

**The Construction of the Gang in British Columbia: Mafioso, Gangster, or
Thug? An Examination of the Uniqueness of the BC Gangster Phenomenon**

By

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Abstract

This thesis explores the structure, demographics, and history of gangs in British Columbia (BC), Canada, through a social constructionist lens. The purpose of this research is for the reader to consider the current state of gangs in BC as inherently different from other places in the world, to assist in understanding why there may be misconceptions, and to promote the research and implementation of more appropriate context-specific interventions. Building on previous work conducted as a Vancouver Police officer of over 27 years, I participated in field observations with gang units in Toronto and Hobbema, Canada; Chicago and Los Angeles, USA; and London, England. I also examined gang typologies and definitions in academic literature as a segment of the historical context of gang research and highlight how these bodies of literature contribute to the social construction of gangs. A historical review of media-reported gang violence in BC from 1903 to 2012 demonstrates that gang violence is not a new phenomenon, and its history is an essential element in the constructed concept of the gang. As well, I conducted semi-structured interviews with participants who either police gangs, work with gangs, or were former gang members to get their perspectives on the issue. The research findings highlight that gangs in BC are distinct from other locations. Whereas traditional at-risk youth dominate gangs elsewhere, BC has a large number of youth involved in gangs who do not appear to possess the typical antecedents to gang involvement. Because of these differences, it is crucial that anti-gang initiatives and policies be adapted to the BC context to effectively reduce gang activity and ultimately eliminate gangs.

Keywords: gangs, British Columbia, constructionism, social construction, Vancouver Police

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Introduction

I was a sworn constable with the Vancouver Police Department (VPD) in January 1990, when I was 19 years old. I was placed into police recruit academy Class 44 and within four months, I was working on the streets of East Vancouver. This was the “busy” part of town where I soon learned about gangs.

Not long into the training period, my field trainer, Constable Fiona Weller, and I were involved in a car chase with a young Lotus gang member named David Charles.¹ Upon crashing his stolen car in a dark alley, he proceeded to discard a loaded semi-automatic pistol behind a garbage dumpster. I distinctly recall being afraid to the point of not being able to feel my legs; in fact, I was unable to move out of the driver’s seat of the police car. After my first time as the driver of a police vehicle chasing a stolen car, I feared I was doomed to fail. I still recall the advice of a senior officer, Constable Wally Argent, who in his gruff voice commented on the chase by saying, “Kid, don’t worry. For the first six months the adrenaline controls you, and after that, you control the adrenaline.”

What was unbeknownst to me at the time was that in my career as a police officer, I would experience two distinct interests that would eventually lead me into academia. The first, of course, was gangs and gang violence. The second would not come to me until later, in June 1994, when I was a member of the Vancouver Police Crowd Control Unit, which was tasked to quell a riot in Vancouver. The latter interest pertained to why people riot, and what factors would lead typically law-abiding people to throw things at the police in an attempt to hurt us. My second interest was satisfied through my graduate studies in Public Order Policing at the University of Leicester, where I studied the aetiology of riots. My first interest had to wait until now.

Research Focus

The focus of this professional doctorate is the construction of gangs in British Columbia (BC). Essentially, in the most concise terms, I seek to explore if and how gangs might be different in BC in comparison to other Western industrial nations. This examination attempts to understand to a lesser extent why people in BC, who appear to come from good homes and circumstances, join gangs. David Charles, who I pursued in 1990, was not who I had been led to believe a gang member was: he was

¹ David Charles is a pseudonym.

not a visible minority, poor, marginalised, or uneducated. In fact, he was educated and came from a middle-class background with two parents at home. While this does not mean there are no other factors at play, the overwhelming numbers of men with similar social characteristics joining gangs in BC makes our experience atypical. To examine this, I considered the following questions:

1. How does the history of gang violence and police response to it influence the construction of the gang today?
2. How are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? Do these differences inform the discussion that gangs are a constructed term?
3. What motivates people to join gangs in BC, and how does this differ from motivations to join gangs in other cities?

Further, this interest did not just centre on the background of the gang member, but also why in BC we have accepted the term *gang* for use when observably our young adults involved in violence lack the characteristics of gang members elsewhere. The construction of gangs in BC was simply accepted and or assumed to be similar to the Hollywood image. The police accepted this, perhaps purposively; the community accepted this; and arguably the young men themselves accepted it and began to model themselves after the Hollywood images presented to them of what a gang member should look and act like. The defining characteristics of gang members in Chicago, Hobbema², Toronto, London, and Los Angeles are much different from gang members in BC. There are no geographically expansive “hoods” in BC, the few social housing projects that exist are not the primary breeding grounds or battlefields of gangs, and there is limited use of colours and very limited use of graffiti to symbolise a gang-controlled area.³

The distinctive nature of gangs in BC is the focus of this thesis. This is a vital phenomenon to examine because while BC’s gang violence pales in comparison to other places, the violence is senseless and occurs in public places where citizens are put at risk. I have taken a social constructionist approach to demonstrate that the phenomenon we call a “gang” in BC is an influenced term that has a much different

² From time of research Hobbema has been renamed in 2014 Maskwacis, which is Cree for Bear Hills

³ For a further discussion on poverty demographics in context to that of the research sites, see Rob Valletta, *The Ins and Outs of Poverty in Advanced Economies: Poverty Dynamics in Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and the United States*.

meaning for those in London, Toronto, Hobbema, Los Angeles, and Chicago. I believe gangs is a constructed term. Therefore it is reasonable for the term to be employed in distinctive forms; one city's Mafioso is another city's gang, and another city's thug. Thus we must be cautious in comparative analysis and solution seeking.

BC Demographics

BC is Canada's westernmost province, sharing borders with Alberta to the east, the Northwest and Yukon Territories to the north, the Pacific Ocean to the west, and the United States (US) to the south. BC also shares borders with Alaska, Washington, Montana, and Idaho. Moreover, BC has a population of 4.62 million people with 34,000 new immigrants arriving every year (Province of British Columbia, 2015). BC is geographically 95 million hectares, which is larger than France and Germany combined (Province of British Columbia, 2015). It is a diverse province with 200 varieties of First Nations; the most common languages spoken are English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi (Province of British Columbia, 2015).

BC has vast natural resources, which continue to grow in the areas of hydroelectricity and natural gas (Province of British Columbia, 2015). In addition, Vancouver is nicknamed Hollywood North as it is the fourth largest filming and television production centre in North America. British Columbians also have a high average earning power of \$910 per week with an unemployment rate of less than 5%. Also, due to its mild weather, tourism is a major source of employment, with one in 15 people working in this field.

The greater Vancouver area is home to over half of the province's residents, in a quilt-like set of small cities. Vancouver's population (684,681 people) is 51% visible minorities, Richmond (199,949 people) is 65% ethnic minorities, and Surrey (502,299) is 45% ethnic minorities (Province of British Columbia, 2015). In August of 2011, Vancouver slipped from number one to number three in *The Economist's* "most liveable city," a ranking Vancouver had held for over a decade (Melanson, 2015). In comparison, Toronto was fourth, Chicago was 37th, Los Angeles 42nd, and London 55th (Melanson, 2015). The question remains as to why, in a province as wealthy as BC, and with its relatively high socioeconomic standing, do gangs exist?

I have now been a police officer for over 27 years and have spent 12 years working in gang enforcement. Throughout my journey from pursuing an armed gang member in a back alley many years ago to the work conducted today, I have sought to investigate the question of what the characteristics of gangs in BC are and how

they differ from others. In particular, my interest lies in why people in BC's affluent communities join gangs. Police work is often critiqued for making officers cynical, inward-thinking, short-sighted, and even ignorant. However, I do not believe I have ever allowed the job to have this effect on me. I still consider myself naïve in that when I see human beings hurt or kill one another, I still ask myself why they do these things. In that sense, not much has changed since my first night on the job over a quarter century ago. I have stood over so many bodies that were shot, stabbed, or murdered. Although I was a gang police officer and they were gang members, it would be disingenuous to suggest that these men did not have any redeeming qualities, or that I did not like or have some affinity towards them. I did not see them solely as gang members, but also as fathers, brothers, uncles, sons, and husbands.

A key point I raise about gangs in BC is that despite some people claiming the violence is a "self-cleaning oven,"⁴ we have had many innocent victims. While I may not have had a strong dislike of all of these young gang members, I understood well the old maxim "live by the sword, die by the sword," which implies that if you are going to use violence as part of your daily life, one day you may face violence yourself. Ultimately, I know that gang members in BC chose this life and the risks that are associated with it, while innocent victims did not choose to die in a back lane outside a nightclub after being hit by a bullet meant for someone else.

In one of the offices where I worked as a gang officer, a wall was dedicated to the funeral memorial cards of dead gang members. Officers from this unit were commonly assigned to attend funerals to ensure public safety and prevent any further violence, and they would often discreetly take a memorial card for the wall back at the police station. As the wall of cards grew, I soon recognised that it was having a profound and negative impact on me; while I know that many of my colleagues would disagree, I felt that these cards ultimately represented our failure as those responsible for the safety and security of the community. This naivety, my earnest questioning of why, and a desire to be part of stopping more funeral cards from being placed on the wall, coupled with encouragement from respected academics, started me on a journey to seek answers to my initial question and eventually, to write this doctoral thesis.

⁴ "Self-cleaning oven" is police parlance for gang members killing gang members.

Through this research, my aim is for the reader to understand that the current state of gangs in BC is inherently different from other gang regions. Further, I argue that because of these differences, we must ensure that when we as authorities speak of gangs, we are confident that the listener appreciates that context. Finally, I seek to underscore the importance of ensuring that when we identify solutions, they can be applied to the BC context effectively to reduce gang activity and ultimately to eliminate gangs. My academic research and field research observations provide evidence that gangs and their members in Chicago, London, Toronto, Hobbema, and Los Angeles are different from those in BC.

Overview

Social construction theory, which is the focus of Chapter 1, helps to examine the issue of gangs in BC. Some questions arise: Why do we believe we have a gang problem? Have we mislabelled our phenomenon as “gangs” when it is organised crime or even disorganised crime? Social construction theory underpins the discussions in this thesis and serves as the lens to examine the research. My 27 years of experience as a police officer has also informed my view of gangs both personally and as a recognised gang expert. I regularly speak to students, the media, community groups, government, police officers, and others about my experiences and my viewpoints of gangs.

My use of construction theory goes beyond an examination of the construction of gangs by the media, police, and government: I examine how gang members construct themselves. These gang members have a “script” of their own that has been constructed by the images, experiences, and expectations they have of gangsters (K. Stenson, personal communication, September 16, 2014). I consider the construction of BC gangs in three parts:

- 1) a historical review, looking at how the word gang appears in newspapers (see Appendix A),
- 2) my field observations, looking at gangs in other places,
- 3) semi-structured interviews with 17 people who work with gang members and former gang members in BC.

Following this is the literature review in Chapter 2, where I examine the historical context of gang research beginning with the early works of Riis (1902) and Thrasher (1927). The construction of gangs is embedded in the contextual history of the phenomenon. Explanations of crime rely on the foundations of academic work

completed this far back in our history, and this review highlights how these bodies of literature are arguably *part of* the construction of gangs.

The third chapter addresses the methodology and design of my research project. My research is situated within the epistemology of a constructionist perspective; I am not accepting that gangs exist absent of personal examination, and therefore, “meaning is not discovered, but constructed” (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Further, my theoretical perspective is interpretive with a methodology of ethnography. My methods were chosen to be consistent with this approach and specifically included 1) my field observations as a practitioner and participant observer, 2) a historical analysis, which is included as Appendix A, and 3) 17 semi-structured interviews.

Chapter four discusses findings from the field observations I made in Chicago, Toronto, London, Hobbema, and Los Angeles. Chapter 5 presents the participants’ words and analyses two overarching themes from my interviews: motivations for joining gangs/gang recruitment, and whether the term *gang* being incorrectly constructed regarding the situation in BC. In Chapter 6, I discuss how the comparative nature of the research and the perceptions of the participants leads me to believe the term *gang* is constructed, and that construction needs to be considered in light of solutions. Finally, in conclusion in Chapter 7, I make recommendations based on my research and how it may influence police and community practices and policies in BC.

In the end, I trust that the reader has a greater understanding of gangs in BC. The aim is to start discussions of real strategies for the prevention, intervention, and suppression of these armed young thugs who have, compared to youth in Chicago, Los Angeles, Hobbema, Toronto, and London, no legitimate reason to engage in this conflict. Police Constable Eric Davis, a gang officer who works with me in the gang unit, recently stated, “I just cannot relate. Their parents look after these guys. They want for nothing. They have nice homes, nice schools, and nice cars. Why would they risk death, paralysis, or a colostomy bag? To prove what?”

This thesis aims to answer my colleague’s question for those of us who must engage with these young men making poor decisions with fatal or life-changing consequences.

Chapter 1: Social Constructionism and the Gang

On the evening of Saturday, January 19, 2008, Ricky Scarpino, his fiancé, and his bodyguard were driving to Gotham, the premier steakhouse in Vancouver. As Scarpino parked outside of the restaurant, two gunmen emerged from the shadows and shot wildly into his luxury SUV, killing him and his bodyguard instantly (O'Connor, 2008). I was one of the first attending police officers and supervised the crime scene. When four tactical armed officers arrived, I ordered them into the restaurant to check on the patrons' welfare, only to be confronted by another suspect exiting the restaurant with a pistol. As the police officers raised their assault rifles, he dropped the handgun (Grindlay, 2008). Several politicians, tycoons, philanthropists, and a Hollywood movie star were enjoying their dinner when the chaos of BC gang violence invaded their peaceful evening (Spencer, 2008).

In response to this and other incidents of gang crime, the media bemoaned how dangerous the times are. Police leaders stepped up to advise the public and, in turn, were part of the construction of the gang. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police then-Deputy Commissioner Gary Bass stated in February 2009 that BC was experiencing "unprecedented levels of violence" (Vancouver Sun, 2009). The government further exaggerated this when Wally Oppal, BC's Attorney General at the time, said, "the shootings are an unparalleled wave of violence" (Vancouver Sun, 2009). Both of these well-connected, well-informed, and respected leaders suggested that gang violence at this level was new to BC. In fact, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) publication *Youth Gangs and Guns* (K. Clark, 2006) indicated that the onset of youth gangs in Vancouver does not occur until 1979 (p. 26), which evidence provided by M. Young (1993a) and this research contradicts.

Consequently, what constitutes a gang and what characteristics make a gang member? These questions have been the focus of many heated debates in alleyways, nightclubs, restaurants, and parents' homes because young men have protested being labelled as gang members. As a serving police officer with a variety of gang units over the last 12 years, I have heard these questions being raised by members of government, the public, other police officers, and even by those classified as gang members. These should be simple questions to answer; however, this is not the case. They are complex social issues, complicated by the evolving nature of the concepts of *gang* and *gang member*.

Not only are there multiple assumptions underlying these labels, but also consequences resulting from them. Of particular concern are the significant negative penalties on these young men for their futures. Once they are identified as gang members, they become *inadmissible patrons* under various anti-gang ejection programs, such as Barwatch and Restaurant Watch. In BC, the label on young men or women will result in increased police attention and an inability to eat at many restaurants, drink in many bars and pubs, and/or attend popular public events.

My experience as a police officer, combined with research conducted for this thesis, reveal that for many people in BC, the entry into gang life is a choice. These young men (in most cases) are not forced into this life by dire circumstance. Rather, they see the lifestyle as an attractive hedonistic pursuit. This chapter examines how in BC, stakeholders such as the police, government, community, educators, academics, corrections, and social service providers have constructed this phenomenon into a “gang” problem. These are the groups I refer to when I use “we” throughout this thesis.

Situating Social Construction Theory in the Discussion

The use of the term *gang* is the core tenet of this thesis, and how we construct this term in BC is the key consideration of this study. The aim of this chapter is to explain the social constructionist perspective of how gangs are viewed in BC, and how the word *gang* is so elusive.

As I believe the term *gang* to be a constructed term, it is not similar in all its characteristics worldwide. A gang member in Los Angeles looks entirely different from a gang member in BC. For this reason, I sought to conduct a qualitative analysis, not only to hear from those who report on and work with gangs but also men who were once gang members. We have many people in our community pointing to the fact that we do not have geographically based, colour-wearing, tattoo-covered young men, nor graffiti fences or walls, as evidence that we do not have a gang problem. They believe that the above indicators are the hallmarks and evidence of gang activity. The denial of the problem, because it does not appear as we have been informed, is an impediment to safe communities. Furthermore, while I am critical of the use of the term *gang* to describe the phenomenon in BC with our middle class, non-marginalised youth engaging in gang violence and crime, it is the term that has been accepted into the discourse.

I argue that for us to build safer and more resilient communities, we must examine why a gang is not the same in Vancouver as it is in Chicago. In fact, they are very different, and the way we conceptualise and find acceptance and explanation for this is through the work of the social constructionist.

Another considerable issue that bears some discussion is the overlap that exists in many regions between gangs and organised crime and how to define them. This debate is not new, and many academics have weighed in without a definitive result. For example, Silverstone (2015) recognised that there are over 170 different definitions of organised crime as suggested by Professor Van Lampe. Silverstone abandoned all but three for his purposes in describing the construction of organised crime in the UK. So while the task of defining gangs is certainly difficult, it becomes relatively insurmountable when debating whether a group is behaving as a gang or as organised crime. This inability of academics to agree on a definition of gangs has the potential to sideline the research when in those rare moments of clarity politicians want to spend money on the root causes of gangs. Furthermore, these academic debates may marginalize academic research and viewpoints out of frustration in times when quick solutions are being sought. Rice (2012) found this in Los Angeles: “As we synthesized gang studies, Susan [her associate] and I cringed at the academic duelling (the Ph.D.’s couldn’t even agree on the definition of a gang) and at the thin record of research” (p. 278).

Kennedy (2011) also commented on the frustration of these academic disagreements and dismissed most of the academic debates on gangs. He stated in speaking about Boston’s Ceasefire (an initiative aimed at curbing youth gun violence)

The experts can’t even agree on what a gang is, can’t predict why one kid will join when another won’t, can’t predict why one gang member will kill and the others won’t, can’t say why one neighbourhood has an open drug market and others like it don’t. (p. 214)

Further, the debate on organised crime versus gangs is equally less productive for those tasked with developing responses to violence associated with this criminality. Hauck and Peterke (2010) stated,

In practice, however, the dividing line between gangs and organised crime often become blurred. Again, the dynamics and the heterogeneity of the phenomena in question must be borne in mind. Criminal organizations often emerge out of gangs (and hence continue to use their names and symbols) and may also recruit street gangs to spread violence or provide other services.

