008, pp.49-55) and the dominant presence of residents of ethnic origin (White, 2008b). These 'melting pots' lead to preconceived decisions (that are not unjustified), that these conditions will lead to groups of rebellious violent youth, therefore the formation of street gangs and continuous conflict in these locations leading to recreational violence.

Territoriality can vary as to how it looks from location to location and with this the variation on how it impacts the community. Not all gangs are territorial and their link to territory is one of perception due solely to a social meeting place resulting in mislabelling (Young, Fitzgerald, Hallsworth & Joseph, 2007).

5.4 Grouping: Gender, Age, Gang Endurance, and Membership Numbers

Theme three analyses grouping and the data revealed within the following sub themes: gender, age, period of gang endurance and membership numbers.

5.4.1 Gender and age

Males are the 'dominant' presence within gangs and history has recorded this since 1200 A.D. with the forming of a male gang called the thugz (representative now of the word thugs). 'Thugz' characteristics were not dissimilar to those of gangs today; a distinct appearance, methods of communication and anti-social behaviour (Johnson, 2004). Gender ratios within the USA of 10 males to 1 female or more are common and in rare cases 1 to 1 (Thornberry et. al, 2006, pp.30-42). Male dominance within gangs is no different within Victoria and naturally to be the case across Australia, as is criminal offending by males outstripping that of females (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Case studies revealed during the interviews, found that females have a dominant presence within a gang as an aggressor, inciting male members to confront others and also intimidating police officers into a response. The 34 participants that discussed the presence of females within or associated with gangs commonly described them as displaying bravado, intimidating and feral, all usually when intoxicated. Though most officers believed that the girls were not members but 'hangers on' their non-membership role was a significant one with the responsibility of carrying and concealing weapons and stolen property, drug distribution, providing an alibi and to lie and hinder police on the street and/or during search warrant executions. Pitts' UK research produced similar evidence of female supportive behaviour, the girls even accepting blame and receiving jail sentences, describing these persons as "essentially unrewarded aspirants trying to gain acceptance" (2008, pp.72-73).

All these actions and roles were to gain respect from the 'gang members' and differs slightly from the reasoning for gang membership to gain identity and respect from others. Presumably, the girls would benefit indirectly from their association with the gang through reward for the service provided but understanding the involvement of girls in gangs was beyond the scope of this study and was not information that was shared with the researcher

by the interviewees. One officer suggested that, *"They did so to gain respect. Girls were hangers on and when there is a brawl they get involved. They are feral" (No.24).* This assessment must be considered in any response to female presence or membership within a gang and not presume that their reasoning or what they may be escaping is identical to that of the male. Three officers expressed concern with the increasing Sudanese female presence within gangs of like ethnicity, *"Girls had a significant presence of 30%-50% and very aggressive, more so than the males" (No 25)* and *"When drinking they are the worst" (No. 9).*There must also be careful consideration that any dismissiveness in thinking as to female gang presence could also cause focus on males as supported by Sikes, 1997 (cited Shelden et al. 2004). Chesney-Lind and Hagedorn (1999) in their review of authors on the subject of girls and gangs between the 1920s and 1990s warn that they have "long been present but invisible" (p.3).

There is no evidence of the age that these individuals were accepted into the gang, how long they were members, their departure age, and who of the group were actually members. This can only be established through the questioning of those identified and this was outside the scope of the research. The reliance of the opinions of the police officers is the soul to this research and their evidence of age is supported by Miller, (1992); Klein, (2007); Pitts, (2008) and research by Valdez (2009, p.27) indicates that sixty to seventy five per cent of the street gang membership in the USA is between 14-30 years of age as supported by Egley Jr., et al. (2006, p. xii).

Interestingly in Australia, persons aged 15-19 are substantially more likely to come into police contact due to criminal offending, at almost three times the occurrence than other age groups (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012). Particularly of concern is that this age group is responsible for the highest violent crime offending, except for homicide, which was the 20-24 years age group.

Victoria Police has recognised and is responding to this concern by improving community safety through the development of an assessment and prioritisation tool to identify youth at risk of recidivism, enabling early intervention (Victoria Police Blueprint, 02 Action A7, 2012-15).

5.4.2 Gang endurance and membership numbers

Vision across Victoria Police is limited as to the life span and membership numbers within street gangs. Apart from OMCGs, Victoria Police cannot confidently identify the presence and number of street gangs in Victoria. The recording of street gangs on the Victoria Police LEAP (Victoria Police 2000) system is ad-hoc and not updated as to currency, suggesting a need for a central depository for the recording of names of gangs, their membership, activities, and methodology to gain a reasonable understanding on their relationship to criminal activity. This limited intelligence impacts on the development of assessment tools and therefore disruption strategies.

As street gangs have not been a point of interest due to the common response of "denial" by the interviewees', the result is mixed messages as to what is actually known. What is presently recorded within LEAP is based on personal opinion without validation. A police officer records their opinion that the person they have had contact with is a street gang member, it is accepted and recorded, and it is that easy. How do you record the presence of a gang or a gang member without agreed requirements and then substantiated by a person who is suitability qualified to validate the supplied intelligence? In addition, the information now remains on LEAP and there is no follow up as to currency so when any search is conducted – usually in response to media outrage, the data is fouled as to context.

The tacit knowledge supplied by the participants as to gang endurance was also mixed as to accuracy, because of relevance to here and now. As members transfer positions within

Victoria Police Commands and Departments, their knowledge relates to what they were exposed to and therefore a reflection on their encounter. Comments of gang existence between 4-5 years and 7-12 years was common and in most cases those facts would have to be relied upon through on-going communication with fellow officers after they transferred or historical knowledge passed on to them upon arrival in position. Victoria Police could also be duplicating reporting, as members told of some gang members transferring their allegiance to another gang which would result in membership numbers within gangs being distorted or inflated.

The response to OMCG presence by the formation of the Victoria Police Echo Task in 2011 has resulted in the collation and validation of OMCG intelligence provided by police officers and is proof that Victoria Police is now responding effectively to the threat of organised crime by OMCGs. The thirst for knowledge by police officers as to the appropriate collection and recording of OMCG encounters has been proven by the significant hits on the OMCG education hub on the Victoria Police Intranet site since its introduction on the 30 June 2012 – 35332 views. This can also be taken into context with the need to understand how to identify and address street gangs.

Intelligence and education was seen as critical factors by over half of the interviewed police officers and particular reference to a prompt card, detailing known characteristics but not limited to just appearance and street gang name. The present Victoria Police Field Contact form (Victoria Police 2003) used to record contact with persons of interest, was not deemed suitable as an aid, though this form has been revised to include reasoning for the person being approached and a copy given to the person of interest.

A suitable prompt card has been developed by the researcher (Appendix F) based on the input provided by the participants during the research and prior knowledge gained through Churchill Fellowship studies in the USA. This would assure the police officer that all

considered identifiers were recorded and allow for any additional information that may form part of a trend. An analyst with extensive exposure to gang membership supported this initiative as a consistent and reliable approach to accurate recording of street gang contact.

For any street gang to survive, membership numbers is crucial to their continued existence and is essential to mark presence. A gang can disband due to various people within the gang no longer needing what they originally sought by being part of its membership or due to incarceration. 'Gang today, gone tomorrow' and there is no understanding as to why it was formed, why it disbanded and how long this gang existed. These are answers that are required to assist in responding to gang presence so that any strategy is based on acquired evidence. The other question is what of those who still want the ideology that they sought and found within the gang but now have lost due to disbandment. It is presumed they will seek this elsewhere, as has been discovered in NZ (Gilbert, 2013), the street gang being a precursor for membership to an OMCG. As also explained by one ex NZ police officer, street gangs were also a stepping point into ethnic gangs *"The Bloods were affiliated with the Mongrel Mob and the Crips with the Black Power" (No.7).*

5.5 Leadership: Its Relevance within the Gang

Theme four explores the relevance of leadership and its relationship and influence on organisation within the gang.

> *The autonomy from authority so highly prized on the street inhibits effective leadership (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p.275).*

There is a perception that for gangs to exist there must be a hierarchical structure to maintain identity, loyalty and purpose (Johnson, 2004). This is also the thinking of the general population and understandably due to various influences, particularly journalistic accounts. Johnson explains over time, gang structure is maintained by a 'changing of the guard' based on members moving on for various reasons such as their age, employment or

incarceration. Yablonsky (1959) describes the structure within a gang as to be filled with persons with similar needs and therefore a further answer to their problems, as there was no need for questions as to their decisions. Sanchez-Jankowski, (1991, p.23) identified these persons as "defiant individualists" who did not want to answer to any form of authority or control.

The presumption that all gangs are hierarchical and are guided by rules is not supported by the findings in this research. Yes, historically, there are gangs that have structure; Outlaw Motor Cycle Gangs, Organised Crime Syndicates, Triads, and the Mafia for example, criminality a key value to their existence. The belief also is that if the depiction of a USA street gang does not match what is being witnessed therefore it isn't a gang, is also flawed. The USA, the founder of street gangs has also encountered this problem, cities, comparing their gangs to those from Los Angeles, resulting in denial based on comparison. If a USA street gang is depicted as violent, structured, organised, has leadership, a name and uniformity such as colours and a symbol, and that is not totally representative of what is being witnessed, it is therefore erroneously presumed that it cannot be a gang. Typecasting has been the answer to not addressing an issue because it does not match exactly what is being encountered.

This small study found that to consider that a gang has to follow exactly the purported USA standard is a fantasy with no thought given to individuality and local context. Consideration must be given to the circumstances as to why someone joins or forms a gang and for what purpose. Objections to the USA stereotypical gang definition were also encountered in the UK, as reported by Aldridge, Medina, and Ralphs (2008). It was considered by UK researchers that their gangs or what they called "troublesome British youth groups, do not meet the USA definition of gangs and are instead unstructured, loose knit and therefore different from American Gangs" (p.34). Klein defines this as the Eurogang

Paradox, explaining that there are "denials that there are street gangs in Europe, because they don't fit the American pattern of highly structured, cohesive, violent gangs" (2001, p.7). Aldridge et al. (2008) agreed with the UK finding, explaining that this is also the situation in the USA, the stereotypical gang descriptor not being the norm.

This is similar to the previous discussion of membership and accepting those they encountered were members without exploring further. Are these 10-12 year olds actual members or 'wannabees' and the 15-16 years old are they prospects? The 17 – 24 years old are presumed members and the oldest would have to be the leader. Or, is the leader the person with the dominant presence due to stature? All of these are valid assertions but without verification, are again possible comparisons to perceived USA gang norms.

Victoria Police officers had limited knowledge of the presence of leadership, or structure within the gangs they encountered. A third of the interviewed participants encountered leadership within a gang, a third had not witnessed it, and the balance did not mention it in discussions. It is possible the last group did not consider its relevance or witnessed anything that drew their attention.

The officers who were confident in their assessment of leadership were those who had investigative experience (*n*=15, refer Table 4.2) and provided evidence based assertions disclosed during the interviews of gang members for criminal offences. Leadership was prominent within some Asian gangs, with the presence of a leader, and an appointed deputy in case of incarceration. The Asian male gang profile was noticeably different in reported average age grouping (18-19 years), the oldest being 36 years and their recruitment was within higher education systems. The researcher supports this assessment based on his prior experience investigating Asian gangs from 2000 - 2006. An ode of allegiance to each other within one Asian gang and conflict restricted to those of like ethnicity also differentiated

Asian gangs from other like groups. Stature and fear based leadership was also noted within some Lebanese and Maori gangs by the participants.

It was evident within most gangs that leadership was loose and that the majority of any anti-social or criminal activity was through opportunity more so than prior planning. Those with the required skills to complete the crime be it physical or knowledge based, as previously discussed by Decker & Van Winkle (1996) as situational leadership, age graded leadership as mentioned by Klein, (1971) and Vigil (1988), and familial leadership as prevised by Cunningham et al., (2013), would be called upon to undertake the task.

Interestingly, the Europol Organised Crime Report 2013 discusses many crime groups "often adopting a shared (or 'group') leadership approach, and/or a flexibility hierarchy" (p.36). This group approach is through the pooling of effort to attain the objective, calling on personal skills to meet a need.

Occasion leadership seems to have more relevance to the setting that the officers were witnessing in their encounters with gangs, the gang comprising mixed personalities and skills and a reluctance to be led. There is an obvious need to gain a greater understanding of the persons the subject of this discussion to confirm this hypothesis but Klein's explanation does support the theory of 'occasion leadership', "A single leader is uncommon; many influential members is the more common practise" (2007, p.53).

5.6 Communication and Social Media

Theme five analyses communication and a gangs purpose in the use of social media. The interviews revealed the limited recognition or understanding by police as to the use of communication by gang members through social media, language, gestures, hand signs, music, or acts.

The use of Facebook or YouTube for self-promotion, vilification and taunting, was known by nine participants. Seven noted but did not necessarily understand or question the use of hand signs, language, gestures, graffiti, appearance or acts as a source of communication, though were mindful of the colours blue and red having possible relevance to identity. Communication was limited in its focus to social media, texting, or phone calls and there was no correlation to communication in any other form, resulting in missed opportunities for discussion with those who used these tools so as to define its purpose.

The use of hand signs was considered as a mimicking of rappers and this followed also as to dress sense and language, though not established. Visual and verbal communication was not seen as a tool for fear by establishing presence and with that notoriety. Graffiti was also not considered in its aim as a tool of establishing presence, challenge, tribute or glorification, (Valdez, 2009) just mindless scribble, never considering that 'walls talk', as Phillips explains, graffiti is just "gangbangin on a wall" (1999, p.21).

Through various presentations and conferences the researcher (in his role as a police officer) has explained the relevance to letters, numbers and cross outs over the top of graffiti and only through this exposure have some of the participants realised its relevance and confirmed its presence, reinforcing the importance of education. This study has found that you cannot address something that you cannot identify or understand its purpose.