. . . Therefore it may be argued that the distinction between organized crime, gangs, and gang violence is artificial and of little use. . . . However, as we have seen, there is no satisfactory definition and consequently no consensus in that regard. (p. 413)

J. Katz and Jackson-Jacobs (2004) have critically assessed academics' efforts to define gangs akin to describing a ghost, while Hobbs (1997) and Hagedorn (2008) are sceptical that the efforts to define a gang problem are often motivated by funding requests by police and academics.

I tend to agree with Hobbs (1997) that when debating the definition of organised crime, "the issue of definition threatens to kill off both description and debate" (p. 801). A full examination of this debate is beyond the scope and intent of this thesis. However, it is important to recognise the overlap between the terms when discussing the phenomenon in BC.

In the Vancouver Police Organized Crime Section, I specifically work in the Gang Crime Unit (GCU). The section also houses the Organized Crime Unit (OCU). All of the officers assigned to the section work on the same targets; there is no distinction between the GCU and OCU on street-level targets (traditionally considered GCU targets) and high-level targets (traditionally OCU targets). All officers work the same targets and assist one another in investigations. This is further evidence of the blurring and overlap of terms that occurs in BC. This is the same in other jurisdictions like Chicago, where up until January 2016, Gang Crime Units were part of the Organized Crime Bureau (J. Zapatta, personal communication, January 28, 2016).

Frankly, as stated earlier, the importance of this thesis is not to debate this matter, but to accept that the term used in BC is gangs, and quite possibly Silverstone (2015), Harding (2014), or Hobbs (1997) might call it organised crime. My aim is to inform two audiences: the academics and the police community. For the academic, the purpose of the professional doctorate is to demonstrate the ability to conduct thorough research that contributes to debate and the knowledge base. For the practitioner, the purpose is to help solve, minimise, and/or understand the problem regarding reducing its harm to public safety.

Influence of Other Theories on Social Constructionism

When I first started this thesis and was considering all the relevant theories, I thought they were all vying to be right, with the superior theory being the one that explained the phenomenon, thus making the other theories useless. After a long day

of writing, and feeling frustrated, confused, and admittedly defeated, I expressed this to a colleague who provided me with sound guidance: I had to stop looking at the theories as singular entities, like golf players, and more like a team of hockey players. Each one brings a unique skill and ability to be used at different points in the same game. They are not competing with one another but are complementary, and each is more valuable in some situations than others. Just like the players best suited for the power play,⁵ and the defensemen best used to set the tone of the game, all theories all help us to understand better and explain a phenomenon.

The phenomenologist is one who “advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomenon of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality” (English & English, 1958, cited by Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 22). For the phenomenologist, the process of examining the “taken for granted” is necessary. The founder of the phenomenological approaches, Edmund Husserl, suggested that we put the world in brackets and/or free ourselves from our usual way of perceiving the world (Cohen et al., 2007). For Schutz (cited by Cohen et al., 2007), people use “ideal types” to make sense of the world and the people we encounter in it. Through this process, we can manoeuvre through life without having to be analysing at all times. With that in mind, however, “we thus live in a world of multiple realities, and social actors move within and between these with ease, abiding by the rules of the game for each of these worlds” (Burrell & Morgan, cited by Cohen et al., 2007, p. 23). Schutz’s explanation is highly applicable to my research in that the gang is believed to be understood by all, but in reality, there are several different narratives of what the gang is, and those narratives are constantly influenced by a variety of claims-makers who have their own agendas, which are often biased and self-fulfilling.

While this chapter discusses social construction theory, it would be negligent to exclude discussion of the influence of symbolic interactionism on social construction theory. Essentially, symbolic interactionism, developed in 1937 by sociologist Herbert Blumer, is the basis of the form of social constructionism that I am using in my analysis (Blumer, 1969). Specifically, symbolic interactionism

⁵ The power play in hockey occurs when a team plays short because one or more of its players are serving penalty minutes.

rejects views of society as a ready-made structure (various systems analogies). Rather, symbolic interactionists do not take things for granted. They want to examine the manner in which people see the world through the interpretation of those things, in context to themselves and how others view these things (Blumer, 1969).

Symbolic interactionism is noted as one of the more persisting sociological theories of the Chicago School tradition, developed from a conclusion that human behaviour is the product of purely social symbols communicated between individuals. The basic idea of some symbolic interactionism is that the mind and the self are not innate but are products of the social environment. In the process of communicating, or symbolizing, humans come to define both themselves and others. These symbols have meanings affecting the way we see the world (Williams & McShane, 1999).

In symbolic interactionism, the definition of “self,” or the roles that we take on in society, are how we see ourselves and how others see us, as either deviant or not (Turner, 1988). Deviance is then the result of proponents claiming the behaviour is, in fact, anomalous, and thus unacceptable. On this basis, the behaviour is not deviant until society places that label on it. For example, smoking marijuana in a café in Amsterdam is not considered deviant, but the same activity in Vancouver, Canada, would likely result in an arrest by the police.⁶

Downes and Rock (2003) explain that symbolic interactionists “take part of their job to be a formal description of the little social worlds that constitute a society” (p. 179), and they draw a comparison of the study of the ecological or “natural areas of the Chicago School [to the] . . . bounded social situations [of] schools, gangs, families, pubs and hospitals” (p. 179). These social contexts are created and defined by a society that “experience[s]” (Downes & Rock, 2003, p. 180) them as sets of changing resources, opportunities, contexts, and constraints. Any social situation will be a blend of activity, history, and material props, which achieves its definition and coherence from shared symbols.

Labelling theory was also influential on the social constructionist because the labelling theorists, in particular Becker, suggested that the “label of deviant was the consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an ‘offender’. The deviant is one to whom the label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is

⁶ Though this is currently under review and debatable in Vancouver.

behaviour that people so label” (1973, cited by Clinard & Meier, 2004, p. 105). As discussed earlier, the placement of the label “gangster” as one who carries out deviant behaviour has a real impact on people in BC. If we accept the words *gang* and *gangster* to have universal meaning, symbolic interactionists and social constructionists will caution such an approach. Many phenomena that are easily defined in science labs are more difficult to define in the real world. If we accept either a consensus or conflict perspective, we must recognise that the term *gang* is nebulous. Further, and more importantly, we can use social constructionism to explain why, for example, the United Nations gang in Vancouver looks and behaves the way it does compared to the Vice Lords of Chicago, the Brothers for Life in Hobbema, the Custom House gang in London, the Driftwood Crips in Toronto, and the 18th Street Crips in Los Angeles.

Social Construction Theory

For social constructionists, the definition of the term *gang* is more elusive than concrete. Pursuant to Berger and Luckmann (1966), we need to examine how we know something to be true. The language in and of itself that we use to describe a phenomenon might be leading us to the conclusion or value.

The social constructionist perspective seeks to expand on the work of Chicago School theorists such as Clifford Shaw, George Mead, Erving Goffman, and Harold Garfinkel in discovering ways in which individuals and groups perceive, interpret, and create “social reality” (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, cited by Farrell, 2008, p. 218). In time, the perceptions of the actors, participants, and observers will move from subjective to objective. This process of the perception of reality is often more important than the objective reality itself. In other words, for the social constructionist to say that something is socially constructed is to emphasize its dependence on contingent aspects of our social selves. It is to say: this thing could not have existed had we not built it; and we need not have built it at all, at least not in its present form. Had we been a different kind of society, had we had different needs, values or interests, we might have built a different kind of thing, or built this one differently. The inevitable contrast is a naturally existing object, something that exists independently of us and which we did not have a hand in shaping. (Boghossian, 2006, p. 16)

Social constructionists are interested in the process by which a putative condition becomes labelled and perceived as a social problem. For instance,

Frederick Thrasher (1927) considers at what point a group of neighbourhood boys engaged in playful activity transforms into the neighbourhood gang. More important, when does this transformation occur in the minds of the boys, the police, and the community? As Thrasher eloquently describes, what would otherwise be simple youthful activities becoming redefined as those of a gang is as follows:

The beginning of the gang can be best studied in the slums of the city where an inordinately large number of children are crowded into a limited area. On a warm summer evening children fairly swarm over areaways and sidewalks, vacant lots and rubbish dumps, streets and alleys. The buzzing chatter and constant motion remind one of insects, which hover in a swarm, yet ceaselessly dart hither and thither within the animated mess. This endless activity has a tremendous fascination, even for the casual visitor to the district, and it would be a marvel indeed if any healthy boy could hold himself aloof from it. In this ubiquitous crowd of children, spontaneous play-groups are formed everywhere—gangs in embryo. (1927, p. 26)

Inherent here is an assertion that the problem exists only if the discourse on the topic defines, clarifies, or confirms it to be so. People who are advocating for a social issue to be considered deviant, and hence a social problem, are termed the claims-makers (Best, 2010). Social constructionists also note moral panics taking place where claims-makers manipulate information, usually through the use of the media, to present a problem as being vastly more concerning than it is.

Because claims-makers must compete to gain the attention of the public, the press, and policy makers, dramatic rhetoric is often chosen to make the advocate's cause seem especially important (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988, cited by Best, 2010, p. 5). For example, in 2011, the British government tried to make claims that the riots in London following the police shooting and killing of Mark Duggan⁷ were the work of gangs. Gangs became the focal point of the source of the violence; UK Prime Minister David Cameron claimed:

At the heart of all the violence sits the issue of street gangs. Territorial, hierarchical, and incredibly violent, they are mostly composed of young boys, mainly from dysfunctional homes. They earn money through crime, particularly drugs[,] and are bound together by an imposed loyalty to an authoritarian gang leader. (Cameron, 2011, cited by Hallsworth, 2013, p. 1)

This perspective of gangs being the cause of the riots is an ill-thought-out example of the construction of gangs as evil. More specifically, the government's

⁷ On August 4, 2011, armed police shot and killed Mark Duggan in Tottenham, London. Rioting occurred and an inquest found, eight in the majority and two dissenting, that the killing was lawful despite a finding that Duggan was not armed immediately before he was shot by police.

assertion and blaming of gangs was quickly dismissed. Hallsworth (2013) stated, “the media (and just about everyone else) had no trouble at all in taking up this, the gangland UK thesis” (p. 1). Densley (2013) was also critical of the government’s construction of the problem evident in the prime minister stating that “tackling gangs was his ‘new national priority’ and launched a ‘concerted, all-out war on gangs and gang culture’” (p. 1). It was later revealed that gang members made up less than 20% of those involved in the riots.

Based on the arguments and conclusions reached in my research, it is evident that society has constructed the gang phenomenon, and despite the limitations in using the word *gang* to describe the situation in BC, it is now the term understood by most.

Strict and Contextualised Constructionism in Defining Gangs

Sanders (2007) comments on a division that has “arisen within the constructionist camp” (p. 25) that delineates between the strict and contextualized constructionists. She explains that “A strict constructionist adopts a literal interpretation of constructionist theory and focuses their analyses solely on the claims-making process” (Sanders, 2007, p. 25).

Further, Sanders (2007) explains that strict constructionists place themselves outside of the phenomenon and simply observe, while contextual constructionists recognise that while they are searching for the construction of meaning, they are permitted to allow some assumptions to be made, and they might be within the bubble of examination. Thus the “strict constructionists perceive themselves as standing outside the bubble of social life while analysing the claims-making process as it occurs within the bubble” (Sanders, 2007, p. 25). This division is an important one, and it should be noted that my perspective is that of a contextualised constructionist as I am a practitioner who works with gangs. As such, the uniform I wear, the university classes I teach as a professor, and the research I have done all put me within the debate, arguably as a key claims-maker on gangs. An example lies in an analysis of the uniform I wear in the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit; it is a black uniform reserved for uniformed specialty units.⁸ In addition, across the chest and back of the tactical body armour worn are the words “Vancouver Police Gang

⁸ Other such units include the Public Order Unit, Forensic Officers, the Marine Squad, and the Emergency Response Team.

Crime Unit,” which would suggest to observers that we patrol places where gangs exist. For example, when we walk into restaurants as a unit, our mere presence constructs for the public that gangs are a significant problem, and that the gang members may, in fact, be sitting among them. Our overt presence adds to the construction of gangs in Vancouver.

Sociologist Kai Erikson states that the very agencies (such as the police) in a society designed to inhibit criminal conduct might arguably provide “nourishment” for their existence (1966, p. 284). It might be argued that the anti-gang task forces and police specialists may be reinforcing the deviant role, even providing the definition for their unique construction by using otherwise scarce law enforcement resources to battle the scourge of the perceived gang. This is not an uncommon criticism of various criminal justice policies and approaches. For example, the criminogenic nature and consequences of prisons, where criminals are gathered and then teach one another criminal skills and values, is commonly debated by criminologists. The prison itself is criticised for having a part in creating the very criminal it seeks to rehabilitate (Sutherland, 1947; Reiman & Leighton, 2013). Could it be that the police gang unit has in part contributed to the social construct of the criminal gang subculture by the nature of a uniquely identifiable policing style? For this reason, I do not claim to be a strict constructionist; I am actively a part of and within the phenomenon I wish to study.

The terms *gang* and *gangsterism* are both a social construction in the academic sense; they are also a *real* product of our social situation. This approach is reasonable because as Best (2003, cited by Sanders, 2007) explains, “contextual constructionism remains focused on the claims-making process and the construction of meaning, but places this activity within its context” (p. 25). As such, contextual constructionists think it appropriate to acknowledge or make some assumption about objective conditions, “as long as it is done carefully and as long as the questions remain tightly focused on the process of creating human meaning” (Loseke, 2003, cited by Sanders, 2007, p. 26).

In his lecture on social construction, Tom Allen (2013) suggests that there are three kinds of realities: the experienced reality, the symbolic reality, and the socially constructed reality. The experienced reality is what people experience themselves. For example, attitudes toward police may be influenced by the media, but the strongest influence will be personal positive or negative experiences with police

officers (Allen, 2013). Symbolic reality consists of our beliefs about the world that we learned from other places, for example, parents, teachers, and the media. Experienced reality combined with symbolic reality forms the socially constructed reality, which is what we believe to be true about the world.

In this section I have examined the theoretical framework of social construction theory and concur with J. Katz and Jackson-Jacobs (2004) in that “one might say that gangs only exist to the extent that their existence is problematic” (p. 92). Labelling gangs in this manner is important to consider in reference to gangs generally, and later, specifically to gangs in BC.

An examination of the constructive nature of the word *gang* is important in this research, as it is through this process of construction that the police and the community respond. We are doomed to fail if in BC we respond to gangs in the same manner as they are responded to in other jurisdictions. As is discussed in Chapter 4, the motivations to join gangs in Los Angeles, for example, are much different than they are in BC. If stakeholders in BC simply look to Los Angeles for solutions, without examining how gangs are constructed differently in BC, then those solutions likely will not be successful.

Definition of a Gang

One might expect that the definition of a gang is universally accepted by police, academics, government, and the community (Gordon, 2000; C. Katz & Webb, 2006; Klein, 2007; Hagedorn, 2008). That would be a false assumption. Many gang researchers readily admit that the word *gang* means different things to different people (Richardson & Kennedy, 2012). While the definition of a gang has been the subject of much discussion by gang researchers, a shared understanding is still elusive (Spindler & Bouchard, 2011). Many commentators agree with Thrasher (1927) in his assertion that no two gangs are alike. This presents significant challenges because there is no universal definition and the phenomenon studied has no universal structure.

Of the many definitions for the term *gang*, the first to be considered is that of Hallsworth and Young (2006), and adopted by the London Metropolitan Police Service: “A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group who see themselves and are seen by others as a discernible group and for whom crime and violence is intrinsic to the identity of group practice and solidarity” (p. 68). This definition may be helpful outside of BC, but with the specification of a street-based group criterion,

it falls short in describing the construct of the gang in BC: most of our groups are not street-based, and certainly not geographically based.

Canadian Prosecutor Carol Fleischhaker provided a useful definition:

An organized crime outlaw is an individual whose consensual association with an organized crime group and participation in anti-social learning of the norms and values of that group, has led to his and her adoption or internalization of the norms and values of that group to such a degree that the individual identifies with that organized crime group more than or rather than identifying with law-abiding conventional members of society. Once this individual so identifies with the organized crime group, (s)he reinforces this identity, and thus, simultaneously perpetuates and reinforces the identity of the group, by using or displaying this identity in a manner that accords with the values and norms of the group during the commission of criminal activities generally, and organized crime activities specifically. (2012, p. 19)

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (2011) defines a gang as “a group of persons working to unlawful or antisocial ends; *esp*: a band of antisocial adolescents” (p. 514). The Government of Canada, in the Canadian Criminal Code, defines organised crime as a criminal organisation that

means a group, however organized, that (a) is composed of three or more persons in or outside Canada; and (b) has as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offences that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any of the persons who constitute the group. It does not include a group of persons that forms randomly for the immediate commission of a single offence. (1985, p. 315)

This legislative definition fails to define gangs at all, instead recognising only “organised crime groups” (Richardson & Kennedy, 2012). The “organised crime” definition is problematic, but not just for Canadians. Dick Hobbs (2013) stated:

The U.K. formally embraced the notion of organised crime in 1993 at a conference at Bramshill Police College where it was announced that “Organized crime has many definitions; this may be because it is like an elephant—it is difficult to describe but you know it when you see it.” (p. 18)

Although I am considering gangs, the criteria for organised crime and gangs are very similar. In fact, Criminal Intelligence Services Canada described organised crime as “loosely structured, competitive networks with fluid linkages between members and associates, with a diverse range of leadership structures” (cited by Beare, 2015, p. 5). This definition further clouds the distinction between organised crime and gangs in Canada.

One Canadian expert on gangs, Robert Gordon, recognised the challenges of defining gangs in his research. He explained that a problem for his initial study was

to find “an accurate and widely accepted definition of a ‘gang,’ and a ‘gang member’” (Gordon, 2000, p. 46). Gordon notes that “similar difficulties are reported consistently in research reports and other literature on gangs, regardless of the location and objective of the research, and the methods used by the researchers” (2000, p. 46).

Gordon (1994) decided to develop a five-point typology of gangs: 1) youth movements, 2) youth groups, 3) criminal groups, 4) street gangs, and 5) criminal business organisations (p. 15). For Gordon (2000), “street gangs” are

groups of young people and young adults who band together to form a semi-structured organisation, the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behaviour or organised violence against rival street gangs. (p. 48)

Street gangs tend to be less visible but more permanent than other groups.

Gordon (1994) also identified “criminal business organisations” as

groups that exhibit a formal structure and a high degree of sophistication. They are composed mainly of adults and engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons and invariably maintain a low profile. Thus while they may have a name, they are rarely visible. (p. 16)

Hagedorn (1994) suggested a typology of adult gang members in four categories: 1) legit and removed from the gang life; 2) homeboys, who worked conventional employment and engaged in the drug trade in between jobs; 3) dope fiends, who needed to sell drugs to feed their own addiction; and 4) “new jacks,” who engaged in the drug trade as an illicit career (p. 206).