Technology and in particular communications, will continue to influence community behaviours, resulting in significant challenges but also opportunities. It will also influence Victoria Police, as it will challenge how the organisation can effectively respond across all crime types that technology is influencing. The on-going development of search tools and investigative mediums relating to social media has required law enforcement to develop the investigative tools required to interrogate.

Social media over time has repeated itself in many forms and observed through the use of phones, pagers, mobile phones and now the internet. The internet is further evolving the communication cycle commencing with Hotmail, followed by Facebook and Instagram, through to encrypted sites such as Hushmail, Viber, and Ansa, and now the Deep Web, fuelled by online digital currency - Bitcoin (Grossman & Newton-Small, 2013).

Social media has been used by street gangs to boast about their exploits and achievements so as to impose their presence and flaunt their disregard for authority. They have become adept at using this tool to challenge and to threaten rivals. As was graffiti the newspaper of the street, electronic graffiti through the internet has exposed their message to a broader audience (Pyrooz, Decker & Moule, 2013). Such is the power of this median that a rap video released by a street gang in the USA, which promoted their beliefs, colours, territory and weapons achieved 90000 hits within four months of posting (West Vallejo Tunes, 2012).

Victoria is also not immune to online banter through chat rooms between gang members, leading to a deteriorated war of words resulting in physical violence. Victoria's first exposure to this type of outcome occurred in 2004 when 100 youths from two rival gangs met in the Flagstaff Gardens Melbourne to resolve a dispute linked to a girl, resulting in one youth's arm being severed (Victoria Police Asian Squad, Operation Khaki). The researcher was at that time the Detective Inspector in charge of the Asian Squad.

Though acts of violence is promoted and supported through social media and accepted by the police officers as a sign of authority by a gang, the violent actions were not seen as a communication tool. The violent act reinforces presence and the message is reflected throughout the community, through the control of fear and amplified through media attention. The promotion of physical strength played out through violent behaviour has now placed the gang in control due to their overt actions. This is a profound message that police need to

understand is breaching community perceptions of safety both threatening and powerful in its message, whether the gang realised is unknown and a question that needs to be asked.

5.7 Knowledge and Awareness

The value of intelligence is dependent on the quality of information collected, the skills of the intelligence practitioner and the ability of the decision maker to turn intelligence into action (Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine, p.1.5).

Theme six captures the experience of police officers examining their limited knowledge and awareness to address the gang phenomena.

There was a vast difference in the knowledge and awareness levels of police to confidently identify and address gang behaviour. Participants were drawn either to the behaviour and appearance of individuals or groups or responding to a community complaint. Twenty-five percent (*n*=10) discussed gang presence with reasonable confidence of what they were witnessing and how they defined gang crime but limited understanding of the reasons for these persons membership.

It was obvious to these officers that a number of these persons were engaging in an apprenticeship of criminality, qualified by their anti-social behaviour, theft and violence, though many had not been detected and apprehended on this journey. Most officers did not consider that these gang members could also be potentially victims of their own settings of having no choice due to their vulnerability. This vulnerability coming in many forms and understanding no other life than what they have been exposed to, due to familial placement (Cunningham et al. 2013; Shelden, et al. 2004).

Without the luxury of being able to interview the subjects of comment, it sets the tone that a reasonable person could foresee where this behaviour will lead to but it was being ignored or not seen as gang behaviour. Common was the reply by the officers that the threat was not seen by their superiors as one of justification to design a response, "just kids being

kids'' or as one member aptly explained *"It's this ignorance that gives them their power. We tend to ignore it and sweep it under the carpet, instead of just jumping on it"* (No 39).

Their tacit knowledge was not judged in these cases as being deemed relevant, yet the opinion of these officers was accepted for many and varied criminal activities they were confronting. Is it one of ignorance by those in a position of influence to make things happen, or personal points of view supported by others of like thinking, allowing them the self-assurance of their self-assessment?

Frustration was also sensed as to the participants limited understanding and willingness to take a step forward to increase their knowledge due to apprehension, that their limited subject matter experience would be sensed and exploited by the gang members they were speaking to. This judgement decision clouded by fear of the unknown is a key problem, as inexperienced police officers particular in the inner city, are tasked to address this behaviour but not with the right tools or experienced mentor to be guided through the gang culture. Though avoidance is not the answer - do not confront and you will not have a problem, stature and intimidation coupled with anti-police attitude leading to harassment allegations, caused apprehension and heightened concern. *"People seem to think the Maoris are a threat as they are so big. People are building them up and they are using it to their advantage. You follow up a complaint and find it is a small fat kid"* (No.7).

Subjectiveness also played a role – *"I don't think they are a gang but they do"* *(No.21).*Who is right? Nonaka's explanation to this problem is that "People don't just passively receive new knowledge, they actively interpret it to fit their own situation and perspective" (1998, p.39). This results in a 'diffusion of knowledge' as the receiver takes this knowledge away and communicates it differently than intended. In the case of most of these officers, this diffusion did not even take place as gang presence was not recognised, accepted, or mentioned, to their superiors.

Participants' spoke of a sense of relief that they could discuss their knowledge with a researcher who had an understanding of what they were witnessing, who valued their opinion and was not dismissive. It is valid in thinking that the researcher being a police officer caused a legitimatized belief that the level of discussion could be expanded without compromise or concern of incorrect interpretation. The tacit knowledge held by these officers may have also been restricted in response if shared with an academic due to the protective nature of policing.

Training and education is the answer within any organisation when employees are not able to respond effectively and confidently and this was echoed by 27 officers. How can one communicate and respond when you cannot interpret what you are witnessing? Some of the present training in the Victoria Police Academy environment is exposure through role play scenarios, arrest search and seizer of exhibits pertaining to a crime theme but the language and appearance is not contextual to the youth of today. The persons used for this training are police, ex-police, and unsworn members who are also unfamiliar. An improved approach could be the use of experienced youth workers and through knowledge sharing a dual education regime is established to respond to the difficulties they are both confronting.

What should be questioned is what are we trying to learn? What do we need to know? Where should we be going? What or who is the answer? If the role of frontline employees is to discover these answers, then it is the responsibility of senior management to act upon the transferred knowledge.

This responsibility was enshrined and introduced in the Victoria Police intelligence Model (VPIM, 2006) and was the foundation for intelligence led policing within Victoria Police and has led to the Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine (VPID, 2012) which is an evolving document. Victoria police has suffered from a lack of standardised intelligence tools and has released the VPID to increase the analytical capability of the organisation, ensuring

intelligence driven outcomes and the targeting of recidivist offenders. Twenty participants' expressed concern that there is limited recorded street gang intelligence and the researcher has struggled with the accuracy of the current intelligence as there is no classification and validation process.

The VPID provides an accountable, intelligence policy framework and sets the minimum standards required for the collection, analysis and reporting, to enable an effective response. This then allows for informed decisions to be managed through the Tasking and Coordination (T&C) process at Police Service Area, Division, Region, Command or State Level. By aligning intelligence and T&C as part of core business, it ensures 'every member' understands their role. The T&C process assesses the intelligence gleaned, prioritizes the response required, and aims also to address the drivers of the problem so as to map out long term requirements if any. In addition, each aspect of the response is reviewed as to its success or not. The primary focus is community safety by addressing harm across four categories: Crime, Family Violence, Public Order, and Road Policing with an emphasis on balanced tasking including considerations for a multidisciplinary approach.