Knox (2006) suggests another useful typology of five levels of gangs. A level zero gang is simply a group of young people who are identified in a neighbourhood as a group. A level one gang is an emergent gang existing of only one unit that has no real formal leadership or ties to other gangs. A level two gang has structure and links to other gangs that do not operate in the same geographical area. A level three gang is a super gang and/or a corporate gang that is highly structured and features several sets throughout a city, or even across a larger area. A level four gang is like a level zero gang in that it is no longer truly a gang but meets the criteria of organised crime (Knox, 2006, p. 22).

The Montreal Police use a definition of a gang that requires six criteria to be met: it must have 1) an organised structure, 2) identifiable leadership, 3) a defined area, 4) regular association of several juvenile delinquents, 5) a specific goal, and 6) involvement in illegal activities (Chales et al., 1996). A focus on the gang’s activities

and criminality are seen in several gang definitions. For Klein and Maxson (2006), the definition of “a street gang is any durable, street oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activities is part of its group identity” (p. 3).⁹

As evidenced by the discussion above, there is no agreed-upon definition of a *gang*. Further challenging for the Canadian-specific discussion is that very few gang typologies and definitions come from a Canadian perspective or Canadian research data (Descormiers, 2013). Mellor et al. (2005) suggested a Canadian typology with their five types of gangs:

1) Type A (Group of Friends) groups tend to be interest-based and usually do not involve criminal activity, thus pose no threat to a community’s well-being and, in many situations, should be promoted.

2) Type B (Spontaneous Criminal Activity Group/Gang) groups/gangs are social in nature and derive their power and status from the size of their group. Criminal activity is situationally motivated and much of this type of gang/group activity can be categorized as gratuitous violence and bullying by misdirected and unsupervised youth. Many of the members of Type B groups/gangs have other options in life and are less committed to the gang or its culture than more serious types of gangs.

3) Type C (Purposive Group/Gang) gangs come together for a specific purpose. Whether stealing cars, engaging in vigilante-type violence or spontaneous mob activity, these groups/gangs can emerge from within existing larger groups/gangs or may come about for a specific purpose and be disbanded once the activity or plan has been carried out.

4) Type D (Youth Street Gang) gangs are highly visible hardcore groups that come together primarily for profit-driven criminal activity. These street gangs identify themselves as such through the adoption of a gang name; common brands, styles, colours of clothing and/or jewellery; and tattoos to openly display gang membership to other gangs. These gangs do not seem to be part of a larger criminal organization and often have a definite territory or “turf” that they claim and defend as their own. Street gangs appear to be stand-alone organizations that have little connection to other gangs.

5) Type E (Structured Criminal Organization) gangs are highly structured criminal networks that tend to be led by criminally experienced adults for the purpose of economic or financial gain. The criminal activities of these types of gangs tend to be severe in nature and are generally premeditated. Youth are used for specific purposes to further the gang’s activities. (p. 8)

Another Canadian researcher, Cathy Prowse (2012), a former Calgary police officer of 25 years, suggested the following typology:

1) Organized crime group: A close-knit, geographically anchored group with enduring criminal associations, engaged in low-risk and high-gain criminal

⁹ Notably, this definition was accepted by the Eurogang project of over 100 academics as an acceptable definition.

enterprises while also operating in the legal marketplace.

2) New-age gang: A loose-knit and fluid group of associates who comprise a subset of a street gang leader's enduring social network and who are preferentially activated in the commission of street-based criminal activity by that street gang leader. A gang identity need not form part of their collective self-identification.

3) Action-set: An unorganized and generally youthful (under age 18) collective of potential criminal participants, known to the street gang leader through a social network of relations. Street gang participation is peripheral and on an ad hoc basis; it does not form part of their self-identification. (p. 9)

Even though the groups in BC do not fit with the traditional, standard definition of gangs provided by academics, the word *gang* is so entrenched in the public discourse that it is unlikely to be abandoned. With that said, Hagedorn is critical of such an approach:

If gang members' identities are internally contested and constantly switching, how can a hard and fast definition describe such a changing reality? The search for a more precise gang definition by criminology is on the one hand, an old-fashioned positivist venture, trying to track down and quantify gangs as static, clearly delineated form. (2008, p. 30)

He went on to suggest the best gang definitions are an "amorphous one: (gangs) are simply alienated groups socialized by the streets or prisons, not conventional institutions" (Hagedorn, 2008, p. 31).

Walter Miller provided a definition of gangs, which may be of use for groups in BC:

[a] self formed association of peers, bound together by mutual interests, with identifiable leadership, well-developed lines of authority, and other organizational features, who act in concert to achieve a specific purpose or purposes, which generally include the conduct of illegal activity and control over a particular territory, facility or type of enterprise. (cited by Weisel, 2002, p. 35)

Determining the impact that these definitions have on the construction of the phenomenon of gangs in BC is a major task. Equally important is the impact that the acceptance of these definitions has on those being labelled, as well as those doing the labelling. Finally, while it is clear that these definitions can be helpful and informative, my research demonstrates that these definitions cannot adequately capture the phenomenon of gangs in BC. These attempts to provide typologies are admirable and useful, but the reality is that gangs are very different from place to place. Arguably, there "is no single type of gang, but only patterns of gangs and gang behaviour" (Klein & Maxson, 2006, p. 167).

Impact of the Construction of Gangs Within BC's Context

Many describe BC as having a gang problem. I strongly reject that belief; as I have discussed, the use of the term *gang* is misleading and problematic in this province. Using the term *gang* to describe the phenomenon that exists in BC is misleading for a number of reasons: it not only suggests that street-based youth workers might be effective in deterring gangs, but also has connotations of predominantly young ethnic men fighting for geographical turf, wearing colours, and having a blue bandana sticking out of their pants pocket. This illusion of gangs in BC has consequently wasted scarce resources. The community sends police into neighbourhoods looking for them to arrest street-corner hustlers as gangsters. Densley (2011) built on Frum's example of the mirage in the desert, suggesting that "if the gang is a mirage, then interventions based on that mirage can only lead police deeper into the desert" (p. 13). Thus, programs geared towards assisting street youth engaged in the gang lifestyle would likely be ineffective, and other soundly developed programs that might better reach non-traditionally at-risk youth may be much more efficient.

The next question, then, is that if we do not have a gang problem in BC, do we have an organised crime problem? Despite the unyielding debate amongst academics, police, and others about the definition of organised crime, it is also challenging to place this label on the phenomenon in BC. Recently, a criminal informant stated, "Calling it organised might be the worst label you could put on it. It is chaotic, frantic, and unpredictable." Arguably, neither term applies fully. Therefore, the question that begs to be answered is why the phenomenon is called a gang problem. Many people, including me to some extent, believe that through the process of constructing social problems, various stakeholders and claims-makers have made these assertions. In BC, the police, as stakeholders, have declared the issue to be a gang problem. The police might have called it something else, but the term *gang* has stuck. One of the common themes of this thesis, and the use of construction theory, is to provide a platform where readers can accept that what we call gangs in BC might be called organised crime in other parts of the world. In BC, the definition of gangs and organised crime is blurred and overlapping as in other places. For this thesis, the term *gang*, as used in BC, includes organised crime. This is the construction of the word in BC.

The Construction of Gangs in BC by the Police

In November of 2007, after a year of 17 targeted homicides in the Lower Mainland, Chief Chu responded to a brazen shooting resulting in the death of two young men. These two men were shot dead in an ambush on one of Vancouver's main streets while two Vancouver police officers were on a traffic stop less than a block away. This complete lack of respect for public safety and the presence of the police nearby angered the chief, who subsequently formed the Regional Violence Suppression Team with 45 police officers from the Vancouver Police and 35 officers from the RCMP and other municipal police agencies. Chief Chu stated,

“We are merging our resources to create the largest street-level gang violence task force B.C. has ever seen. . . . We intend to attack the problem with three broad strategies.” . . . Those strategies include pooling expertise from police departments all over the Lower Mainland, to be a highly visible presence, and to target gang suspects until they are arrested. (CBC News, 2007b)

Further, Deputy Chief Rich stated, “The task force will be very much [an] in your face kind of task force confronting people who are in gangs, finding out where they live” (CBC News, 2007c). Within two weeks of the unit's inception, the Vancouver police reported that it had checked nearly 300 people, and several firearms had been seized (CBC News, 2007a). It should also be noted that the originally planned 80 officers assigned to the unit never materialised, and in fact only 56 officers arrived, with several of the officers returning to patrol just before Christmas as the department could not financially sustain their “largest street level gang violence task force.” Within two years the chief would be facing the media again to discuss the gang violence.

In March of 2009, on the heels of 29 shootings in three months with over a dozen murders, then Chief Constable Chu stated at a press conference,

As police, we've always been told by media experts to never say or admit that there is a gang war. Well, let's get serious. There is a gang war, and it's brutal. . . . There are new rules of engagement, and these gangs are shooting at each other when they don't have to. (Bailey, 2009)

Standing beside the chief at the same press conference was Mayor Gregor Robertson, who stated,

It's very unfortunate that we are now looking more like most of the big cities around the world, certainly in the United States, that deal with significant violent crime and gang warfare. . . . Vancouver has never been known for this, so in terms of our international reputation, I think it's a problem, and we need to bear down and focus dealing with it urgently, but not for our international reputation, but for public safety, and the well-being of the

communities here. (Bailey, 2009)

Finally, in response to the continued gang violence, the provincial government amalgamated the Integrated Gang Task Forces and the Violence Suppression Team into a parent organization, Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (CFSEU). CFSEU has over 400 assigned officers and civilians, boasts regional offices all over the province, and considers itself the lead against gang violence in BC. It conducts investigations into large quantity drug trafficking, kidnappings, and conspiracy to commit murder, and assists in the investigation of gang homicides.

CFSEU defines a gangs as

an organized group of three or more, that as one of its main purposes or main activities the facilitation or commission of one or more serious offence, that, if committed, would likely result in the direct or indirect receipt of a material benefit, including a financial benefit, by the group or by any one of the persons who constitute the group. (CFSEU, 2015a, para. 1)

In addition, the CFSEU Prolific Violent Gang Offender Program further uses a seven-point structure to determine if a person is involved in the gang lifestyle:

1. Subject is directly or indirectly involved in a gang-related crime or incident;
2. Self-admission of involvement;
3. Reliable source information indicating subject is a gang member;
4. Observable association;
5. Common and symbolic gang identifiers;
6. Court rulings; and
7. Physical evidence. (Accessed May 23, 2016)

This typology provides evidence of the constructive nature of gangs and how the police influence this construction as several of these criteria are subjective in nature. They may lead to the potential for both over inclusion or exclusion by the police depending on the police agenda.

Furthermore, CFSEU recognises the changing landscape of the gang problem in BC, and specifically, that gangs in BC are not based predominantly on ethnicity, not likely to self-identify, and are frequently engaging in business with rivals for the sake of profitability. In its 2015 Community Report *Youth, Girls, and Gangs: Prevention and Public Engagement*, CFSEU (2015b) provides information to the public in BC about gangs. This publication, albeit produced by the police, suggests that youth in BC are a product of the environment; specifically that young people are

over-saturated with images of easy access to sex, drugs, and images of violence (Douglas, 2015). Douglas believes that youth become susceptible to the lure of the criminal lifestyle due to an over exposure to this imagery without full consideration of the real risks inherent to it. This appeals to youth seeking quick wealth, flashy clothes, and pretty girls (CFSEU, 2015b, p. 2).

Between January 2006 and June 2015, CFSEU examined gang-related homicides and or attempted homicides and found there were 344 that fit the criteria. The criteria agreed to by several police stakeholders¹⁰ was

A homicide is classified as gang-related when the accused person and/or the victim involved in the homicide was either a member, or a prospective member, of an organized crime group or street gang or was somehow associated with an organized crime group or street gang, and the homicide was carried out as a result of this association (Integrated Homicide Investigative Team, Internal Memo, 2016)

This number indicated a gang homicide or attempted homicide every 10 days in BC during that period. In addition, they found that there had been 35 incidents, which had resulted in 85 victims of gun violence (CFSEU, 2015b, p. 2).

CFSEU is further responsible for the End Gang Life program, an anti-gang messaging campaign, which has resulted in an End Gang Life sticker on every marked RCMP police car in BC, regardless of the size or presence of gangs in that community (see Appendix B for examples). One might be concerned that this monopolization of every police car for the anti-gang message, even in communities where no gangs exist, is akin to moral panic creation. Others might be further critical of this program in that CFSEU is simply amplifying the problem of gangs for vested interests, such as increased police budget dollars.

However, after a presentation by Staff Sergeant Lyndsey Houghton on February 19, 2016, at the annual Gangs and Guns Conference, I was convinced by the explanation provided for the End Gang Life Program. I determined that End Gang Life was actually a marketing and branding tool, and hence a construction by CFSEU to market itself as an agency and to engage the public in dialogue about why young people are joining gangs in BC. This was then a purposeful and strategic tactic to increase awareness, debate, and discussion about gangs in BC.

¹⁰ CFSEU-BC, Integrated Homicide Investigation Team, RCMP E-Division Criminal Analysis Section, RCMP E Division Criminal Operations-Investigative Services & Organized Crime, RCMP E-Division-Major Crime Section, and the Vancouver Police Department Homicide and Gang Crime Units.

There is no doubt that the posters are gritty and contain provocative images, including children burying their fathers or crippled gang members in wheelchairs. However, this shocking publicity gets people to stop and take a moment to consider the problem (Houghton, personal communication, February 19, 2016). With this said, the gang homicide rate is on a decline from the still relatively low rate in 2008 of 0.42 per 100,000 people to the rate of 0.24 per 100,000 people in 2014 (Statistics Canada, 2014). This may be evidence of the amplification of the gang problem by the police or evidence of the police being proactive and trying to reduce the violence through prevention and education. Regardless of the intent, the police need to be cautious as compared to Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hobbs, we have a relatively small gang problem.

Another way the police contribute to the construction of the gang problem in BC is through anti-gang ejection programs such as Barwatch, Restaurant Watch, and other such special agreements. These programs have participating businesses prominently display decals on their front door, indicating that they participate in the program with the aim to remove gang members. The presence of the decals sends a clear message to the community that gangs are present and of concern to public safety. The police are essentially telling the community, “We have a problem, and that problem is a gang problem.” This claims-making by the police is not unique to BC and has in fact been studied in many other places (Archbold & Meyer, 1999; Meehan, 2000; C. Katz, 2003). I examine the validity of this construction by police in more detail in Chapter 6.

The Legal Construction of Gangs in BC

Canadian criminal law is a federal responsibility. The federal government enacted, Bill C-14, The Organized Crime and Protection of Justice System Participants Act in 1997, in response to a biker war between the Hells Angels, the Rock Machine, and the Bandidos in Quebec and Ontario (Parliament of Canada, 1997b). This war would claim over 150 lives between 1994 and 2002. While the deaths of many people were of concern, the pivotal mobilizing events were the death of a boy as a collateral victim of a car bomb meant for an outlaw motorcycle gang in 1995 and the murder of two off-duty correctional officers in 1997. This compelled the enactment of Bill C-95, an amendment to the Criminal Code, in 1997 (Parliament of Canada, 1997a). The original piece of legislation was rushed through Parliament

within seven days of the Liberal Party calling an election. Bill C-95 stated the following:

467.11 (1) Every person who, for the purpose of enhancing the ability of a criminal organization to facilitate or commit an indictable offence under this or any other Act of Parliament, knowingly, by act or omission, participates in or contributes to any activity of the criminal organization is guilty of an indictable offence and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding five years.

Police and prosecutors criticised the section for being too restrictive while defence and civil rights advocates suggested it was too vague (Orlova, 2008). Despite the critics, the new legislation survived judicial scrutiny in Quebec at the Quebec Superior Court in *R. v. Carrier* (2001) and *R. v. Beauchamp* (2002). In January of 2002, the Criminal Code section of Bill C-24 was modified, and a criminal organisation was defined to be consistent with the UN Palermo Convention, to which Canada is a signatory. The new law allowed for punishment for participating in a criminal organization, as well as for recruiting, committing an offence, and instructing an offence. The law also called for consecutive sentences if crimes were conducted as part of a criminal organization, whereas most sentences in Canada are concurrent sentences for multiple offences. The law was also written in such a way that it would allow prosecutors to use it for street level gangs. Notably, the Supreme Court of Canada in *R. v. Venneri* (2012) “asserted that courts should utilize a flexible approach to defining ‘organization’ and avoid checklists as well as stereotypical concepts of sophisticated crime groups” (p. 41).

Despite the introduction of these laws to tackle gang-related offending and organised criminality, many are critical that in practice, the more enforcement-focussed laws have failed (Desroches, 2013). According to one Crown attorney,¹¹ case law reveals that the courts have often made the sentence for the predicate offence (e.g., trafficking) longer, and the criminal organization sentence shorter, albeit to be served in a consecutive manner. If the courts are giving the primary offence the longer sentence and no real additional sentence is occurring, the value of the police investigating and gathering evidence of a criminal organization, or the Crown prosecuting an accused person for organised crime, comes into question. This may be indicative of how the government is constructing the law in such a way that

¹¹ Confidential communication.

the community is aware of these laws, yet arguably in practice, the organised crime provisions have done little to deter criminals.

Formal Construction of Gangs by Criminal Intelligence Analysts

The RCMP are the federal police in Canada, and such have the jurisdiction for global and national policing. In 1998, they implemented the Sleipnir¹² matrix, which evaluated groups based on 16 characteristics to determine their vulnerability to police investigations. Police officers and agencies in Canada use the Sleipnir matrix to determine potential targets for investigations. These Sleipnir characteristics all suggest that organised crime in Canada is mafia-like, which excludes the possibility of white-collar crime being the focus of an organised crime policing project (Sheptycki, 2003).

This formal use of a matrix further constructs gangs and organised crime through the lens of police, and specifically police analysts. As suggested by A. Fraser and Atkinson (2014), having people even further removed from the street than police officers as such an active voice in this construction and labelling of gang members is potentially problematic. Many are already concerned with police officers' ability to correctly identify people as gang members (C. Katz, 2003). This use of the matrix populated by police and or civilian analysts could lead to an incomplete application of resources. By way of an example, Maxson and Klein (1990) considered the differences in gang homicide rates in Los Angeles when "gang member involvement" was replaced with "gang member involvement and gang-motivated." The results were thus reduced by almost 50%. The concern then is that the police may use the Sleipnir to construct one group over another group as being more of a target for police attention.

BC and the Role of the Drug Trade in the Construction of Gangs

BC is also a major, if not the forefront, producer of indoor grown marijuana in the world, with estimates of about \$4.2 billion annually (Plecas, Diplock, & Garis, 2012), and with a total drug business of \$7 billion per year (Pearce, 2009). BC grows more marijuana than any other Canadian province, including Quebec and Ontario with their significantly higher populations (Plecas et al., 2012, p. 3). In addition, BC has the notorious international recognition as being a mass producer of high-quality marijuana (Plecas et al., 2012). In fact, according to Plecas et al. (2012, p. 3), on a

¹² An eight-legged horse from Norse mythology.

per capita basis BC has over 30 times more indoor commercial growing operations than California and 3.5 times more than the United Kingdom (UK). With the abundance of lucrative businesses, it is no surprise that youth become involved in the marijuana trade, either as cultivators, traders, or transporters (Nguyen & Bouchard, 2010, cited in Plecas et al., 2012, p. 4). In addition, using the same transport methods and hidden compartments for shipping marijuana south into the US from BC, the smugglers, in turn, bring money, cocaine, and guns back into BC (Matas, 2009).

This lucrative business may appear to many as harmless, particularly in light of relaxed Canadian attitudes towards the use of marijuana. However, it has resulted in many men getting involved in gangs to make fast and easy money, and the violence simply came with it. The BC government did respond with some law enforcement initiatives, including police units in some communities forming so-called Green Teams, which resulted in a reduction of grow operations. These teams, however, were not without controversy. In Vancouver, VPD officers assigned to Grow Busters would apply for search warrants of suspected marijuana grow operations, and the warrant requirements were such that police would be seeking judicial authority to enter to gather evidence for criminal charges. However, rarely even when locating illegal grow operations would the officers write the reports to request criminal charges. Police were not even subtle in their circumvention of this requirement when Inspector Harrison stated in 2001 “that only in 17% of grow ops where suspects were located were criminal charges requested” (as cited in Skelton, 2001, p. 1). This focus is evident when one considers the success of the Grow Busters unit in seizing over \$46 million in marijuana and closing over 400 operations, with only 120 charges laid (Bolan, 2001). This lack of charges by the VPD was consistent with other police agencies in that “no case seizures” rose from 35% of all seizures in 1997 to 64% in 2003, with 42% occurring even in situations where suspects were located within the house (Plecas et al., 2012, p. 8). Further, these Green Teams resulted in significant displacement of the problem to other areas which were less equipped to manage these sophisticated grow operations (Plecas et al., 2012, p. 7).

These issues have been complicated by the fact that Vancouver is a port city without a dedicated port police. The National Ports Canada Police were disbanded in 1997, to be replaced by a combination of local police and the RCMP. Further cuts in funding reduced the ports-dedicated RCMP officers from 13 to nine in January 2016

(Bolan, 2015b). The VPD maintains security on the water, with a presence in the port, but they do so with only two police patrol boats (VPD, n.d.). Seattle, Washington, which has a comparable population, has seven boats (Port of Seattle, n.d.). In addition, unlike Vancouver, Seattle has the Port of Seattle Police, which is made up of 108 sworn police officers (Port of Seattle, n.d.). Moreover, Washington State shares with Oregon, Montana, and Idaho the Pacific Northwest U.S. Coast Guard, made up of 21 cutters, 132 boats, and 11 aircraft (United States Coast Guard, 2016). In contrast, in 2013 the Canadian federal government closed the Vancouver Coast Guard station. Considering the significant disparity in policing resources between the two ports, it is likely that organised crime would choose Vancouver as a base of operations rather than Seattle.

In addition, the presence of gang members and organised crime in the Port of Vancouver workforce has been widely reported. Almost 25 longshoremen are Hells Angels, are associated with other gangs, or have a serious criminal record (Bolan, 2015a). These are not port employees who turn to gang life post-employment: as recently as 2012, three well-known, prominent Hells Angels were given employment on the dock (Bolan, 2015a). Obviously, for members of organised crime to have free roam of an international shipping port is advantageous to their drug trade. Moreover, their chance of exposure is limited as the port manages one and a half million containers per year with the Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA), being able to examine about 3% of them (Bolan, 2015a). This examination is for containers coming into port, as neither CBSA or the RCMP Waterfront Team search any export containers for contraband.¹³

Further aggravating the illegal drug trade in BC is that the police do not have the capacity to respond to all the marijuana grow operations. It is estimated that the police can respond to less than 6% of them (Plecas et al., 2012 p. 5). In addition, the few grow ops that the police successfully investigate and recommend criminal charges against the owners often do not result in convictions: “between 1997 and 2003, 44% of those charged suspects had all of their criminal charges result in a stay of proceedings by the Crown Counsel at trial” (Plecas et al., 2012, p. 8). Of those who were convicted, the fines they received were on average under \$3,000 (34% of the cases), and custodial sentences were on average around four months (19% of

¹³ Personal communication, senior RCMP officer.

cases). While there are potentially some outliers, Plecas et al. (2012) found in their study that despite the Criminal Code of Canada allowing for a seven-year sentence, not one suspect received a custodial sentence of five years. Plecas et al. noted that had those crimes been committed in Washington state, directly to the south of BC, over half of the sentenced people would likely have received a five-year sentence for the same crime. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) agent John Callery, presenting at Gangs and Guns Conference 2016, made it clear that the cartels of Mexico and other criminal gangs are well aware of the lax sentencing provisions for drug offences in BC (Callery, 2016).

The combination of these factors results in woefully inadequate law enforcement of this illegal industry. In review, these factors include a disbanded port police, a reduced police presence, the closure of a coast guard station, an inability to investigate grow operations, a lack of convictions, and a lack of meaningful deterrent sentences to send messages to those involved.

The Media and the Construction of Gangs in BC

Arguably, one of the most significant community proponents of the term *gang* is the media. Canadians are not immune to Hollywood imagery of gangs; movies such as *West Side Story* (Robbins, 1961), *Boyz N the Hood* (Singleton, 1991), *Colors* (Hopper, 1988), *Gran Torino* (Eastwood, 2008), and many others have influenced the construction of the perception of gangs in BC. This results in the design of programs and police responses based upon these flawed perceptions. Youth outreach workers here generally do not have corners or blocks to walk in search of gang members, as in Chicago, Hobbema, or Toronto.¹⁴ Police in BC do not have geographical areas to try SWAMP-like tactics to control gangs.¹⁵ Vancouver gangs, for example, cannot be contained or limited to geographic regions as they are not built on, nor are they the social products of, neighbourhoods.

The coverage of gang shootings in headlines has a significant impact on the social construction of the issue. Very few people have witnessed a gang shooting in BC, and even fewer have been the victim or a collateral victim¹⁶ of a gang shooting,

¹⁴ Some limited areas exist, such as Downtown Victoria or the Downtown East Side of Vancouver.

¹⁵ Operation SWAMP was a London Met saturation patrol operation that attempted to cut street crime in April 1981. It resulted in rioting in Brixton.

¹⁶ Glen Olson (1994), Rachel Davis (2004), Richard Hui (2004), Lee Matasi (2005), Timothy Jones (2007), Ed Schellenberg (2007), Kirk Holifield (2007), Chris Mohan (2007), and Jonathan Barber (2008).

yet crime narratives and representations are very prominent in the media (Reiner, 2007). Several studies have shown the impact that media may have on the community's perception of a variety of issues, including crime. In their Canadian study of news stories containing content about deviance and control, Ericson et al. found that crime was represented in 45% of quality newspapers and 72% in quality radio stations (1991, cited by Reiner, 2007, p. 305).

An illustrative example in BC occurs when police media spokespersons use the language, "the victim was known to the police" or "this was a targeted shooting." The purpose and message of this is clear: If you are not one of "them," then you have nothing to fear. Richardson and Kennedy (2012) reported in their Canadian newspaper analysis that in 2010, the term *gang* appeared in the top-selling English newspapers almost 3,900 times (p. 444). They further suggested that newspapers have long used the term *gang* to create interest and construct with little common knowledge of its meaning (Richardson & Kennedy, 2012, p. 445).

Richardson (2012) also suggested in his thesis that the experience in many Canadian cities is that many groups that form are multi-ethnic in nature, and thus race is not always a factor: "Whether real or constructed, race plays an important role not only in gang formation and solidification but also who reporters and the general public understand to be gang members" (p. 21). Richardson also believes that journalists present a very gendered and racial profile that puts young black males at the forefront of gang violence (2012, p. 25). His research also commented on the fact that despite the *Vancouver Sun* reporting gang violence almost 500 more times than *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star*, and the *Montreal Gazette*, the *Vancouver Sun* refers to "street gangs" in only 1% of its gang articles. He further suggests that the distance between these cities, about 4,000 kilometres, might account for the different gang landscapes (Richardson, 2012, p. 86).

Canadian gang expert Michael Chettleburg (2007) examined the reality of headlines that create fear around gang violence and concludes that while there are innocent victims of gang violence, they are very rare. Chettleburg examined death statistics from 2005 and found that a Canadian not involved in gangs had a 1 in 2,111,266 chance of being an innocent victim of gang-related murder. When compared to the likelihood of dying in daily activities, it appears that some headlines attempt to create fear and panic and do not accurately reflect reality. Canadian death statistics for 2005 reveal that there is a greater chance of dying from food poisoning

(1 in 1,033,333), a plane crash (1 in 380,000), a fire (1 in 90,482), drowning (1 in 63,338), accidental poisoning (1 in 37,039), a fall (1 in 19,793), or a traffic accident (1 in 11,100; Chettleburg, 2007, p. 50). These realities are difficult to remember when headlines in local papers and international media such as *The Economist* magazine compare BC to a third-world emerging country that has been engaged in and sieged by a narco-terrorist war (*The Economist*, 2009).

The impact of US media is significant because most Canadians view US channels on their regular television. Studies of US media content have found 22 to 28% of newspapers, 20% of local television, and 13% of network television is dedicated to news about crime (Graber, 1980, p. 306). Fictional crime movies account for 20% to 50% of all films (Reiner, 2007). Rarely are mass media images of crime objective and absent of an agenda, namely the profit of the owners of the media outlets, which rely on crime to sell the media to advertisers. Violence sells, and routine and mundane life is not news. Therefore, the sensational is the norm in the media. While we get the bulk of our “knowledge” from newspapers and television, their accounts of crime are at odds with FBI uniform crime reports (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2006).

In addition, the media creates a perception of an enormous amount of violent crime, whereas property crime is statistically more likely the crime to be experienced by non-criminally involved members of the community (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2006, p. 9). Further, 33% of total television programming in the US is dedicated to crime or law enforcement, with the largest segment during prime time hours (Beirne & Messerschmidt, 2006). According to Surlin and Berlin (1991), the impact of American media on Canadians has been under-researched, with the few studies completed indicating significant similarities between Canadian and American values and perceptions. Surlin and Berlin’s study is dated; however, it is only in the last few years that high-quality Canadian police dramas, including *Rookie Blue*, *Flashpoint*, *Motive*, and *Cracked*, have become popular (Doyle, 2014). Generally, Canadians get their information about police and crime, albeit fictional information, from US-based media.

As an example, for several years I have taught criminology classes at a variety of educational levels, from first-year to fourth-year university. I begin every course by asking the students two questions. The first question, which is relevant to this discussion, is, “Do you, as an adult, have the right to a lawyer being present

during questioning after the police arrest you in Canada?” Invariably, 90% of students raise their hands to indicate “Yes.” The correct answer is that adults do *not* have this right, which has always been the legal procedure for adults in Canada and was recently confirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada (Ward, 2010). The astounding part of this exercise is that these students have entered a university program about criminal justice, and some are about to graduate, yet they misunderstand their basic legal rights regarding a criminal event as significant as arrest or detention. Arguably, the common underlying reason for that misconception is that on television, the arrested person has a lawyer present when police question him. If such an important right can be misunderstood, then with all the competing messages about gangs, it is likely that this issue is also miscomprehended.

Chapter Conclusion

In summary, social constructionism as a theoretical framework accounts for an incongruity in the perceived reality of the gang phenomenon among various jurisdictions, with BC being particularly distinctive. To be clear, this is not an admission of defeat in the debate about the use of the word; it is an acceptance with the caveat that BC gangs appear to be different in structure and characteristics than gangs in other places. Social phenomena are largely value-neutral until we place value upon them as a community. For Thrasher, gang members are a “crowd of boys” (1927, p. 26), for Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009, p. 360) and for T. Young (2009, p. 229) they are just “on road,” for Gunter it is “road culture” (2008, p. 352), and for BC they are another phenomenon.

The construction of gangs in BC occurs through the interpretation of the term by the press, the public, and policy makers. It is constructed by the very work of crime control agencies designed to inhibit criminal conduct, including the police, and in particular it is significantly influenced by CFSEU. In addition, the courts, legislative actions, and other stakeholders such as the government, community representatives, educators, academics, correction officers, and social service providers have constructed this phenomenon into what is defined as a “gang” problem.

The underpolicing of the cultivation of marijuana in BC has led to an increase in the wealth and sophistication of gangs with the success of each new crop. This success fosters glamorization of the lifestyle of the Mafioso, gangster, or thug. Our construction is not of the young ethnic marginalised youth, but rather middle to

upper-class youth engaged in the lifestyle for a hedonistic accumulation of wealth and power.

If gangs exist in BC, they exist differently from gangs in other places. This acceptance of differences is at the heart of constructionists in that, as Hiebert (2014) explains, they accept that everything that is real for us comes out of some community social construct. However, this construction at the macro level leads to an acceptance at the micro level, allowing some young men to rationally choose the gang lifestyle in BC as a means to satisfy their needs.

Chapter 2: Research and Construction of Gangs

Gangs are a major public safety concern, as their presence and activities create a considerable amount of fear and violence in communities. In fact, the presence of gangs in some communities results in social services being cut off and some protective services such as police, fire, and ambulances being reluctant to go, either alone or without additional resources. This mustering of scarce resources to respond to gang areas can result in delayed essential services in times of crisis (Swift, 2011, p. 8). Thus, it is of utmost importance that gangs be understood correctly in terms of the threat they may or may not present to the community.

This chapter examines the major academic contributions to the discussion on gangs. Because gangs exist in so many forms, and in so many countries, this cannot be an exhaustive review of all the research undertaken on gangs. Nonetheless, this review is intended to map out the significant contributors to the development of gang literature in the academic forum. The common theme throughout most of the existing relevant gang research suggests that gangs form by young, uneducated, and marginalised men from poor backgrounds and often ethnically based communities. This is rejected as an appropriate explanation for gangs in BC.

Arguably, social theory has contributed to the broader social construction of the term *gang* in society. Formal research observations and the subsequent development of criminological theories on youth delinquency have historically been focussed primarily on gang behaviour. These have ultimately aided in the development of conceptions that theorists have about the deviant gang.¹⁷ The conclusions of academic studies are often reflected in the social policies that logically develop out of these theoretical concepts, and this, in turn, contributes to the larger social construction of the gang as a significant social problem. Thus, the history of gang research literature is key to the broader thesis of the social construction of gangs.

Knox (2006) summarises the problem of defining gangs in varying jurisdictions with the concern that many youth are classified as gangs simply because they hang out on the street, or use the street, which absent of criminal activity is not

¹⁷ Further, these conceptions inform researchers' decisions on the appropriate methodologies to employ in researching these problem groups in society, the case study approach of the Chicago School in point.

a gang for Knox. He is equally critical of “youth gang,” as there is no universal definition of youth (Knox, 2006, p. 8).

When police leaders, media, academics, government, and community activists use the terms *gang* and *gang violence* to describe the current situation, it misdiagnoses what we are dealing with in BC. *Gang* conjures up pictures of poor, uneducated youth living in conditions of squalor, fighting for turf and dying for colours—as suggested by much of the literature out of the US and, to a lesser extent, the UK. That is not to suggest that a uniform definition of “gang” exists in these countries either.

Over the course of the past two decades, there have been substantial efforts to address key measurement issues regarding gangs. In addition to the academic debate over the definition of gangs, police are also inconsistent with their definitions. This is problematic for a number of reasons: police databases are frequently the basis for gang research, so comparisons are difficult to make accurately. Also, some police agencies may deny a gang problem while others exaggerate one to increase budgets (C. Katz et al., 2002). Indeed, there is an ongoing debate about the extent of the illegal activities and degree of organization that is necessary for a group to be defined as a gang (Klein & Maxson, 2006). This occurs, for example, in deciding which homicides should count as gang homicides. In Chicago, a homicide that is committed by a gang member but is not motivated by a gang purpose is not classified as such, whereas in Los Angeles it might be (Klein & Maxson, 2006).

Because gangs are topical, there are many commentators on the subject. Various police agencies, educators, academics, former gang members, journalists, government officials, politicians, and community groups have written about gangs. The aim of this chapter is to provide a solid framework of the historical authors, the current authors, and specifically Canadian authors. Canadian research on gangs is minimal in comparison to the US, UK, and Australia. Thus, the Canadian content will be bolstered with a discussion that includes unpublished academic works.¹⁸

In 1994, then-US President Clinton stated, “The problem of gang violence is among the most profound we as a people have ever faced” (cited by McCorkle & Miethe, 2002, p. 9). This significant assertion by an American president resulted in major research discussions and contributions. However, a meaningful analysis of

¹⁸ In addition, I excluded valuable works that are not in English and have not been translated.

gangs must start earlier than the 1990s. North American gangs became research subjects in the late 1800s. American immigration policies, poverty, racism, urbanization, and other factors resulted in gangs forming amongst the Irish and later Italian immigrants in New York (Riis, 1902, p. 55).

The Early US Writers

J. Howell (2012) suggests in his book *Gangs in America's Communities* that the first commentator on gangs was Luke Pike in 1873, who described the highway robbers in England during the 17th century. Pearson (1983, cited by J. Howell, 2012) described the Mims, the Hectors, the Bugles, and the Dead Boys fighting pitched battles on the streets of London, England. Early London gangs are believed to have emerged on the east coast of the US after the American Revolution ended in 1783 (Sante, cited by J. Howell, 2012). The street gangs on the US east coast went through three phases: the first was after the American Revolution, the second was around 1820 and coincided with an increase in immigration, and the third followed from the 1930s into the 1940s, with gang members predominantly being Blacks and Latinos (J. Howell, 2012).

During the first phase of gang emergence on the east coast, three major factors fertilised the gangs' growth. "Gangs grew in New York because of (1) the social disorganization in the slum areas, (2) the establishment of grocery stores (illegal saloons), [and] (3) the involvement of politicians in street gangs" (J. Howell, 2012, p. 4). In fact, Sante (1991) believed that

the basic unit of social life among young males in New York in the nineteenth century was (as it perhaps is still and ever more shall be) the gang. . . . it served as an important marker, a sort of social stake driven in which allowed the offspring of the various races and nationalities and sects and livelihoods and districts to differentiate themselves from their heterogeneous peers. Gangs, it should be recalled, were not always criminal. They engaged in violence, but violence was a normal part of life in their always-contested environment. (p. 197)

These gangs continued to grow and the violence waged in the Five Points area of New York and continued with years of conflict between the Irish gangs known as the Plug Uglies, Chichesters, Roach Guards, and Dead Rabbits (Haskins, cited by J. Howell, 2012). Asbury differentiated between people who grew up in a gang as a matter of life and those who were criminals who organised as a gang to be more effective criminals (1927, p. 20).