Consultation and feedback is crucial to all aspects of the VPID process and for this doctrine to be successful, it requires support from middle managers. Importantly, the targeting of recidivist offending is paramount to the success of this model as the previous ad hoc approach to recidivism left significant gaps in the Victoria Police response to crime.

Tacit knowledge is a belief, an experience, a journey travelled and when someone recognizes that, shapes it, and takes the time and interest to further a person's passion, this process will lead to a greater or further articulation of their thinking for everyone.

5.8 Response: The Importance of a Multidisciplinary Approach

Theme seven addresses the response required to address street gang presence and the importance of a multidisciplinary approach.

The focus on fiscal restraint and sustainability will be an ever increasing priority in how we tailor a response to addressing gang behaviour and delivering strategies. There is a need to ensure a cross pollination across government and non-government organisations due to stretched capacity of Victoria Police resources.

Shared responsibility is more economically viable during these times of fiscal restraint as, without this approach Victoria Police will be left with the responsibility of addressing recidivist offenders whose anti-social behaviour will only increase over time if not holistically addressed.

Policing efforts to address disengaged youth who are susceptible to gang involvement and recruitment cannot be done in isolation, as there is a crucial need for a shared responsibility through regular engagement with other government departments, local council, community groups and industry to address the harm to the community, identify high risk community locations and understand the underlying social-issues.

An example of the success of a targeted, shared government and non-government response has been the focus of the New Zealand Ministry of Government to identify and assess the various risks linked to a community, family, or school. The pooling of resources has resulted in shared learning and targeted, expedient, and cost effective service provision outcomes (New Zealand Government, 2010; New Zealand Ministry of Justice, 2012). Similarly the literature supports the importance of a coordinated response (Gilbert & Newbold, 2006; Ayling, 2011) and collective responsibility.

Year 2 of the Victoria Police Blueprint Project 2012-15 is focused on crime reduction through a whole of government stakeholder engagement plan particularly to address the driver of high volume and violent crime. The plan centres on a two way communication with Victoria Police with all parties ensuring a collaborative approach and a strong emphasis on each parties common interest and expectations, as it is identified that not one single agency is responsible for addressing crime causal factors, though police are the primary agency for the detection prevention and investigation of crime.

These strategies will assist Victoria Police to identify, understand, and address trends in conjunction with the recent introduction of the Integrated Planning and Risk Management Model Profiles (IPRRM), designed to inform local priorities and risks and how those identified concerns will impact on Victoria Police and the community. Primary to the success of any strategy is the understanding and awareness required to address the problem and this can only be achieved through targeted training.

Through enhanced knowledge, police officers will be exposed to methodologies allowing them to be further prepared, coupled with the ability to improve identification and recording processes, filling the present void in intelligence and data collection. This approach is not limited to police because as community cooperation is essential, therefore education needs to be extended to this vital partnership through awareness programs (Brand & Ollerearnshaw, 2008). These programs should include communication tools and history as to relevance of gang behaviours. Essential to the planning and development of these programs is the need for all parties to be educated on the various professional roles, being mindful and respectful of each agencies responsibilities and objectives. Importantly, all professionals if they are to work effectively together, it is imperative that they agree as to what constitutes a gang and a gang member (O'Deane, 2008, p.1).

Numerous officers supported their concerns as to training *"We have no idea of the impact of their behaviour" (No.16),* and others explained the value of the limited exposure the researcher had provided in the distant past, had allowed them to view situations differently, resulting in the removal of blinkers that had been restricting them.

States and Territories within Australia have responded to the threat of criminal gang activity by providing additional power to law enforcement. The enacting of legislation has been in response to media and community outcry based on the violent activities of Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs (Criminal Organisations Control Act, 2012), the legislation designed to address a group that conforms to the definition of a criminal organisation. The opportunity and foresight was there but overlooked to have legislation to address 'all groups' who identify themselves as a gang, presumably an all-encompassing approach may have been considered too radical at this time.

All these differing factors ultimately place these individuals becoming a victim of their own circumstances, having not been accustomed to anything else due to lack of support and guidance. The pathway they have chosen of interest 'the gang' be it one of friendship and or protection, ultimately will lead to a criminal action that will guide their destiny, yet those assigned the responsibility of guidance and direction has no understanding of the attraction to gang membership and therefore addressing the cancer (O'Deane, 2008). This can be addressed through a horizontal not vertical approach to the problem including community intervention.

5.9 Policing Leadership: Its Importance

Guidance and knowledge plus experience nothing greater (No.36).

The last theme explores the importance of policing leadership in its support to frontline policing.

Within an information based organisation, knowledge tends to be based at the bottom of the organisation (front line) encapsulated in the minds of various specialists who feed up data for processing into information (Drucker, 1998, p.6). As such, these organisations in order to maintain knowledge need to recognise and reward those who 'get it' and create an environment where knowledge transfer is encouraged, analysed and acted on. Drucker stresses the importance of self-identification relating to knowledge, "Who in this organisation depends on me for what information? And on whom, in turn, do I depend"? (p.10).

Quinn, et al. (1998) support Drucker's (1998) theory by explaining that organizations that encourage self-motivation will more effectively work through our constant changing environment. The nurturing of "care-why" (Drucker, 1998, p.184) in an organization is seen as essential to its success and will lead to the ability to face today's rapid changes and stay in front of their competitors.

How do these statements have any relevance to street gang presence you would ask? Not listening to what others are witnessing and forecasting was a point of frustration and sometimes anger expressed by the interviewed officers, particularly those in constant contact with street gangs. A fifth of the cohort interviewed faced denial and indifference from their superiors who they explained were told by their management that, "We do not have a gang problem". This rationale was stifling a police force that stressed the need for intelligence led policing, yet there was no intelligence product to confirm that rationale.

But what is the approach when it is management itself that is not listening to the voices of change? Heffernan warns that immersing oneself in the shadow of wilful blindness can make you susceptible and ineffective, "But when we confront facts and fears, we achieve real power and unleash our capacity for change" (2011, p.5). Denial and complacency are obvious barriers for change, resulting in "cynicism and dysfunction both beginning when managers start saying one thing and thinking another" (Martin, 1993, p.128). Duck also

supports Martin's view "The first change in behaviour should be that of the top executives" (Duck, 1993, p.63).

This was a common theme voiced by representatives of all law enforcement agencies within Australasia and speakers from the USA, London, Hong Kong and various national correctional authorities, at the Australian Crime Commission (ACC) Conference conducted in Sydney in 2007. The theme of the conference; the 'Changing Face of Youth Gangs' was held to develop responses to this issue within the following potential categories: Monitoring, Prevention, Mitigation and Intervention, Co-ordination and Evaluation.