During this period, Chicago was growing as a major industrial hub and attracted immigrants from Europe and migrants from the US south. Chicago was to see large groups of Polish and Italian gangs emerge, followed by Black gangs (Haskins, 1974, cited by J. Howell, 2012, p. 5). Chicago also had the burden of organised crime and notorious figures such as Al Capone.

This period was the antecedent of the work of the grandfather of gang research, Frederick Thrasher. This is where I begin the examination of the authors who have shaped the social construction of gangs. Thrasher studied 1,313 gangs in Chicago, totalling approximately 25,000 members (1927, p. 5) and his work is believed to be “the first serious academic treatment of gangs” (J. Howell, 2012, p. 9). Thrasher was part of the Chicago School and researched how gangs formed as well as how they moved and intermingled with other gangs in Chicago. He discovered that gangs were found in the interstitial areas, “which were characterized by three consistent ecological features: (1) deteriorating neighbourhoods, (2) shifting populations, and (3) mobility and disorganization of the slum” (Thrasher, 1927, p. 22). Further, for Thrasher, these gangs were in a constant state of change and flux:

Gangs represent the spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves where none adequate to their needs exists. What boys get out of such association that they do not get otherwise under the conditions that adult society imposes is the thrill and the zest of participation in common interest, more especially in corporate action, in hunting, in capture, conflict, flight and escape. Conflict with other gangs and the world about them furnishes the occasion for many of their exciting activities. (Thrasher, 1927, p. 37)

Even then, Thrasher (1927) found conflict in defining gangs. He believed that gangs were formed from innocent, or at least somewhat innocent, groupings of young boys. They may have been drawn together because of shared experiences such as neighbourhood, sports, or familial ties, and the introduction of a conflict drew them together in solidarity against a common enemy. What set these boys apart from other groups was the desire to fight the enemy, perceived or real (Thrasher, 1927, p. 54). Thrasher further believed this was a three-part process: (1) the diffuse, minimal leadership and short-lived gang; (2) the introduction of conflict, resulting in the gang becoming solidified; and (3) the gang members becoming conventionalised and assuming legitimate roles in society (Thrasher, 1927, p. 58). Thrasher remained steadfast that most gang activity was not unlawful, and his observations indicated that the illegal activities predominantly centred on stealing and fighting with rival gang members and other members of one’s own gang (cited by Decker & Van

Winkle, 1996, p. 15). Notably, the use of firearms by these gangs was very isolated (Thrasher, cited by Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 15).

Thrasher further noted that the gangs “were isolated from mainstream society in both geography and lack of access to legitimate institutional roles” (cited by Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 15). The research conducted by Thrasher continues to influence commentators on the subject of gangs. Arguably, his work is as relevant today as it was in 1927 (C. Katz & Webb, 2006; Densley, 2013); however, it can be criticised in that it was not statistically oriented (Decker & Van Winkle, 1996, p. 15) nor methodologically sound (Knox, 2006, p. 160). Another limitation to Thrasher’s work is that his research subjects can be described as low-functioning gangs in that they “were at the lower end of the organizational sophistication spectrum” (Shelden et al., 2013, p. 195). Therefore, the extent to which researchers can generalise from Thrasher’s findings to gangs of a much higher level of criminal sophistication is at issue.

The next major contributor to gang research was William Foote Whyte in 1943 with *Street Corner Society*. This 1937 study of an Italian community in Boston used a case study/oral history methodology. His findings confirmed the work of Thrasher in that the gangs he researched were centred around fights, but observations also indicated many more activities that would be described as legitimate, including the organizing of bowling nights. The Corner Boys were in conflict with the College Boys, which resulted in fights for domination of the neighbourhood (Whyte, 1943). Whyte, like Thrasher, saw the emergence of the gang as “the habitual association of members over a long period of time on the street corners” (1943, p. 255).

While the important social theorists Emile Durkheim and Robert Merton did not specifically write about gangs, they did discuss the societal precursors to gang formation and associated behaviour. Durkheim, in his 1893 text *The Division of Labour in Society*, wrote extensively on the theoretical state of anomie. Durkheim (1893) argued that anomic conditions arose in society when the rules that normally guide behaviour in society erode, and people no longer know how to behave towards, or what to expect from, one another (p. 304). Thus, deregulated and deviant behaviour was a potential consequence.

In 1938, Merton expanded on Durkheim’s concept of anomie, identifying it as a reaction to the “disruption of normal social conditions” (cited by Abadinsky, 2013, p. 81). Anomic adaptations occurred “when people are confronted by the

contradiction between goals and means and become estranged from a society that promises them in principle what they are deprived of in reality” (Merton, 1964, cited by Abadinsky, 2013, p. 81). In terms of how this applies to modern gang associations and behaviours, one can argue that Merton’s concept of anomie is evident where young people group together in gangs to collectively engage in deviant behaviours as an adaptation to the apparent inability of the group members to achieve what society both promises and expects, yet provides little in the way of fair or reasonable access to.

In 1955, Albert Cohen published *Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang*. He built on the previous work of Merton in the adaptation of young men to strain (anomie). Cohen wrote that young males would “innovate” criminally to be successful in surroundings that did not allow them the tools to conventional success (cited by Knox, 2006, p. 44). For Cohen, “Youth gangs emerge as a reaction formation to status frustration among working-class youths who are less likely to have been socialised into middle-class values” (cited by Knox, 2006, p. 45). The occasional extreme behaviour of members of youth gangs, and their willingness to engage in unlawful behaviour may thus be recognised as indicative of Cohen’s “reaction-formation” analysis.

Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958, cited by Knox, 2006) followed Cohen when they published their work *The Gang: A Study in Adolescent Behaviour*. They suggested that “there is a variation in all societies in terms of mechanisms of status, rituals, roles, etc., made available to adolescents and that these also vary across cultures in terms of how difficult a transition it is from youth to adulthood” (Bloch & Niederhoffer, 1958, cited by Knox, 2006, p. 45). Lewis Yablonsky (cited by Knox, 2006) studied gangs in New York City in 1959. His work suggested that there were three types of gangs: delinquent, violent, and social. The most concerning was the violent gang because of the danger it presented to public safety.

From the 1960s to the 2000s

In 1960, Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (cited by Siegel & McCormick, 2012) suggested that youth gangs occur when youth are not able to reach legitimate goals through legitimate means. These are not youth who reject societal goals, but simply those who do not have the legitimate means to attain those goals. In turn, they form gangs as part of their differential opportunity. These theorists go further and suggest that some youth will be excluded because they are truly disadvantaged

(Cloward & Ohlin, cited by Siegel & McCormick, 2012, p. 252). For Cloward and Ohlin (cited by Siegel & McCormick, 2012), gangs are either criminal gangs, conflict gangs, or retreatist gangs. The criminal gang is formed for the purpose of committing crime to achieve financial gain and societally sanctioned goals. The conflict gang members come from areas where even illegitimate means to obtain goals are limited. The conflict gang members have very few role models of legitimate or illegitimate means and are essentially fighting other gangs for their share of scarce resources. Finally, the retreatist gang members do not have legitimate or illegitimate means, so they reject the values of the dominant society and essentially opt out of the society.

In 1964, researcher Irving Spergel contributed considerably to the study of gangs with his publication on Racketville and Slumtown, two fictional communities. In the predominantly Italian community of Racketville, the youth had better access to legitimate and illegitimate opportunities (Spergel, 1964, p. 15). The larger community supported the Racketville youth as they were seen to defend the neighbourhood from the Slumtown youth. Moreover, the Racketville youth were generationally established and displayed respect for the older generation gang members. The Slumville youth had far more limited opportunities to access both legitimate and illegitimate opportunities. Racially, they were predominantly Puerto Rican and were described as “offensive” and “seeking out conflicts and fights in order to bolster personal and gang reputations” (Spergel, 1964, p. 64).

In 1965, James Short and Fred L. Strodbeck published work that was based on three years of research between 1959 and 1962. They conducted their research in Chicago and focussed on street workers organised by the YMCA (Short & Strodbeck, 1965, p. 10). Through field observations and surveys, they found that gang violence was often a result gang members’ need to assert their “toughness” in terms of the threat they presented to the status of others (Short & Strodbeck, 1965, p. 132). This study had a remarkable result: The community formally assigning a youth worker served as a formal recognition of the gang as “legitimate,” and established for that gang a sense of having “arrived.” This resulted in less violence due to a reduction of the need to prove themselves (Short & Strodbeck, 1965, cited by Curry & Decker, 2003, p. 36).

Klein (1971) evaluated two gang intervention programs in Los Angeles: the Group Guidance Project (1961–1965) and the Ladino Hills Project (1966–1968). In

contrast to Short and Strodbeck, Klein (1971) found that youth who most frequently accessed the group gang intervention services by street workers also engaged the most frequently in delinquency. Klein concluded, “Gang intervention programs may have the unexpected result of contributing to the attractiveness of gangs, enhancing their solidarity, and promoting more violence” (1971, p. 37). This conclusion is contrary to Short and Strodbeck’s findings in 1965. The study by Klein (1971) also suggested that the “internal control mechanisms” were less powerful than “external control mechanisms” of gang intervention programs (cited by Curry & Decker, 2003, p. 37). Thus, the threats of violence from other gangs, as well as the attention placed on gangs by police, community workers, and educators, were more likely to result in gang cohesion than any internal mechanism. Ultimately, Klein (1971) was concerned that formal responses to gangs, in fact, led to the gangs’ overall attractiveness, social cohesion, and reputation. If the goal is a reduction of gangs, this unintended consequence should be avoided (Klein, 1971, cited by Curry & Decker, 2003, p. 37).

Ruth Horowitz (1983) studied the Chicano gang the Lions in the 1970s by following the men from teenagers to adults. She found that there was pressure on the men to have honour and achieve the American dream. The gangs provided means to this end and featured a high level of social status attached to respect and character, which were difficult to achieve through legitimate means due to the poverty of the neighbourhood (Horowitz, 1983, p. 31). The Lions were traditionally centred on 32nd Street and had loose leadership roles with some gang rules. Ultimately, Horowitz confirmed the work of Thrasher in that the bulk of the Lions’ violence was in response, or perceived response, to outside gangs. The Lions carried guns to protect themselves from other gangs who carried guns (Horowitz, 1983, p. 85).

Morash (1983) studied Boston youth to determine the extent to which the relationship of delinquency was connected to gang involvement (p. 313). This study indicated that the

negligible association between membership in a stereotypical gang and delinquency has implications for the understanding of societal reactions to delinquency as well as for the understanding of the etiology of delinquency. It is possible that the reaction of police and others to youths whom they perceive to be gang members can amplify the delinquency of members. (Morash, 1983, p. 328)

This work cautions stakeholders in BC in applying the gang label to less organised or less delinquent groups of youths.

In 1987, Marjorie Zatz conducted research into the moral panic that occurred in Phoenix, Arizona, in response to a fear of the Chicano community. This was a case study of Chicano youth gangs in Phoenix in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Zatz employed qualitative and quantitative data from multiple sources including media reports, interviews, and juvenile court records to assess and determine the source of the “gang problem” in Phoenix (1987, p. 138). She suggested that the image of gangs, particularly Chicano gangs, as violent converged with the image of Mexicans and Chicanos as “different” to create the threat of disorder.

Zatz further identified the police as having a vested interest in the identification of the “gang problem” and building on the threat to acquire funding for a specialised gang unit. Specifically, Zatz pointed out that

from the police perspective the problem of gangs was growing at an alarming rate. The number of gangs reputedly went from 5 or 6 to 35 in 18 months, then to 50 or 60 in the next three months, and then to between 100 and 120. Similarly, police estimates had the number of gang members, most of whom were young Chicano men, increasing from at most 630 (35 gangs multiplied by 18 members) to between 3000 and 4000 within about 27 months. (1987, p. 130)

The implications of the process of social construction to North American policing is evident in that Zatz (1987) alleged the police to be the perpetrators of the moral panic with the intent to secure federal funding.

Building on his earlier work with Joan Moore, James Diego Vigil (2007) studied the Pico Gardens Housing Project in East Los Angeles, where he was interested in why some families joined gangs while others in similar hardship were able to resist. Vigil found that non-gang-involved families were not immune to the difficulties of living in social housing, and that “the experiences of non-gang families are those typically associated with the travails of the socio-economically and socio-culturally marginalized; their responses and outlook are nonetheless exceptional in many respects” (2007, p. 156). His research also found that the parents of non-gang-involved families ensured their children were engaged in activities such as sports and church, and they were actively involved in their children’s education, for example by participating in their schools (Vigil, 2007).

Hagedorn (2008) credits Klein’s 1960’s research in his work on gangs, as Hagedorn distanced himself from the desire by American criminologists to transport American gang definitions to Europe. Klein’s research indicated that gang intervention could have the unintended consequence of changing the perception of

the gang members themselves around their overall attractiveness and cohesion. Thus definitions of gangs are sensitive to presumption.

Further, Hagedorn (2008) was more interested in the global perspective on the phenomenon of armed young men who are responding to the era of globalization (p. 3). For Hagedorn (2008), the social disorganization that so many of the academics credit for gang deviance has been replaced by the “retreat of the state,” meaning that social institutions and the state itself are being replaced in some communities by gangs (p. 6).

In 1988, Hagedorn began his exploration by examining gangs in Milwaukee. He interviewed 47 founding members from 19 of Milwaukee’s largest gangs. His research was similar to others who found that most of the gangs were formed from loose social groups centred on geographical areas such as neighbourhood street corners. Many of the gangs in Milwaukee took on the same names of gangs in Chicago, even though only four of the gangs had any Chicago connection (cited by Sheldon et al., 2013, p. 15). Hagedorn found that these youths had migrated from Chicago with the intent of leaving gangs behind them. Once in Milwaukee, they quickly realised the need to form gangs for protection from other youth, and as a response to police harassment (cited by Sheldon et al., 2013, p. 15). Hagedorn also described the gangs of Milwaukee as being age-graded, meaning the gang members’ ages were related to their commitment to the gang. Hagedorn suggested the following categories: 1) the Ancients (20 years and older), 2) the Seniors (ages 16–19), 3) the Juniors (ages 12–15), and 4) the Pee Wees (ages 8–12; cited by Delaney, 2005, p. 134).

The next piece of major research was by Ko-Lin Chin (1990), who studied the Asian-American gangs in New York City. Chin’s research found that these gangs primarily victimised other Asian Americans in either their legitimate or illegitimate businesses. In addition, the gangs were often called upon to mediate or fix problems encountered in legitimate business, rather than owners resorting to the police. He also found that the gangs would often engage in periods of war with one another, followed by periods of peace, when accepted markets for exploitation were agreed upon (Chin, 1990).

In 1990, Carl Taylor studied gangs in Detroit. His research suggested that there were three types of gangs: 1) scavenger gangs, 2) territorial gangs, and 3) corporate gangs. The scavenger gangs were very unorganised, with a constant

changing focus of criminality and leadership. The territorial gangs were more organised, with clear profit-driven leadership. Interestingly, Taylor reported that territorial gangs were not limited to geographical areas and could be considered in terms of criminal markets. Finally, corporate gangs were very organised and used violence strategically in order to assert control over criminal enterprises (Taylor, 1990, p. 4).

In the book *Islands in the Street*, Martin Sanchez-Jankowski (1991) describes his 10-year ethnographic study in which he was a participant observer with 37 gangs in New York, Boston, and Los Angeles. His findings are of interest in that they deviate from the broader conclusions of typical research findings. Sanchez-Jankowski observed that these gangs formed as a rational response to the conditions in which these young men found themselves.¹⁹ In addition, he argued that the gangs possessed some positive aspects and often did positive things within and for the community. He did not observe a typology that included gang disorganization, and he found a strong connection between the gang members and organised crime (Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991).

In 1992, Felix Padilla studied the Diamonds, a street gang in Chicago. He found evidence of a gang career path in that youth moved from stealers to mules to dealers through demonstration of street skills and success. Moreover, while the gang engaged in the sale of narcotics for the purchase of basic items of comfort such as clothes, the gang was not focussed purely on criminality; its members spent most of their time hanging out and engaged in typical activities that young men engage in. The exception was that they also trafficked narcotics and were not averse to explaining it:

People say it's all the violence and crime: it's a lot of fun. You're with your friends, you hang out, you party, or whatever. We're just like everybody else. If you do drugs, that's your prerogative. But most of the time we're sitting at the schoolyard talking or playing basketball. And that's hanging out. But the other kids who hang out, those who are considered straight, they're not violent, right—but they hang out too. It's the same thing: they're doing the same thing we are doing. So there's a bunch of these types of guys who hang out here, and they are not considered a gang, but they're a bunch of friends who stick up for each other. That's all a gang really is—it's a bunch of friends who hang out. (Padilla, 1992, p. 9)

¹⁹ Social strain theorist R. K. Merton (1968) states plainly that individuals in their deviant or conformist social adaptations “are responding normally to the social situation in which they find themselves” (p. 186).

This quote by one of Padilla's (1992) research subjects is very useful because, in the absence of a formal academic analysis, it hits the nail on the head in my examination of gangs through a social construct perspective. From Thrasher forward, academics have asked why some groups are "gangs" and why some groups that share similarities are not.

This question of *gang* or *group* also flows from the work of Peggy Sanday (1990, as cited by Maxon et al., 2006), who suggested in response to a 1990 incident that a group of young males in Philadelphia who had engaged in a multiple-assault sexual assault were gang members. They were all part of an identified group of cohesively organised young men, and the group had developed a reputation in the neighbourhood for anti-social behaviour, including drinking beer and harassing passing women. In fact, many women reported a fear of attending social events at the clubhouse these young men had. Based on these facts, many people might consider this a gang and the sexual assault a gang-related crime, yet Sanday was challenged because this group of men was actually a prominent upper-class university fraternity.

Carol Archbold and Michael Meyer (1999) conducted research on a midsized US police agency that formed a gang unit in response to internal and external pressures of a perceived gang problem in the Midwestern community of Cedar Springs, Michigan. The researchers participated in 250 hours of participant observations and examined media reports and internal memos (Archbold & Meyer, 1999, p. 202), and their results indicated similar conditions as those associated with moral panic situations. The researchers found that applying the gang indicators and suppression techniques of large cities to a midsized city's framework resulted in gang indicators being misidentified and overemphasised, which prompted the gang suppression unit to be created, as well as generating a moral panic across the community (Archbold & Meyer, 1999, p. 221).

In 2000, Thompson et al. conducted a content analysis, within a contextual constructionism theoretical framework, of 4,445 newspaper articles that examined the media construction of criminal gangs and societal responses (p. 412). They found that articles covering gang crimes were outnumbered by stories about community responses to gangs and that reporting results of scientific research on gangs received the least media attention (Thompson et al., 2000, p. 414). They concluded that by presenting gangs through primarily social and moral disorder news stories, the media had transformed the criminal gang into a cultural metaphor, by using the "gang-

problem” motif to highlight aspects of other social problems, as well as a metaphor for social disorder, thus requiring the need for social control (Thompson et al., 2000, p. 410). For these authors, the construction of the “gang problem” is a tool of social control, impacting non-gang members (and non-criminal juveniles) as much as, if not more than, actual gang members.

Scott Decker has conducted research with several colleagues in St. Louis, Missouri. The researchers interviewed 99 gang members in their own environment, 24 relatives, and 28 former gang members. This research found that gangs were distinct and experienced different subcultural value systems. In St. Louis, the gangs were influenced and had adopted names of Los Angeles and Chicago gangs, despite no organizational connection with these gangs. Further research conducted by Decker and Van Winkle (1996) that involved interviewing members of a gang task force, police youth squad officers and some incarcerated juveniles found that the sale of drugs was a primary activity of the gang members, though not highly organised. Decker and Van Winkle concluded that street violence was a major interest of the gangs, as well as a strong impediment to members’ safety and decision to leave the gang (1996, p. 46).

In 2001, Esbensen et al. conducted research on the definitional issues associated with gang research. Using a sample of almost 6,000 middle-school students from 11 US cities, they applied five definitions of increasing restrictiveness to the youth gang phenomenon (Esbensen et al., 2001, p. 112). They also examined differentially defined gang and non-gang youths on various demographic characteristics, theoretical factors, and levels of self-reported crime. The largest differences in attitudes and behaviours were found between youths who reported never being in a gang and those who reported prior gang involvement. Self-identified prior or current gang members reported more antisocial attitudes and behaviours than non-gang youths, and as categories for gang classification became more restrictive, the attitudes and behaviours of the gang members became increasingly antisocial, with a small number of “core gang members” having the most extreme responses. The study also questioned the validity of the typical and well-used methods to determine gang involvement, including self-identification and the theory that “if it walks like a duck and talks like a duck, it’s a duck,” used by police and academics (Esbensen et al., 2001, p. 123).

Charles Katz (2001) conducted research into the factors behind the creation of another police gang unit in the midwest as a response to a community's alleged gang problem. C. Katz (2001) used the pseudonym of "Junction City" (p. 46). Through a largely qualitative mixed-methods approach that included 300 hours of field observations, thorough interviews, and content analysis, he found that the community significantly contributed to constructing both the alleged gang problem and gang unit. C. Katz's (2001) results also show that the institutional environment, compared to rational considerations, heavily influenced the gang unit's response (p. 53).

In 2002, Mike Carlie began his online book *Into the Abyss*, which unfortunately was never published further (Carlie, 2010). Particularly useful is Carlie's 14 antecedents as to why gangs form:

- 1) social discrimination or rejection,
- 2) the absence of family and its unconditional love, positive adult role models, and proper discipline,
- 3) feelings of powerlessness,
- 4) abuse, fear, and lack of security,
- 5) economic deprivation,
- 6) school failure and delinquency,
- 7) low self-esteem,
- 8) the lack of acceptable rites of passage into adulthood,
- 9) the lack of free-time legitimate activities,
- 10) building on some of the gang members pathological needs,
- 11) the influence of migrating gang members,
- 12) the mass media's portrayal of gangs and gang members,
- 13) following in the footsteps of others, and
- 14) because they can. (2010, Part 8)

The value this adds to the discussion of gangs as a construct is that if we accept the work of Carlie (2010), we should see the antecedents in the formation of all gangs, which arguably is not the case.

Rick Ruddel and Scott Decker's (2005) study used a social constructionism theoretical framework to illuminate the parallels between perceptions of youth gangs and gang culture (including the use of weapons). They found that the panic associated with juveniles and possession of assault weapons were extremely rare, especially when compared with public perceptions. Ruddel and Decker suggested therefore that the panic associated with juveniles using assault weapons was falsely constructed. After studying firearms taken from juvenile offenders in samples (municipal and national) from 1992 to 2000, they found a great divide between the perception and the reality of the use of these weapons. They concluded that this matter was a social construction, both created and perpetuated by various groups and institutions including police, news and entertainment agencies, interest groups, and juveniles themselves (Ruddel & Decker, 2005, p. 57). Although their study was not

specifically about gangs, it used a social constructionism theoretical framework and illuminates the parallels between perceptions of youth gangs and gang culture, including the use of weapons.

In 2005, Chris Przemieniecki conducted research into the role the media plays in the construction of gangs, specifically whether Hollywood gang films influenced violent gang behaviour. The study was a qualitative analysis of newspapers and interviews with police and both former and current gang members. Despite efforts to connect with more subjects, Przemieniecki interviewed only six gang members and six law enforcement officers. The officers clearly believed there was a relationship between gang movies and street violence. Deputy Wes McBride with the LA County Sheriff's Department commented,

I would say the most influential movie that began the migrations of gang philosophy if not actual movement of people was *Colors*, which was not a very true portrayal of gangs . . . would leave dead bodies from one end of town to the other. (Goldstein, 1988, cited by Przemieniecki, 2005, p. 9)

The next major contribution to gang research occurred in 1998 when researcher Sudhir Venkatesh stumbled into Chicago's gang-infested housing project, the Robert Taylor Homes, and was held against his will by gang members (Venkatesh, 2008). This inspired a four-year ethnographic study that provided glimpses into the construction of gang members in the inner cities of the US. While responsible for horrendous violence, the gang served other traditional functions within the community; for example, the members were seen to act as peacekeepers and mediators, as well as to provide social services to others in the community. While the research was conducted as part of his qualitative data sample for his Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Chicago, it would later form the foundation for his book, *Gang Leader for a Day*, published in 2008. His work is useful as it provides a glimpse into the challenges that face people in the inner city projects of Chicago (Venkatesh, 2008).

C. Katz et al. (2011) studied data from 909 recently booked juvenile arrestees who were interviewed as part of the Arizona Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program. They tested three hypotheses: 1) gang involvement and involvement in other risky lifestyles is related to violent victimization, 2) involvement in gang crime is associated with violent victimization, and 3) the presence of rival gangs is related to violent victimization (C. Katz et al., 2011, p. 51). They found that the prevalence of gang victimization was highest among gang

members, followed by former gang members, gang associates, then non-gang members. However, after controlling for involvement in gang crime, gang membership did not significantly influence juveniles' risk of serious violent victimization. As such, the authors question the notion that gang membership exclusively increases the likelihood of violent victimization. Their findings support prior research on the victim–offender overlap in that offending behaviours increase the risk of victimization (C. Katz et al., 2011).

In 2013, Lavorgna, Lombardo, and Sergi conducted research to examine the challenge of defining organised crime by doing a comparative examination of how the concept is defined in Veneto, Italy; Liverpool, England; and Chicago, US They concluded that the definition of organised crime is set within the local context. Lavorgna et al. (2013) provided several examples of where activity in one area was considered organised crime but very similar activity in another area was not. Therefore, the universal definition that many seek may be too elusive due to the uniqueness of the places in which organised crime appears.

British Contributions

British research contributions are relevant to this research because they heavily influenced me in both the theoretical framework and my field observations in Brixton, Hounslow, Toxteth, Tottenham, and Newham. The British perspective on gangs is influenced by the US gang situation, but many differences make gangs in the UK different.

Gang research is relatively new in the UK, since gangs are (arguably) relatively new:

The media and 'social commentators' have been mistakenly identifying American-style, violent, youth gangs in Britain for the last 50 years at least. Not so social scientists, however. David Downes, in his classic study of young people and crime in east London, *The Delinquent Solution* (1966) found no evidence of American-style youth gangs and over the next 30 years or so, nor did anyone else. (Pitts, 2008, p. 2)

It was not until 1998 when Stelfox conducted a national survey that British police forces reported a total of 72 youth gangs (cited by Pitts, 2008, p. 2). Pitts' (2008) work is very helpful because he rejects that the research participants may see themselves as gang members, preferring their own terms such as "crew, family, massive, posse, brerrs, man dem, cousins or boys" (p. 6). Pitts further assisted in defining gang cultures and ganglands. As my examination is on the construction of

gangs, Pitts' research is relevant by suggesting that unlike the US, where the term *gang* is often used and misunderstood, the UK uses different names to describe young groups of rowdy youths. In fact, Pitts suggests the term *gang* is more likely to be used by children to describe their friendship groups, and words such as "yobs, hounds, scallies and stoats are more likely to be used to describe what in the US would be called a gang" (2008, p. 15).

Dick Hobbs (2013) adds considerably to the field in both his unique ethnographic research approach (p. 4) and his criticism of traditional academia and research methods pertaining to organised crime research. Hobbs (2013) is critical of researchers riding with police to examine gangs.²⁰

Hobbs (2013) adds much to the debate because he rejects the gangs of London as being similar to the gangs in Chicago that Thrasher described in 1927 (p. 123). In his description of Dogtown, Hobbs (2013) outlines anomic conditions that Durkheim first introduced when the dock industry became almost wiped out and many of Dogtown's residents migrated to Essex County and other outer London neighbourhoods that were closer to work. This occurred in a neighbourhood movement that closely resembled the Chicago School's concentric circles. For Hobbs (2013), gangs are not new: they may have changed from the Krays and the Nickerson boys to young black men on the streets of Dogtown, but they are not new. Moreover, Hobbs (2013) is certain that the youthful dress and activities of concentrations of young men on the street may not indicate gang members at all; rather, this may simply be the natural activities of young men in a neighbourhood that has experienced massive transition, and its people no longer have shared family knowledge and tradition, which allows the gang of boys to create fear. He believes that as Dogtown moves from the industrial age into a new age where people do not work together, walk together, or socialise together, that people will retreat further into the solitude of their homes, leaving the street to be a fearful place only to be ventured out to for the necessities, and never in the evening or at night (Hobbs, 2013).

20. For while the police constitute a fascinating object of sociological study in their own right, the view from the back seat of a police car tends to be the back of a police officer's head. Indeed, much academic discourse regarding organized crime avoids analysis of the activity itself, concentrating instead upon commentaries on the policing of this vague concept, and making for easy alliances between academics and savvy law enforcement agents who are able to present their organizations as exclusive sources of credible knowledge pertaining to the state of criminal play (Hobbs, 2013, p. 4).

Hallsworth and Young (2006) offer a three-point typology of what they call urban collectives: 1) the peer group, 2) the gang, and 3) the organised criminal gang (p. 63), while Pitts (2008) points out that these are not springboards for each level (p. 18). Hallsworth and Young (2006) suggest that the peer groups of the UK are quickly labelled gangs often without proper consideration, and they resist this approach. They have been very influential on public policy in the UK, and in fact, the Metropolitan Police adopted their definition of gangs as an organizational definition. With that said, they have been criticised for their approach because some argue it is simplistic and does not attempt to explain the issue. Joseph et al. stated, “It is our main contention that the three-tier gang model does not take sufficient account of the complex and dynamic friendship patterns that constitute life on ‘Road’” (2011, p. 8).

Simon Hallsworth (2013) also offers a great deal to the discussion in his book *The Gang and Beyond*, where he clearly contests the British government’s attempt to blame street gangs for the 2011 rioting. In a tongue-in-cheek approach, he challenges the media reporting of girls involvement in gangs and young children’s involvement in gangs (Hallsworth, 2013). He goes on further to criticise the massive expansion of “gang experts” and suggests that this is very much a product of hysteria and importation of a US phenomenon in an attempt to explain the products of poor, marginalised, predominantly ethnic youth living in forgotten housing estates (Hallsworth, 2013). Moreover, Hallsworth challenges many of the British commentators’ position that gangs exist in the UK. He states,

Where do I situate my analysis? To begin with it marks my response to the position staked out by John Pitts and his followers who see gangs today as the new face of youth crime and who, by and large, appear happy to blame them for everything. As will become clear, I have no time whatsoever for this position. I do not accept that gangs are the new face of youth crime; I do not accept that gangs today are large and corporate, and nor do I hold with other widely-held gang “truths” as exemplified in claims to the effect that they are coercively recruit members or are habitual rapists. The book is, then, in one respect at least, a wholesale challenge to the contemporary orthodox that prevails today in that confused state called the U.K. (Hallsworth, 2013, p. 13)

Hallsworth (2013) is very critical of the claim makers. He spoke on November 1, 2011, on the BBC One Breakfast show of the response by government to gangs in the UK, saying this is an area where there is vagueness. He further rejects the government’s position of 120,000 problem families that are generating gang-involved children. He suggested that he does not understand where the government

is getting these figures from, and that the problems in the streets are not just products of problem families (“Government Helps Youths Out of the Gangs,” 2011).

Densley (2013) offers an interesting insight into British gangs through his ethnographic study of gangs in London. He conducted face-to-face interviews with members of 12 London gangs. Densley is critical of both Pitts and Hallsworth for missing the point that both of their propositions (for Pitts, that gangs exist, and for Hallsworth, that the problem of the street violence is not reducible to the presence of gangs) can be correct (2013, p. 4). Similar to my research, Densley (2013) considers the creep between organised crime and gangs and whether they are the same. Ultimately, he concludes that the gangs he examined did not meet the criteria of organised crime. Through his robust study, Densley (2013) clearly found that those who self-identified as gang members were involved in gangs because

their families were searching for safety and security within contexts where families are stretched to their limit, government protection of rights is limited at best, and the search for meaningful occupation in contexts where opportunities for education, employment and training are curtailed. (p. 5)

Densley (2013) also found that gangs in London were excluded and marginalised on social, economic, and cultural levels. Similar to most studies on gangs, this research demonstrated a marked departure from the norm for those involved in gangs in BC.

Simon Harding (2014) added to the British debates with his theory of “the game.” For him, the gang landscape is a game, albeit a real game with real consequences, but akin to a street casino. Harding believes that when public street violence occurs, the perpetrator’s street credibility (chips) go up in value and the victim’s street credibility goes down, much like a poker game between the house and the players. Harding’s work follows Bourdieu and his theory of social field analysis. Harding’s research was conducted in the SW9 postcode of Lambeth in London, where he suggests there are higher than average amounts of gangs, crack cocaine sales, and Osman warnings.²¹ His research was completed with “semi-structured in-depth qualitative interviews, participant observations; media analysis of documentation collated over four years; web research on social networking sites; and a field diary” (Harding, 2014, p. 11). In carrying on the tradition of the British

²¹ Osman warnings are the Canadian equivalent of a Duty to Warn, when the police advise a person that they are the subject of a murder conspiracy. In the UK, they are named after a male named Osman who was murdered after the police failed to warn him.

debates, Harding rejects the position of other British gang colleagues such as Aldridge, Medina, and Hobbs, and argues against their denunciation of naming gangs and gang territories as promoting the gang. For Harding, that is simplistic and too accepting of the labelling theory (2014, p. 5). Through his social capital theory, Harding offers a strong explanation for what the police called “rideouts.” My field observations demonstrated that the use of the social media to taunt rival post codes appeared to have little strategic value to the gangs. They were not doing rideouts to engage in attacks on drug corners, but simply to try proving supremacy.

Most of the British researchers, whether they minimise the existence of gangs, or are critical about the over-representation of claims, or suggest gangs are in abundance, do generally agree that gangs, groups, or collectives are often made up of poor, ethnic, marginalised youth who are geographically based. The evidence from the lively debates of the British contributors is helpful as it once again shows the differences between gangs in BC and the hotly debated UK experience.

Canadian Researchers

There has not been a considerable amount of Canadian research on gangs. However, Canadians are influenced by US academics, US law, and, without argument, US television programming, and media. Robert Gordon (2000), considered one of the few gang academics in Canada, described the Canadian gang research perspective that “those interested in the ‘gang’ phenomenon in Canada are frequently surprised by the absence of the body of research that is distinctively Canadian and publicly available” (p. 40). Further, Gordon (2000) comments that up until Beare’s work in 1996, there was no work being done in Canada on the phenomenon of organised crime. The only two other previous studies conducted were the work of Rogers in 1940 on Toronto street gangs, and the work of Joe and Robinson on Vancouver Chinatown Street Gangs in the 1970s.

In 1980, Delbert Joe and Norman Robinson published research conducted on four Asian youth gangs in Vancouver, BC. The researchers used a Cantonese-speaking person for the 13 interviews of gang members from each of the four gangs: the Phantom Riders, the Golden Skippers, the Blue Angels, and the Golden Wheels (Joe & Robinson, 1980, p. 338). They found that Asian immigrant youth were prime candidates for joining gangs because these youths were often left to fend for themselves, as new immigrant parents worked long hours to succeed in the new country. Second, the new immigrant family lost ties with their home culture and

supportive family members. Third, the new Asian youth often did not speak English and were susceptible to exclusion from and by other youth. Fourth, the combination of the three previous factors would often lead the immigrant youth to look for alternatives, which included economic alternatives (Joe & Robinson, 1980, p. 340). Ironically, these youths all met while participating in traditional positive activities, such as school and church groups (Gordon, 2000).

In 1993, Fasilio and Leckie (cited by Gordon, 2000) published their work on the role the Canadian media had on the public's view of gangs. After "examining 120 gang related stories from July to October 1992, [they concluded] that the media characterises gang activity as a threat to society, as widespread and a relatively new trend" (Fasilio & Leckie, cited by Gordon, 2000, p. 41). This examination of the media demonstrates the way gangs are constructed in Canada.

In 1993, Robert Gordon focussed on incarcerated youth in BC who had been identified or self-identified as being associated to youth gangs. Interviews were conducted, and the findings suggested that despite calls for controls on immigration, the largest group of gang members were born in Canada and were of European ethnicity (40%), followed by Asians²² (34 %), the majority of whom were born in Canada (Gordon, 1994). The gang members did not report being coerced into gangs, but rather joined without much persuasion, rather through association with youths already involved in gangs. Not one participant described being recruited into the gang (Gordon, 1994). Just under half the respondents reported any kind of initiation, such as a beating-in ritual (Gordon, 1994). Gordon (1994) also found that 50% of the individuals came from what we understand to be traditional at-risk homes,²³ with the other 50% joining gangs for unclear reasons, which may have included earning money, continuing to be friends with people in gangs, and escaping from boredom.