The researcher, along with other national and international invited speakers, reported that denial at executive levels within all our agencies was causing 'road blocks' to effectively addressing this concern (Boyle, P., 2007). Awareness through education and training were seen as key factors for policing the emergence of this American born cancer within Australasia. You cannot police a problem if you do not know how to identify it, this being the case with street gangs.

The police officers responses related to an era of two previous police commissioners, (though the researcher noted the intervention of former Deputy Commissioner Sir Ken Jones) and not that of the present Chief Commissioner Ken Lay. Lay and his executive management team have noted past denial and agree there are definite youth behavioural concerns and identified this as an opportunity to develop strategies.

Lay has identified that volume crime; street robbery, burglary, criminal damage and assaults, is having the greatest impact on the Victorian Community and such offences are also linked to street gang activity. Lay was aware that police also needed to develop tools and responses to address the issue and the VPID has been successful in providing direction to address recidivism. A further intelligence collection product was the amendment of the Field

Contact Report (Victoria Police 2003) based on community consultation to improve the recording of police contact with diverse communities (Cultural & Indigenous Research Centre Australia, 2013) in addition to a three year action plan to drive cultural change (Victoria Police, 2013).

The Support Link Referral Management System launched across Victoria in January 2013, after extensive trials, was also developed to allow police officers an e-referral pathway for social support of individuals, allowing for early intervention. Operation Unite a joint initiative of the Police Commissioners across Australia and New Zealand in consultation with the Australia New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency (ANZPAA) to address violence, anti-social behaviour, and alcohol misuse was also launched in December 2012 and activated again in December 2013. The response to OMCGs has also quelled officers concerns but there is still a need for greater education to record street gang presence with confidence but it is understandable that pressures of police and protective security officer recruitment, induction and training, are competing priorities.

Martin (1993) explains Lays present situation that "There are too many steering mechanisms in any company for the CEO to pilot everything from the bridge" (p.136) so executives have to listen to the voice of the employees when the statements they are making have substance, so a holistic course can be correctly plotted. At this point, the voices of police officers are at least being accepted as fact and not fiction.

5.10 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed and discussed the findings from the qualitative data in relation to research and literature, through an exploration of the identified themes. The interviews highlight the need for training, the present police knowledge levels, and gaps,

intelligence collection concerns, the skills and multidisciplinary approach required to effectively respond to street gang behaviour and what this will mean for training.

From these findings, it can be seen, that the street gang has a significant role in increasing the opportunities for delinquent and criminal behaviour and therefore an escalation of that behaviour due to the group nature. Any multidisciplinary cohesive response to street gang behaviour is limited if there is not fluid and transparent communication with other youth focused agencies, in particular the Department of Human Services and the Department of Education. These factors are considered a priority if there is to be an effective response to street gangs.

However, the findings of this small study provide a corroborated insight as to the tacit knowledge of the police participants and their opinions as to the level of response to street gangs, and it places Victoria Police in a favourable position to develop the training and education required to respond effectively and confidently. The final chapter will exam this more fully.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the objective of this research and examines the opinions, theories and rational of the forty-three police officers that were interviewed, as to the presence of street gangs in Victoria and how they identified them.

The constructivist framework and qualitative research design utilized in this study allowed the researcher to gain a broad insight into and understanding of the central research question: 'What is a Street Gang?' The findings from this analysis could assist not only police officers but other agencies in their endeavours to identify street gang presence.

6.2 The Objective and Research Questions

The primary objective of this research was to develop a descriptor as to street gang identification from the perspective of a Victoria Police Officer's tacit knowledge. The study hypothesised that there is little consistent formal operational assessment undertaken in Victoria Police and groundless assumption in determining what is and isn't gang activity. The findings confirm this hypothesis.

The secondary objective was to determine whether Victoria Police is adequately aware as to what is a street gang and if it is being correctly recorded and therefore appropriately addressing and responding to emerging street gang presence. The findings also confirm this hypothesis.

Eight thematic questions were developed to gain an extensive and considered understanding of the subject matter:

- What do you mean by a street gang?

- How did you come about this description?

- Are there street gangs in your current location? and if 'yes'

- How long have they been here?

- What are the genders of the participants in these street gangs?

- What are the ages of persons you have identified having street gang involvement?

- What other descriptors do you relate to a person's street gang involvement?

- What would assist you to record street gang activity or presence with confidence?

Arising from these interviews, eight recurring themes were identified resulting in eighteen sub themes for further analysis.

6.3 The Participants

The background and experience of the police officers interviewed is as follows:

Thirty eight males and five females (N=43) were interviewed ranging in rank from; Constable (n=3), Senior Constable (n=11), Detective Senior Constable (n= 13), Sergeant (n=8), Detective Sergeant (n=3), Senior Sergeant (n=1), Detective Senior Sergeant (n=2) and Inspector (n=1), totalling 652 years of policing. The officer's operational experience ranged from 7 months to 35 years and included a broad range of skills; uniform, investigative, analytical and management, including two (n=2) who had prior experience as police officers in the UK and New Zealand (see Table 4.2).

The cited location of gangs covered all Victoria Police regions including metropolitan, country, and one department, transit. North West Metro, which encompasses the city area to Broadmeadows, had three times the number of cited gang locations (n=15) per region to the average (n=5) (see Table 4.2).

The varied length of service, rank and experience, plus the cross-pollination of knowledge in varied operational settings including metropolitan and country Victoria, allowed for an informed indicative cohort of opinions. Two participants also injected prior life-experience into discussions, comparing that to what they were witnessing as officers.

6.4 Research Objective One: Tacit Knowledge Findings

The research questions covering the tacit knowledge held by police officers were primarily addressed through the qualitative component of this research and comparison with national and international literature provided perspective. Though sought, the VPRCC did not grant permission to access either LEAP or Interpose, the relevant Victoria Police databases for this research.

The interviews of police officers revealed genuine interest and passion about the subject and support for the research, blended with unfortunately a sense of frustration. Limited information was documented in any intelligence records held by police or recorded by these officers on any dossier within LEAP as to witnessed, gang activity. It appeared that complacency had taken place due to now, past denial of gang presence and therefore the antecedent and modus operandi of individuals was not known. These persons were off the 'radar' as to gang behaviour, restricting any possible early intervention by fellow officers, the courts, or referral to another responsible agency.

Though interview participants had an understanding of gang behaviour, it was considered to range from basic to very good. The knowledge was centred on what had alerted them to gang behaviour and not necessarily an appreciative insight as to why, what and how this had occurred, nor relevance or appreciation of gang history. Collectively their tacit knowledge corroborated each other and was significantly important to the outcomes of this research.

The officers' answers to the eight questions revealed three themes as primary identifiers of street gang presence and twelve sub themes. The terms Core, Purpose and Grouping were used to describe those themes.

The term core was used to identify the theme that attracted police interest being appearance, anti-social behaviour, crime, and recruitment. Purpose was identified as the bond within the gang, ethnicity, badging, and territoriality cited as the reasoning. Grouping was revealed as the composition of the gang; gender, age, period of gang endurance and membership numbers. This sourced evidence provided the material required for consideration to address the primary objective of this research.

The five remaining themes were considered as secondary objectives of the research and not 'primary' to the development of a street gang descriptor. Two of the themes were considered as having relevance but not essential to gang activity; 'leadership' within a gang and 'communication' through the use of social media or by projecting physical presence and the use of social media as a global education and awareness tool.

The remaining themes identified that training was required to address gang activity effectively and with confidence, due to the varied experience within Victoria Police and would be necessary for a multidisciplinary response. Confident supportive policing leadership was stressed as paramount to the success of any strategic response due to past denial of gang presence. Overall, the findings provided the evidence required to address the secondary objective of this research.

6.5 Research Objective Two: Definition or Descriptor of a Street Gang?

Gang is a term that is used quite loosely in its interpretation of group behaviour particularly by the media and a word that is avoided when it does not suit an agenda, be it political or social. It has become ambiguous in meaning and referenced to activities ranging

from street behaviour to organized crime. This study concentrated on the formation and

behaviour of 'street gangs' and has no reference to other gang types; prison gangs, white

supremacist groups, OMCGs or other forms of organised crime groups. All of these other

entities have differing reasons for their formation, including their group values and objectives

that have not really changed over time.

This is where there is a difference with the street gang. The street gang other than

those that are institutionalised, are creatures of the present time and situation, they are

chameleons, constantly changing and adapting and come in a variety of forms and social

context. To move forward, an agreed definition would normally be the base to work from but

this approach is restrictive as a street gang is fluid and, as such, a descriptor of what is a street

gang is required. A gang definition suits the purpose of legislative requirement where

aggravated penalties are imposed due to gang associated infractions. Redefinition is then

required due to changes in the definitions original prosecutorial purpose as the gang has

changed its behaviour to overcome the legislation.

For the purpose of research, Pitts prescribes that a definition restricts the ability for

change as a, "Description can always be augmented by new knowledge and fresh insights,

definition, by demarcating a field of study too narrowly, often restricts the scope of enquiry

and lacks the flexibility to accommodate changes in the phenomenon it endeavours to

illuminate" (2008, p.5).

There also further lies the problem, why the term street gang and not youth gang? The

term youth gang is a misnomer due to the varying ages of the participants and the term street

gang better reflects what historically is present in the USA and now the UK and NZ. Gangs

were also seen to be part of a staged continuum spanning 'peer groups' who were transient

and not inherently criminal, to 'gangs' who were durable and for whom crime and violence

were integral to their identity, to 'organised criminal networks' at the upper end of the continuum.

6.5.1 Towards a Street Gang Descriptor

Analysis of the research findings underpinned by the review of literature has enabled the development of the following 'descriptor' to assist police and other agencies that have the responsibility to respond and address social and behavioural concerns and complaints, and to assist in identifying if the person or persons are a member of a street gang:

> *A street gang is a durable street based group, whose members collectively exhibit unity and identity through their behaviour and criminal activity.*

This descriptor was formulated with reference to important work done by Klein (2007, p.18) in his explanation of the Eurogang definition as a result of 'six years' of discussion and consensus between USA and European researchers.

- *Durable* – Refers to the group ability to endure over a period of time and establish presence. This interpretation should also be considered with points 2-4.

- *Street Based* – Continual presence in public places as a group.

- *Collective Unity and Identity*–Recognisable group cohesion and or admission.

- *Behaviour* – Delinquent, anti-social and or criminal activity - Summary and or Indictable offences. This activity is one that causes repeated community concern and is not nuisance behaviour.

This descriptor differentiates a street gang from a social group and other forms of criminal groups. Other themes identified; age, group size, gender, ethnicity, and badging, though having relevance, were excluded as these were considered aids to gang identification that can vary and are not always present.

6.6 Intelligence, Education, and a Partnership Response

Analysis of the data revealed a strong opinion amongst the participants interviewed, that there needs to be education and training for police and other relevant agencies, to effectively identify and therefore appropriately respond to and address persons who are involved in street gangs, and any response is one that is multidisciplinary.

Recent highly publicised investigations into street gang activity in Victoria have produced limited intelligence due to their being a solely reactive response to specific incidents and showed no consideration for the intelligence that could gleaned and assessed from those involved. This blinkers on approach, could result in reduced levels of community perceptions of safety and confidence in Victoria Police.

This thesis finds that greater awareness through education, training, reporting methodology and community partnerships, will enable Victoria Police to develop contextual intelligence-led strategies to target street gangs, before they have an opportunity to evolve. These strategies would be formulated under the Victoria Police; Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement, Reassurance and Support Plan within the Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine (Victoria Police Intelligence Doctrine, 2012).

Prevention would include youth engagement initiatives and methodology to identify causational factors. Current intelligence recording systems do not include gang descriptors, therefore links to crimes, resulting in duplication of effort. Aligned with these strategies is the need to revisit legislation and policy including consultation with community groups who have like interests. The challenge, at the moment, is to be innovative and not replicate mistakes (Duck 1993).

The response to street gangs is not one that is solely the responsibility of Victoria Police as there are social issues that are the underlying drivers of gangs and their criminality

(Lozusic, 2002; White, 2002, 2007a). Local multi agency frameworks across education, policing, youth corrections, community engagement with training tailored to specific needs and in context with the environment in which the identified gangs operate, is essential. Each has a role in response to this issue and communication is the key to understanding how each problem is to be addressed and how to work together effectively in a multidisciplinary environment by understanding each agencies roles and boundaries.

Symptoms management is now put into place. The police response base instead of action specific can now be approached differently if we have the knowledge and understanding of the relevance of characteristics and process in our response to the outcome as explained in Figure 6.1. Operating in isolation is not the answer (Duck, 1993), nor is denial, which will delay response through early intervention, while over reaction to the problem may result in gang cohesion (Howell, 2000, p.55).

Figure 6.1 Coordinated Professionalization

COORDINATED PROFESSIALISATION OF POLICE RESPONSE TO GANGS
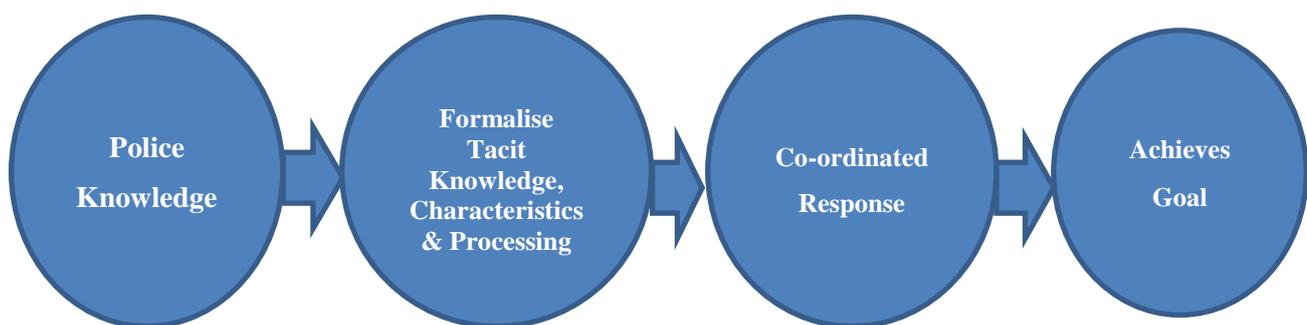
6.7 Strengths and Limitations of the Research

6.7.1 Strengths

This research has a number of strengths:

There is limited research within Australia on street gangs particularly conducted with police officers as the source of opinion. As the researcher has an extensive background in policing particularly in the area of street gangs, this allowed for a greater appreciation and understanding of the responses, which may have been limited in detail to an external researcher, though a balanced viewpoint was maintained at all times.