Mathews published his work on Toronto gangs in 1994 with his study of 12 young people aged 12 to 21 who were identified in the community as being gang-involved (1993, p. 11). Further interviews were conducted with social workers, police, educators, parents of gang members, and victims of gang activity. Mathews' work is helpful to the discussion of the construction of gangs because he specifically

²² In BC, the phrase "Asian" refers to a person from China, Japan, Vietnam, etc., which differs from United Kingdom, where this reference is more likely to be associated with a person from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Sri Lanka.

²³ Traditional at-risk is associated with criminogenic factors including poverty, substance abuse, physical and/or mental abuse, discrimination, and poor parenting.

used the terminology “gang/group” to avoid the negative connotations of serious criminal gangs. In addition, Mathews was clear throughout the research that there was a large spectrum of groups that ranged from a social group that gets into trouble to fully organised crime (Mathews, 1993). Mathews concluded that there really was a group/gang involvement cycle, where youth joined, participated in, then left the gang/group. Similar to other research findings, a youth’s vulnerabilities were considered a “push” into the gang lifestyle.

M. Young (1993a) wrote extensively on the history of gangs in BC. He conducted an 85-year review of articles pertaining to gangs in a Vancouver newspaper. He found that there have been waves of gang activity during that time span, with the first major wave between 1924 and 1931 (the Corner Lounger Gangs), followed by the 1944 to 1959 era of the Zoot Suits and the Hoodlum gangs. The third wave occurred between 1959 and 1975 with the Park Gangs (centred geographically around city parks), fascist gangs, and political gangs. M. Young (1993a) concluded his research with a discussion of what he referred to as the “new era,” which was from 1973 to 1985. He attempted to show a relationship between inward migration and unemployment, and while he found some correlation, it was not to be relied on without further research (M. Young, 1993a).

In 1995, Robert Gordon conducted further research on gangs in BC with 128 subjects. Thirty-three of them further agreed to participate in an interview. The subjects were all incarcerated individuals who were identified as being gang-involved. Gordon (2000) was clear that defining “gangs” can be problematic and presents research challenges. He also noted that some of the 128 subjects may have been peripheral/associates, and not “hard-core” gang members (Gordon, 2000, p. 46). Gordon found that many of the people involved in gangs were motivated by money; he also found that 65% were born in Canada, although 85% were visible ethnic minorities (2000, p. 51). Gordon’s (2000) study tested two major hypotheses, both of which were found to be wanting. The first queried if youth joined gangs to manage racism, which the data did not support. This is a significant finding and sets the experience of gangs in BC apart from the other places I studied. The second hypothesis related directly to the role of the media in constructing gangs, which Gordon (2000) also found not to be the case. In fact, he stated that “when the leaders and core members of criminal business organizations and street gangs were asked, in

interviews, about the possibility that their behaviour had been shaped by the media (or words to that effect) most dismissed the idea as a joke” (Gordon, 2000, p. 54).

However, police and probation officers believed that the release of the movie *Colors* (Hopper, 1988) had a significant impact on gang members because graffiti began to appear on fences and walls, gang members started to wear colours, and some youth began to use similar language. This movie came out in 1988, and one of my research participants for this thesis stated:

This Los Angeles gang tactic of the drive-by shooting had clearly come to the streets of Vancouver. This city had never experienced drive-by shootings and in one year they had almost 40, and the year following that they had almost 60. (J. Grywinski, personal communication, April 4, 2013)

Gordon’s (2000) study is further useful in explaining the role of peer groups, and his research implies that when peer groups reject gang involvement as being “cool,” this can have a significant impact on keeping vulnerable youth away from gangs (p. 57). Unfortunately, as becomes evident in my research, this has not come to fruition in BC; many people interviewed still included the “cool” factor as a contributor to gang involvement.

In 2006, Siu-Ming Kwok and Dora Tam conducted their research on Asian gang members in Calgary. They found the process very challenging regarding defining Asian gangs, obtaining funding, gathering support from ethnic communities, obtaining ethics approval, ensuring the researchers’ safety, and maintaining participant confidentiality and anonymity (Kwok & Tam, 2006, p. 47). Their study confirms that the definition and/or construction of the term “gang” are elusive and not a concrete or universal concept.

Martin Bouchard, a local BC gang scholar, has been engaged in the debates since 2006, primarily with his work on the role of illicit markets and the structure of gangs and organised crime. His work suggests that “organized crime researchers have often referred to the mass of small and ephemeral groups that form in any given criminal market as opportunistic operators and less organized (or disorganized) forms of criminal operations” (Bouchard & Morselli, 2014, p. 288). Bouchard argues that these are in fact the typical configurations of most organised crime.

Bouchard and colleagues have also researched the role of social networking and gangs and the influence this networking has on decision-making (McCuish, Bouchard, & Corrado, 2015). Specifically, they considered homicide and the co-offending network of a BC gang and specifically what gang members engaged in

homicides together. Bouchard is clear that gangs in BC are different from other places and cautions against the transferability and applicability of this research to other places. Bouchard recognises, as does my research, that the conventional viewpoint of why gangs form is different in BC: “Caution should be exercised before generalizing to other gangs, especially considering that BC is located in an area of Canada with little racial segregation and low levels of poverty that may differ from the neighbourhoods of gangs operating in the United States” (McCuish et al., 2015, p. 331).

Also in 2006, Scott Wortley and Julian Tanner conducted their extensive research in Toronto on in school (high school) and out of school (street) youth. They contacted over 3,000 metropolitan Toronto youth between June 1998 and June 2000. The study took place in three stages and involved focus group discussions with street and high school youth, an extensive survey of Toronto street youth, and a survey of Toronto high school students. The authors’ key findings include gang activity being more prevalent and serious among the out of school street youth (Wortley & Tanner, 2006). While immigration status was not associated with criminal gang membership, serious gang activity was found to be widespread among particular disadvantaged ethnic minority groups as well as those who were economically disadvantaged. Ultimately, the authors concluded that Caucasians who are born in Canada form the majority of Toronto’s gang members, and “racial differences in gang involvement can be explained by racial differences in economic and social marginalization” (Wortley & Tanner, 2006, p. 18). Their study once again helps in our understanding of how gangs are constructed and challenges the perception that gangs are a product of immigration policies gone awry.

Wortley and Tanner (2007) continued their research on gangs in Toronto and produced a report on youth gangs in Canada—their nature, their prevalence, the social correlates, the reasons for joining a gang, and the policies and strategies that are effective at decreasing them. The report relies on data from the Toronto Youth Crime and Victimization Survey. Results of the study suggest the need to differentiate between youth who are involved in ordinary social activities and youth who commit criminal acts. The authors reconfirmed findings from their 2006 study regarding a higher prevalence of youth gang activity among the out of school street youth than the youth in high school, and the lack of association between criminal gang membership and immigration status (Wortley & Tanner, 2007). The authors

acknowledge that due to a lack of relevant historical Canadian data, their results cannot be used to determine whether the gang activity among youth is becoming more frequent in Canada or if the members are involved in more serious criminal activities.

One of the few research studies conducted on Canadian Aboriginal gangs occurred in 2008. Jana Grekul and Patti LaBoucane-Benson completed an exploratory qualitative study that involved interviews with ex-gang members, police officers, and correctional workers in identifying risk factors for the involvement in gangs for Aboriginal youth and young adults. They found that Aboriginal youth are typically attracted to gangs because of the alternatives they offer to the marginalization often experienced (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008, p. 72). Aboriginal gangs differ from other gangs in their use of violence, their overrepresentation in prairie prisons,²⁴ and their role as substitutes for the intergenerational effects of colonialism and contemporary marginalization. However, much like Aboriginal people in general, Aboriginal gangs have been relegated to the outskirts of legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures in Canada (Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008).

In 2011, Rick Ruddell and Shannon Gottschall conducted their research on 1,636 inmates in the Canadian federal correctional system who self-identified as being part of a gang and/or a security threat group. The purpose of their research was to identify whether gang members presented a higher risk to the staff or were involved in greater institutional misconduct than non-gang members. The researchers also examined if some gangs or security threat groups presented a greater risk than others. The inmates were categorised as belonging in one of five groups: Aboriginal gangs, Asian gangs, street gangs, outlaw motorcycle gangs, and traditional organised crime (Ruddell & Gottschall, 2011, p. 275). While Aboriginal, Asian, and street gang members were involved in more violence and institutional misconduct than non-gang members, outlaw motorcycle gang and traditional organised crime members were involved in 33% less misconduct than non-gang members (Ruddell & Gottschall, 2011, p. 265).

Descormiers and Morselli (2011) conducted a study on Montreal street gangs through group interviews of 20 incarcerated youth gang members. The researchers

²⁴ The Canadian prairies are usually considered the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba.

used social network analysis to track 35 street gangs and made comments on the level and type of violence that was occurring (Descormiers & Morselli, 2011, p. 297). Of particular interest is that the street gangs were found to act out their violence in consortiums of gangs; the violence was often against rival gangs and along ethnic lines. The researchers also found the violence and the adaptation of the gangs to be directly related to the changing dynamics of illegal drug markets (Descormiers & Morselli, 2011).

In 2012, Chris Richardson and Liam Kennedy conducted a discourse content analysis of English-language newspapers in Canada, looking specifically for how the media constructed concepts of gangs. They reported that the term *gang* is now an “empty signifier” in that it is over-used and often applied to groups that are not traditional gangs; instead, groups seen by the dominant society to be negative, for a variety of reasons outside traditional gang definitions, are being (incorrectly) labelled with the term (Richardson & Kennedy, 2012, p. 444). Ultimately, Richardson and Kennedy’s study demonstrates the manner in which the media constructs gangs for the general population, often contrary to the facts.

Beare and Hogg (2013) produced a Canadian study by listening to police wiretaps entered into court, to see what gang members talk about, what crimes they engage in, and how they interact and communicate with one another. They rejected the idea that gangs provide familial-like support for members and argue that membership can be characterised by tension, stress, violence, and often betrayal. Beare and Hogg’s study is supportive of my current study, which suggests that the ideal of loyalty among gang members is false in BC.

Prowse (2012), a former police officer from Alberta, suggested that the gang situation in her jurisdiction consisted of “new-age” street gangs. She distinguishes these groups from traditional gangs because they are

a loose-knit and fluid group of associates who comprise a subset of street gang leaders [*sic*] enduring social network and who are preferentially activated in the commission of street-based criminal activity through that street gang leader. A gang identity need not form part of their collective self-identification. (Prowse, 2012, p. 8)

She notes that the seeming lack of structure is in fact a lack of “structural continuity” (Prowse, 2012, p. 9).

Thesis Examination

As there is a limited amount of research completed and even less published about gangs in Canada, I include in this literature review the excellent scholarly work of graduate students in Canadian universities. As part of his Master of Arts degree thesis, Christopher Giles researched gangs in Winnipeg in 2000. This was similar to my research project in that he conducted a qualitative analysis of gang-related newspaper articles, though he used the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Giles considered data from 1945 to 1997 and found that prior to 1985, Winnipeg had experienced “gang-like activity,” but most of the groups were more criminal groups and youth groups than street gangs (2000, p. 3). Since the early 1990s, street gangs have developed in Winnipeg with a higher concentration of Aboriginal gangs, such as the Indian Posse, the Deuce, the Manitoba Warriors, and the Native Syndicate (Giles, 2000).

With social construction theory underpinning my research, Anik Morsani’s (2005) work is an important piece of research for consideration. Morsani examined the construction of a moral panic in response to the Quebec outlaw motorcycle gang wars, and completed a content analysis of Quebec newspapers. She also used Goode and Ben-Yehuda’s five criteria of a moral panic to conclude that the police, victims’ rights activists, politicians, and the media used the tragic but unintended consequence of the death of an 11-year-old boy to push for restrictive anti-gang legislation (Morsani, 2005, p. 19).

In 2008, as part of her Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Saskatchewan, Harpreet Aulakh researched female gang members’ reasons for joining, and their roles, within gangs. She conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 females ranging from 16 to 33 years old. She learned that

gangs are highly gendered groups in which gender hierarchies force girls to find ways to both create personas of toughness and independence through participation in violent activities yet also to display appropriate feminine behaviours of sexually non-promiscuous females. (Aulakh, 2008, p. 199)

As part of his master’s degree at the University of Saskatchewan, Robert Henry (2009) researched how five agencies in Saskatoon that regularly interacted with youth gang members defined “youth gangs.” Essentially, the participants of the study believed that law enforcement was best situated to label youth as gang members (Henry, 2009).

In 2010, Amy Marie Siciliano examined the response narrative to Toronto's 2005 "Year of the Gun" as part of her Ph.D. at the University of Toronto. Her research examined how the debates and discussions in the community changed when a young white woman named Jane Creba was murdered. Fifteen-year-old Creba joined the majority of the murder victims, young African Canadian men. As a student of geography, Siciliano examined the connection between racialised poverty, specifically how race and space are connected to crime. Similar to my observations in Chicago, her research suggests that "successful" police investigations ending with the arrest of key leaders in the gang can produce a void that subsequently results in the unintended consequence of more violence. She quoted one research participant, who stated,

The months leading up to that horrible year (2005) there was a huge gang bust (in a low income area of the city) and so what happened . . . is that they busted a bunch of these gangs and sent all of the elders to the clang and so there were a lot of 15- and 16-year-old kids without elders who didn't . . . understand that you're not supposed to shoot up your neighbourhood and so it was mayhem. (Siciliano, 2010, p. 6)

Siciliano's (2010) research informs my own in that it clearly demonstrates the role that race and marginalization play in the formation of gangs in Toronto, which is markedly different from in BC.

Descormiers (2013) interviewed 73 incarcerated youth who self-identified as gang members in BC. During her interviews, Descormiers learned that her research participants were involved in criminal social activity and that they were likely to join gangs and participate in gang initiations. These initiations were an "ego violent event" (where others beat the prospective member in the gang), a crime commission, and/or violence expressed towards others (Descormiers, 2013, p. 80). This study was of great interest to me because none of the research participants who I interviewed described any type of initiation. While they may have participated in a criminal event, they did not see it as part of an initiation process.

Another Simon Fraser University student, Jason Gravel, wrote on gangs as part of his Master of Arts degree. His research considered the role of social capital and the impact it had on criminal networking opportunities. His research considered 979 gang members who were active from 2001 to 2008 in a large Canadian city. The study primarily focussed on Haitian gang members and considered the social network and interconnection that existed (Gravel, 2013).

The final thesis included in this literature review was completed by Matthew Fast as part of his master's degree at the University of Manitoba. Fast (2013) examined the process that led young refugees into gangs in Winnipeg. His conclusion was that if positive support mechanisms were not in place, the youth were at greater risk to be involved in gangs (Fast, 2013). His research reconfirms that the construction of gangs is often around marginality and economic/opportunity deprivation.

Chapter Conclusion

The research presented is persuasive in that it adds to the construction of gangs in many places as being adaptations by young men in order to cope within their communities. In summary, I cite some of the foremost gang researchers:

Street gangs are an amalgam of racism, of urban class poverty, of minority and youth culture, of fatalism in the face of rampant deprivation, of political insensitivity and the gross ignorance of inner-city (and inner-town) America on the part of us who don't have to survive there. (Klein, 1995, p. 234)

Further, The Koch Institute commented that “gangs are still largely populated by young people from disenfranchised neighborhoods characterized by overcrowding, high unemployment, high drop-out rates, lack of social and recreational services and a general feeling of hopelessness” (2001, cited by Carlie, 2010, Part 3). Finally, the words of Yablonsky differentiate between the conditions in BC and much of the research that has been examined in this literature review: “Gang behaviour is often an appropriate response to the pathological conditions that exist in the inner cities of the United States” (1997, cited by Carlie, 2010, Part 3). It is evident from the work of various gang researchers over time and across the world that in most places, gangs are a rational choice to irrational conditions, while I demonstrate that in BC, they are an irrational response to rational conditions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used in this research. It has been my experience that when one speaks of gangs, the stereotypical imagery of poor marginalised young men living in squalid conditions comes to mind. My professional experiences as a police officer in BC do not support that imagery, so I wanted to test the hypothesis that gangs in BC are different. To do so, I employed a constructionist epistemology and through an ethnographic interpretive lens used a variety of methods to collect the data.

In addition to my literature review and secondary data exploration of primarily open source publications on gangs, I took three approaches to meet my goals. First, I conducted an analysis of the history of gang-like violence in Vancouver from 1900 to the present. Second, I engaged in participant observation research, building on previous work that I conducted as part of my professional development as a Vancouver Police officer of over 27 years. Third, I conducted 17 semi-structured interviews. This triangulation serves the purpose of using multiple methods to thoroughly study the same questions (Bachman & Schutt, 2011).

Situating the Research

It is well established that a researcher's viewpoint influences the choice of problem to engage, formulation of questions to be answered, methodological approaches to use, instrumentation to employ, and data collection strategies to adopt. This research is situated in the phenomenological-ethnogenic paradigm, which seeks to explore ways that society has construed and constructed gangs as social problems, and how this differs from place to place. Broadly, I have asked the primary question of how a gang is defined, perceived, and experienced differently in BC, and ultimately how that may impact criminal justice policy and practice.

The gang as a social problem is a product of social cognition, thus ontologically nominalistic as a product of thought and interpretation. Epistemologically, the research is anti-positivist interpretivism in that the social reality of BC's gang phenomenon must be explored as a product of individual consciousness; it is not as objective as some may think, and thus action in the form of legislation and policy development proceeds via potentially false assumptions of what a gang is, or is not. Most anti-gang legislation fails to consider these assumptions and is often written in such an unyielding manner that many street gangs and/or groups fail to meet the criteria.

Society often imposes particular one-size-fits-all meanings on large social constructs, including “gangs.” This research proposes that a gang may be better defined and understood as being a lived experience that reflects the society it thrives in, rather than a continued adherence to a definition of crime patterns constructed outside of that geographic region.

“Inside Insider” Research

I was concerned about the potential for bias in my approach to the research because I have been a police officer in BC for 27 years, the last 12 of which were working predominantly in gang enforcement units.²⁵ I have also developed and taught three university courses on organised crime and gangs, trained multiple police officers on effective anti-gang strategies, and spoken to various community groups about gangs. With these experiences and my academic interest in gangs, I have often been called upon to provide information to police leaders, speak at conferences, and consult with government policymakers. Subsequently, I have been deeply immersed in the subject area for over a decade, which has created a broad network of relevant contacts. Many of the participants in this research have known me only in my role as a police officer, so I soon became aware of the potential for, or an assumption of, bias in the research by way of my professional standing.