The research involved the interview of 43 police officers (five female) consisting of five ranks from Constable to Inspector. Their professional experience comprised operational, analytical, investigative and management experience, totalling 652 years of service. This cross-pollination of experience and ranks resulted in rich mixed insights and opinions (see Table 1).

The research involved a qualitative and literature review methodology and incorporated eight questions (Appendix E) through 43 semi-structured interviews. The design allowed for opinion and brought forward the secondary objective of the research that had not been incorporated into the questions, providing the evidence for comparative opinion.

The study uncovered a number of educational and awareness training needs for police and suggests this be extended to the broader multidisciplinary system for an effective response to street gangs.

6.7.2 Limitations

This research also has a number of limitations:

The researcher acknowledges that the opinions of representatives from various multidisciplinary agencies and street gang members would have provided a richer context as to street gang interpretation. Preliminary inquiries revealed that ethics approval would not be sanctioned to interview persons under the age of 18 years, nor allow access to Victoria Police intelligence systems, so a decision was made to concentrate on the opinion of police officers.

Although only five of the 43 police officers interviewed were female, all were Senior

Constable in rank, with frontline, investigative and analytical backgrounds, three having

significant time in service.

Street gang membership evidence was predominantly viewed as within the male

domain and therefore limited knowledge or evidence of female involvement was ascertained,

though two officers who had extensive analytical experience, indicated that female presence

was as much as 30%-50% within Sudanese gangs.

During this research, denial of street gang presence by various management levels

within Victoria Police was the norm, therefore; this study must be viewed in light of that

time. The outcome of denial is though worthy of note, as confusion and frustration borne of

denial impacted on moral and a loss of tacit knowledge and organisational intelligence.

6.8 Recommendations for Future Research

Absence of perceived evidence has become evidence of absence (Diaz, 2009, p.6).

The following is a précis of considerations for further research within Australia and

New Zealand. This phenomenon is not limited to Victoria so a broader examination of the

opinions and experiences of police officers throughout Australia and New Zealand would be

invaluable as a comparison, state to state and country. The diversity of street gang knowledge

and experience has broad research potential and it is suggested that multidisciplinary research

would improve the identification and response to street gang presence. Literature (Ayling

2011; McCluskey, 2013; White, 2004) and this research, emphasis the need for a

multidisciplinary response to street gang behaviour and research needs to be undertaken as

how agencies can effectively respond together.

Interrogation of the Victoria Police LEAP & Interpose investigation recording and

case management systems would provide an organisational evaluation of the records

associated with gang activity. This would also assist in the identification and interview of persons past or present who are/were members of a street gang and would allow for an overlay comparison of evidence resulting from this research.

The interviewees' revealed a concern as to the growing presence of Maori and Pacific Island youth who have separated from their familial homes in New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, and are involved in criminal activity as members of street gangs. It is suggested that research will greatly assist to improve professionals understanding of the reasons for familial separation and their offending and management and investigative practises associated with it.

6.9 Conclusion

Gangs are an unmistakable sign that all is not well (Hagedorn, 2008, p. xxiv).

The intention of this research was to answer the question what is a street gang through a study of one police service, Victoria Police. This involved examining Victoria Police Officers tacit knowledge as to what they consider constitutes a street gang based on their operational experience.

The research has provided an opportunity to evaluate the existence of street gangs in Victoria, their demography and behaviour, the requirement for education and training and whether community perceptions of public safety rightly or wrongly are being affected.

The findings demonstrate that any response to recognise and address street gang behaviour must be one that is proactive and collaborative through a multidisciplinary partnership. Most importantly for any partnership to work affectively there must be transparency and all persons involved in the process 'must' be educated to recognise and understand the identifiers relating to street gang involvement and whether this involvement is social or criminal.

Victoria does not want the institutionalised gangs that exist in Chicago and Los Angeles and the growing concerns that the UK are experiencing in central London and Glasgow. Hagedorn explains that though not all cities have institutionalised gangs, "conditions in many cities worldwide are ripe to produce them" (2008, p. xxvi).

Victoria has the opportunity to 'get it right' by removing the blinkers and through progressive thinking, fuelled by education and awareness, linked to a transparent and cohesive multidisciplinary partnership and community efficacy, there will be an effective response to street gang presence.

The hopes of the researcher is that this research will be an invaluable insight into the identifiers of street gang presence in Victoria and will be of benefit to not just police but others involved in the response to the street gang phenomenon as all concerned organisations has a responsibility to respond appropriately.

More exactly it is hoped that this thesis will inform a growing material and international understanding of the thorny question of 'What is a Street Gang?' and find the 'descriptor' offered to be a useful starting point for further work in this challenging field of law enforcement. It must be remembered that the 'gang of yesterday is not the gang of today and the gang of tomorrow is not the gang of today'.

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APPENDIX A

Victoria Police Human Ethics Committee Approval

National Liaison and Research Unit

Strategy and Policy Division

Corporate Strategy and Governance Department

Victoria Police Centre, 637 Flinders Street,

Melbourne VIC 3005

DX 210096

███████████

Facsimile 9247-6712

Email ██████████████████

www.police.vic.gov.au

12 June 2015

Mr Patrick Boyle

c/o Crime Department

Victoria Police

Level 8/412 St Kilda Rd

Melbourne 3004

Dear Mr Boyle,

Re: Application to the Research Coordinating Committee for RCC 606 What is a Street Gang? A Victoria Police Case Study

I write to advise you that the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) has approved your request to undertake the above research involving Victoria Police.

This approval is conditional on:

- The Research Organisation signing a Research Agreement outlining the conditions governing the conduct of research involving Victoria Police and

- Any other condition(s) set by the RCC.

You will need to ensure the completion of the Research Agreement and return it to Victoria Police before the research can commence.

If you have any queries or require further clarification please contact the RCC Secretariat on the contact details above.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Georgina Lee

pp Secretariat, Research Coordinating Committee

APPENDIX B

HUMAN ETHICS CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

MONASH University

Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC)

Research Office

Date: 25 August 2011

Project Number: CF10/0938 – 2010000475

Project Title: What is a gang? A Victoria Police case study

Chief Investigator: Dr Zane Ma Rhea

Approved: From: 25 August 2011 To: 25 August 2016

Terms of approval

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, and a copy forwarded to MUHREC before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation. **Failure to provide permission letters to MUHREC before data collection commences is in breach of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research**.

2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.

3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.

4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.

5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.

6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Requires the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.

7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.

8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.

9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.

10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.

11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

Professor Ben Canny Chair, MUHREC

cc: Mr Patrick Boyle

APPENDIX C

PARTICIPANT EXPLANATORY STATEMENT

PLAIN LANGUAGE STATEMENT

This information sheet is for you to keep.

What is a Street Gang?
A Victoria Police Case Study.

Dear

My name is Patrick Boyle and I am a Monash University Research Student and I am conducting a research project with Dr Zane Ma Rhea a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Education towards a Masters of Research at Monash University. This means that I will be writing a thesis which is the equivalent of a short book.

The aim of this study is to procure an in-depth understanding of the factors and patterns of practice that contribute to the recording of gang activity by police within the police database. The benefits of this research is to ensure that the recording of gang activity on the Victoria Police database is consistent and standardised therefore allowing for correct recording as to what is or isn't gang behaviour.

The study involves the audio taping of a semi structured interview conducted over an hour to hour and a half. There should not be any discomfort from participating in the interview, as the information I am seeking is based on personal experience and opinion through the knowledge you have obtained in dealing with persons or issues that you consider to have a gang relationship. If at any point you experience any discomfort, the interview will be terminated and appropriate care services will be contacted. All information obtained during the interview will be held in confidence and non-identifiable unless your permission is given.

No payment is being offered or received during the conduct of this research by any parties involved. Participation in this study is voluntary and you are under no obligation to consent to participation. However, if you do consent to participate, you may withdraw at any time and all reference to your participation would be deleted from my records and any information provided will not be used.

The management and confidentiality of this research will be ensured through the use of an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates. Storage of the data will adhere to Monash University regulations and secured in a locked cupboard / filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The anonymous data that is collected may be considered for use for other purposes but this in no way will reveal the names of the persons participating in this study.

Participants should be aware that Section 127A Police Regulation Act 1958, 'Unauthorised disclosure of information and documents' states:

(1) Any member of the police force who publishes or communicates, except to some person to whom he is authorised to publish or communicate it, any fact or document which comes to his knowledge or into his possession by virtue of this office and which it is his duty not to disclose shall be guilty of an offence against this Act.

Section 95 of the Constitution Act 1975 provides that officers in the public service must not:

(a) Publicly comment upon the administration of any department of the State of Victoria;

(b) Use exception in or for the discharge of this official duties, any information gained by or conveyed to him through connection with the public service; or

(c) Directly or indirectly use or attempt to use any influence with respect to the remuneration or position of himself or of any person in the public service.

If you would like to be informed of the aggregate research finding, please contact Patrick Boyle on 0403130276 or email address ███████████████ The findings are accessible for a year.

If you would like to contact the **researcher** about any aspect of this study, please contact the Principal Investigator:	If you have a **complaint** concerning the manner in which this research **What is a gang? A Victoria Police Case Study.** is being conducted, please contact:
Principal Researcher - Dr Zane Ma Rhea Email: Zane.Marhea@education.monash.edu.au Internal phone number – 03 9905 2823 Fax number – 03 9905 2779	**Secretariat** Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee Corporate Strategy and Governance Department Level 5, Building C Victoria Police Centre 637 Flinders Street Melbourne 3005 ████████████ Fax: +61 3 9247 6712 ████████████████████

Thank you. **Patrick Boyle**

Mr Patrick Boyle

Monash University, VIC 3800, Australia

Building 6, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton

████████████████

██████████████████

Website www.education.monash.edu.au

CRICOS Provider No. 00008C

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

MONASH University
Education

CONSENT FORM

What is a Street Gang?

A Victoria Police Case Study.

Dear Patrick

I agree to take part in the research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Plain Language Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

I agree to be interviewed by the researcher	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to allow the interview to be audio-taped	☐ Yes ☐ No
I agree to make myself available for a further interview if required	☐ Yes ☐ No

I understand that my participation is voluntary that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged

in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I understand that data from the interview and transcription of the audio tape will be kept in a secure storage and accessible to the research team. I also understand that the data will be destroyed after 5 year period unless I consent to it being used in future research.

I understand that I may contact the researcher Patrick Boyle on 0403130276 with regard to any concerns I may have about my participation in this research. Should you have any queries.

Participant's name:

Signature:

Signature of witness:

Date:

Mr Patrick Boyle

APPENDIX E

THEMATIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What is a Street Gang?

A Victoria Police Case Study.

Thematic questions for participant who identified an activity or person as having a gang involvement:

1. What do you mean by a Street Gang?

2. How did you come about this description?

3. Are there Street Gangs in your current location? and if 'yes'

4. How long have they been here?

5. What are the genders of the participants in this Street Gang/s?

6. What are the ages of persons you have identified having Street Gang

involvement?

7. What other descriptors do you relate to a person's Street Gang involvement?

8. What would assist you to confidently record Street Gang activity or presence?

APPENDIX F: PROMPT CARD

Gang Identification Card	
Contact Date:	Time:
Member/s: *(name/reg. no / station)*	Location:
	Region:
	Gang Information
	Name of Gang *(or known as and why)*:
	Total Membership:
Circumstances:	Acronym *(letters numbers tag)*:
	Vehicle Information

Vehicle Information

Make:		Year:	
Reg:		Exp:	State:
Colour:		Model:	
Type:		Driver:	
Licence:		Exp:	

Name:	Licence:	Exp:

Nickname:	**Scars / Marks / Tattoos / Piercings**
DOB:	
Gender: Male / Female	
Ethnicity	
Indian:	
Asian:	
Middle Eastern:	
African:	**Clothing** *(Attention to style etc.)*
European:	
Anglo Saxon:	
Aboriginal:	
Phone Home:	**Hair**

Hair

Black		Brown		Blonde		Red	
Grey		Bald		Other			
Style (if distinctive):							
Length: Collar		Short		Long		Shoulder	

Phone Mobile:	
School:	
Occupation:	
MNI:	

Eyes

Black		Blue		Brown		Green	
Hazel		Grey		Other			

Prior History:	

Height / Weight

cm	kg

Facial Hair

Clean Shaven		Beard		Moustache	
Lower Lip		Goatee		Other	

Associates

(List passengers in vehicle if applicable with*)

Build

Thin		Heavy		Solid		Obese	
Muscular		Other					

PROMPT CARD INFORMATION

(Rear side of previous)

The information contained on the Gang identification Card is an aid to assist police or other organizations that have the responsibility to respond and address social and behavioural concerns and complaints, and to assist in identifying if the person or persons are a member of a street gang. The following is a gang 'descriptor':

"A street gang is a durable street based group, whose members collectively exhibit unity and identity through their behaviour and criminal activity".

Durable – Refers to the group ability to endure over a period of time and establish presence. This interpretation should also be considered with points 2-4.

Street Based – Continual presence in public places as a group.

Collective Unity and Identity–Recognisable group cohesion and or admission.

Behaviour – Delinquent, anti-social and or criminal activity - Summary and or Indictable offences. This activity is one that causes repeated community concern and is not nuisance behaviour.