In their lectures on research methods, both Silverstone (personal communication, May 12, 2012) and Ridley (personal communication, March 9, 2012) have emphasised the value of researchers working from within their subject, explaining that the voice of the insider can be particularly powerful as it combines academic strength with years of experience. Silverstone explained that “insider research can make a significant contribution to the discipline while equally advancing knowledge and professional practice within the sector through the development of advanced practitioner research” (personal communication, May 12, 2012). Silverstone urged insider researchers to be aware of and take steps to diminish their own bias and cautions that “there is sometimes a huge difference between how an institution/people claim to behave and how it actually does” (personal communication, May 12, 2012). Ultimately, insider researchers can provide invaluable insight into the real workings of otherwise inaccessible agencies.

²⁵ I served with the Vancouver Police Firearms Interdiction Team, then the Violence Suppression Team, then the Integrated Gang Task Force, then the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit–Gang Enforcement Team, and then the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit (my current position).

As stated, I have been part of the discourse and construction of gangs in BC for years. Arguably, this research takes both an emic²⁶ and etic²⁷ approach: it is emic in the sense that I am very much involved in the culture of policing gangs in BC. In addition, when I arranged and arrived at the various sites for field observations, the fact that I am a police officer and a “gang cop” also situated me well with the officers I was assigned to. I was also able to have an etic account of my research in that I was not part of the gang culture and have never been a youth worker. Frankly, the practice of policing without a gun, and the courage that must take, clearly made me an outsider in London. This gave me the opportunity to take on the etic approach as the culture was similar but with significant differences.

Weatheritt (1986, as cited by G. Thomas, 2014, p. 7) suggested that while insiders have taken considerable criticism from academics in the past due to their research being composed of “foregone conclusions,” this has improved in recent years with more police taking on formal academic degrees and aligning themselves under the tutelage of academics (Punch, cited by G. Thomas, 2014, p. 8). My research is intended to inform police practices and add to the debate and discourse within academia about gangs. While it would be impossible for me to separate my past experiences from this academic endeavour, I took numerous steps to address the consequences of my insider status. For example, I sought permission to conduct this research from VPD’s Chief Constable Jim Chu; I ensured that all participants were voluntarily willing to participate, and I was clear that my research was of a professional nature.

Another concern for me that was central in my approach to the research project was to ensure that I did not place myself in a position of professional jeopardy. The VPD has a clear conflict of interest policy that curtails the ability of police members to gain advantage over others due to their employment position. I wanted to ensure no perception of conflict occurred. In addition, police officers in BC are subject to severe discipline if found to have improperly disclosed

²⁶ “An emic approach (sometimes referred to as ‘insider,’ or ‘bottom-up’) takes as its starting point the perspectives and words of research participants. . . . In taking an emic approach, a researcher tries to put aside prior theories and assumptions in order to let the participants and data ‘speak’ to them and to allow themes, patterns, and concepts to emerge” (Harvard University, 2008, para. 2).

²⁷ “An etic approach (sometimes referred to as ‘outsider,’ ‘deductive,’ or ‘top-down’) uses as its starting point theories, hypothesis, perspectives, and concepts from outside of the setting studied” (Harvard University, 2008, para. 3).

information. To protect myself and my colleagues from this possibility, I did not rely on the VPD for any data in this thesis.

I was also careful to ensure all secondary sources used within this research were publicly available and that my position as a police officer gave me no advantage over another researcher who was not a police officer. For example, if a researcher wanted to find out how many “shots fired” 911 calls occurred in a five-year period, they would have to apply to the department and go through a research application or a freedom of information request, and frankly they may not gain access to that information, whereas because of my position, I could simply ask my unit strategic analyst, who would produce these statistics within a few hours.

Of course, absent of my experience and status as a serving police officer, I would not likely have gained access to the field observation attachments. In fact, being a city cop, and a gang cop, opened doors for me. In one research site on one occasion I was received very coolly until the misconception that I was an FBI agent was cleared up, and then the reception became very welcoming.

I also concluded that my previous observations on gangs, which I conducted in the capacity of a police officer and not as an academic researcher, was too valuable to exclude in this doctorate. This prior and current research took place in Chicago and Los Angeles, USA; London, England; and Toronto and Hobbema, Canada.²⁸ I deemed these field observations to be foundational for my discussion of the structure of gangs in BC, and they added to my interest in the social construction of the use of the word *gangs* in BC.

I conducted interviews with 17 key stakeholders in BC who are involved in gangs in various capacities. This included police officers, former gang members, youth outreach workers, and others who expressed interest and met my inclusion criteria, discussed below. I selected most participants myself, and some snowball sampling occurred. Former gang members were selected over current gang members to reduce any conflict of interest pertaining to my professional police duties. An informed consent form (see Appendix C) was approved by the University Ethics Review Board, provided to participants, and signed by everyone prior to the interviews commencing. All interviews were semi-structured with both parties having the ability to ask further questions if required. All interviews were audiotaped

²⁸ This community was renamed “Maskwacis” on January 1, 2014.

and transcribed to determine themes. In this report, the research participants have been given false names to protect their identities and for ease of reading.

The Research Questions

My research questions are as follows:

1. How does the history of gang violence and police response to it influence the construction of the gang today?
2. How are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? Do these differences inform the discussion that gangs are a constructed term?
3. What motivates people to join gangs in BC, and how does this differ from motivations to join gangs in other cities?

How does the history of gang violence and police response to it influence the construction of the current BC gang? To explore the first question, I had to define the term *gang violence* and collect data from a variety of sources that demonstrated some form of gang violence occurring. For the purposes of this research, the definition and criteria used for the term *gang violence* are any stabbings, shooting (including drive-by shootings, people being shot, and guns being shot regardless of whether someone was hit), firearm seized, and assault that was reported as being related to a known or suspected gang member or associate. I discuss definitions of gang members and others in the next subsection. To ensure the accuracy of my conclusions, I used a large scope for my historical analysis (see Appendix A) and began in the early 1900s, when gangs were first recorded in BC (M. Young, 1993a).

How are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? To explore this question, I had to define the terms *gang* and *gang member*, and collect data from a variety of sources that demonstrated some form of gang members and their collective groups operating in BC, as well as outside BC, for comparison. As I explained previously, the matter of defining “gangs” is worthy of its own Ph.D. Because my research entailed three methods of qualitative data collection, I used a slightly different set of criteria for each method.

For my own field observations, I decided to use the typology suggested by Cathy Prowse (2012, p. 9) of organised crime group, new-age gang, and action-set (see Chapter 1, Definition of a Gang section). I conducted my interviews with this three-part typology in mind but was careful to balance it with the participants’ own

ideas and beliefs. Because this typology includes individuals involved in organised crime, which I believe is a semi-accurate but not ideal word for the situation in BC, I want to acknowledge the potential irony of my using the term *gang* in such a broad manner. Because BC's "gang" situation is unique and does not align with gang situations in other cities, I am at a loss as to what term would be most appropriate for me to use in this thesis. In fact, I asked this question in all 17 interviews, and I remain undecided on a more suitable term. Similar to the word *gang*, the phrase *organised crime* is relevant but not applicable to the circumstances in BC, primarily because a fundamental feature of most organised crime groups is a pyramid-like structure. One of the distinguishing characteristics of gangs in BC is their lack of a clear and stable structure.

The definition of *gang* used to complete the historical analysis was much looser because I had to rely on journalists' judgment regarding gang identification. This is problematic for a number of reasons, one of which is that a central tenet of this thesis is that the media is partly responsible for constructing gangs in the first place by overzealously deeming violence to be a cause or result of gangs. After reading each newspaper article that contained the word *gang*, I applied the definition that I used for my interviews and field observations and removed an article if I knew of any information that conflicted with the reported incident actually being gang-related.

The criteria used for the term *gang member* also changed depending on the research method being used (interviews, field observations, and historical analysis), but generally speaking, I deemed anyone who is identified (by themselves, the media, and/or police) as belonging to a gang that operates in BC to be a gang member. This is differentiated from anyone who is associated to a gang member (sometimes referred to in the literature as affiliates, hang-arounds, peripherals, wanna-bes/gonna-bes, gang-dabblers, etc.), who are also included in this research but to a lesser extent than full members and leaders.

What motivates people to join gangs in BC, and how does this differ from motivations to join gangs in other cities? To explore this question, I had to define and explore the following variables:

- motivation;
- recruitment;

- push–pull factors;
- traditional at-risk youth; and
- non-traditional at-risk youth.

Through the interview process, these were explored through the questions around gangs.

Qualitative Methods Approach

In considering the construction of the gang in British Columbia, I wanted to provide a historical account of the main gang events and police responses. As such, I reviewed newspapers and other documents to provide historical context (see Appendix A). In addition, if I wanted to test my hypothesis that gangs in BC were different, I needed to conduct field observations in other jurisdictions. Finally, in keeping with social construction theory, a qualitative approach was best suited to be able to hear the various research participants' accounts of their experiences, examine how they believed gangs were constructed in BC, and learn how they constructed their own experiences with gangs.

My profession, of course, influenced my research methods. Consider this excerpt from my field notes:

The dispatcher broadcast that the suspect was a young black male on a bicycle wearing a white sleeveless undershirt and armed with a handgun. He was threatening members of a crowd. At that moment, we turned the corner of Karlov Street and Wilcox Avenue in the 11th District of Chicago, and right in front of Gang Enforcement Car 6741C was a young African American man riding a bicycle and wearing a white sleeveless undershirt, with a crowd of about 20 people yelling at him. As the brakes were applied, two officers bailed out of the car with pistols clearing their holsters, and an older African American man on the corner yelled to the young man on the bicycle, "Don't do it fool, they will light you up!" Instantly, I knew my safety was in great peril and that if the members were involved in a shooting, I might regret my decision to conduct field observations as part of my research. Fortunately, the suspect complied and the incident was dealt with absent of any force.

As was the case with my other data-gathering methods, I was able to experience this event in part because of my position as a police officer. My professional standing gave me access to police attachments that non-police researchers may never have been allowed to observe. It also provided me access to documents that have not been published and are out of the public's view, including the CFSEU's open-source library. Finally, my professional capacity and reputation

within the field of gang policing assisted me in gaining access to, and the trust of, the research participants.

A professional doctoral student should be encouraged to venture outside of traditional academic research methods. The student should have a vast amount of experience in his or her chosen profession, as the value of such extensive familiarity is comparable to years of in-depth participant observations. My first real lesson about gangs was not from my formal education on the topic, but long before that, as a police officer; that primary and esteemed education came from on-the-job training and experience dealing directly with gang members. Conferences, discussions with other subject matter experts, court cases, and informant handling added to my learning process, and collectively, these valuable experiences prepared me to conduct this academic research. A professional doctorate qualification requires a significant contribution to the profession and knowledge surrounding a specific phenomenon, which I hope to have accomplished.

The purpose of my research is to demonstrate to the community (including police, educators, academics, government, and courts) that gangs in BC are unique to our social structure, and hence we need to implement responses that reflect these differences. For example, a significant number of BC gang members do not come from impoverished homes with traditional at-risk factors. Therefore, these gang members may not respond to Wellness Recovery Action Plan (WRAP) programs that were successful with gang members in Milwaukee. We need to find our own solutions based on our own unique circumstances in BC; but first, my research attempts to situate the context of the problem. This point was driven home for me when Ms. Theresa Campbell of Safer Schools Together, while sitting in a presentation of mine in Chicago, Illinois, stated that when the Surrey WRAP program began, the traditional at-risk testing mechanisms developed in other places were of no use because BC gang kids were not scoring at risk because the push and pull factors were so vastly different in BC (T. Campbell, personal communication, August 2015).

The research conducted here is deeply rooted in and seen through a practitioner's perspective. This research is also heavily influenced by the Chicago School's ethnographic practices, and specifically the words of Robert Park, who told his students:

Go and sit in the lounges of the luxury hotels and on the doorsteps of the

flophouses; sit on the Gold Coast settees and on the slum shakedown; sit in the Orchestra Hall and in the Star & Garter Burlesk. In short, gentlemen, go get the seat of your pants dirty in real research. (cited by Prus, 1996, p. 119)

In the tradition of Park's admonition to go get "dirty in real research," I have done just that. I have stood over countless shooting victims, I have watched the last breaths of young men pass. I have smelled the odour of the blood of a crime scene, I have observed the fear in witnesses, and I have observed the frustration of men and women in uniform with gun and badge as we watched another senseless death.

Ethical Research

For a variety of reasons, this research project has many considerations and challenges around ethical approaches. Ultimately, it was vetted and approved by the London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Board, which examines issues of protecting participants' safety and identity, storage of information, access to the information and potential conflicts of interest.

Research conducted in criminal justice often presents challenges, as often the participants are involved in crime and/or deviant behaviour (Punch, 2010, cited by G. Thomas, 2014). This research project did have some considerations to ensure ethical research was conducted. Ethical research calls for protection of the participants, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, lack of deception of the subjects, proper analysis, and reporting, and legal liability (Simon, 1969).²⁹

Each of the three research methods presented unique ethical considerations. The least worrisome was the analysis of newspapers since it did not entail any exposure to human beings. Nevertheless, there was still an ethical consideration in that to present these findings as useful, the analysis had to be thorough, and to be thorough, the same search engines and same databases had to be used for consistency.

For the field observations, the issue of ethics was more pronounced, even though police officers participating in attachments with other departments is fairly common. I received permission from the appropriate decision-makers in each respective police agency. To ensure full disclosure of my purpose, the officers were all informed that my presence was part of my professional development as a police

²⁹ For a greater discussion of research ethics in criminal justice, please see Pope, Lovell, and Brandl, (2001), Hagan (2010), and Balso and Lewis (2012).

officer as well as my research towards a doctorate. I explained to all the officers that I would be taking field notes on my iPhone and/or a paper notebook, with their permission. While I hold the rank of sergeant, most police still see this role as that of an operational police officer and not an administrator. In cases where a member of the public spoke to me about my presence, I explained that I was a police officer working on a doctorate. In most cases, I would redirect the member of the public to the on-duty police officers I was accompanying.

In keeping with the ethical consideration of the safety of the researcher, I wore my police-issued body armour on all of the ride-alongs except in London, England. I decided to forego this safeguard because my North American body armour is designed to protect against bullets, not knives, whereas body armour in the UK is designed more to protect the wearer against edged weapons. When I wore the armour, it was under an oversized shirt to diminish its presence. I was never armed in any of the attachment areas, although in several attachments I was offered a firearm and/or was given direction on how to access an officer's secondary weapon or backup firearm on his or her person.

Finally, the interviews presented the most potential for ethical concerns since they entailed direct input from research participants. I took several steps, outlined later in this chapter, to protect the participants. I did not deceive or mislead. The purpose of the research and my role as researcher were made clear at the beginning, and no pressure to participate was directed towards any research participant nor did any research participant appear to be under duress during the interviews. With that said, all of the former gang members had previous dealings with me as a gang police officer. They were clearly told that they were not to discuss any past criminality in specific terms. For example, they could say that they were an enforcer for a specific group and carried out drug debt collection, but they could not say something as specific as, "In December I went to the home of Mr. XYZ and collected cash from him." As a serving police officer, I did not want to be in receipt of information as a researcher that would ethically bind me to begin a criminal investigation. To avoid this possibility, I was purposeful in limiting discussion about criminality.

All the research subjects volunteered to participate in the research and were given the opportunity to withdraw at any time, and to advise me at a later time that they did not want their interviews included. As of this writing, none of them has made such a request.

I chose to interview former rather than current gang members because current members would not have been appropriate for me to interview as a serving police officer. Interviewing current gang members would have posed several ethical issues, including their safety and the perception that their participation was in fact not academic research but involvement as a police informant, which could prove deadly on the streets. Most of the interviews occurred in early 2014. In the summer of 2015, one of the participants was murdered in a gangland slaying and another participant was returned to prison, albeit not for a violent offence.

Most of the interviews were conducted in private places, with all of the former gang member interviews conducted either over the telephone or within secure, covert places to ensure their safety and anonymity. They could not be seen to be speaking with me, as I am a recognised gang police officer. For all the telephone interviews, the consent form was sent from a secure email to their email for their review and signature.

Field Observations

As a serving police officer in a gang unit, I have access to data and environments that other researchers may not. I wanted to consider how the BC situation compares and contrasts to other places within the context of a gang problem being constructed. Because this question was of importance not only to my research, but also (and perhaps more so) to my professional duties, I began to consider my past and more recent field observations as a continuum of valid research (see Table 1). I decided to include the following cities in my comparative research piece, consisting of field observations and police attachments in London, England; Hobbema, Alberta; Toronto, Ontario; Los Angeles, California; and Chicago, Illinois.

Table 1: Field Observation Details

Date	City	Hours	Units
May 1995	London	10	Territorial Support Group (Public Order Unit)
June 1999	London	8	Immediate Response Vehicle (Brixton)
March 2000	Toronto	10	51 Division Patrol
June 2000	London	8	Immediate Response Vehicle (Hounslow)
June 2000	Liverpool	10	Armed Response Vehicle
June 2000	Cardiff	8	Patrol Response
June 2011	Toronto	16	Gangs and Guns Unit
May 2012	London	8	Serious Organised Crime Unit (Peckham)
May 2012	London	8	Serious Organised Crime (Tottenham)
July 2013	Chicago	16	11th District
October 2014	London	16	Newham Gangs and Firearms Unit
August 2012	Chicago	10	Citywide Gang Unit (Focused on 11th District)
August 2013	Hobbema	36	Patrol Response
August 2014	Chicago	30	11th District and the 4th District
January 2015	Los Angeles	30	77 Division Gang Enforcement; Hollenbeck Division Gang Enforcement
August 2015	Chicago	21	11th District
TOTAL		245	

I chose London because of the presence of postcode street gangs,³⁰ which appear to be influenced by US gangs. Toronto has a history of ethnic issues between the police and ethnic minority communities, resulting in gang violence that I wanted to learn more about. Hobbema offered a valuable opportunity to observe the breeding ground for Aboriginal gangs. Regarding Los Angeles (the source of Hollywood gang representations) and Chicago, the decision to include these cities was straightforward as they are the two epicentres for gang violence in America. These other communities and the media portrayal (including social media) of their gang problems is influential in BC in that these constructions influence police and community stakeholders. Equally, it influences the young men in BC involved in the gang lifestyle.

As previously acknowledged, setting up and participating in the attachments occurred within the context of me being a serving police officer. A unique relationship exists between police officers, regardless of borders or jurisdictions. For

³⁰ A postcode gang is one whose members share the same postcode (the definition of geographically based gangs).

example, while visiting a foreign country, travelling police officers will often approach on-duty officers and will generally be welcomed warmly. This openness from a shared and common experience is what I relied upon to gain access to make my field observations in all five communities. In each of these communities I observed the unique construction of the gang. For example, in Toronto, while one gang claimed to be Crips, there was no association to the Los Angeles Crips, and unlike in Los Angeles where the members all lived in the same couple of street blocks, the Toronto Crips lived in a large geographical area, conducting business in a small area. The police equally constructed the gangs differently, using terms that varied from “capers” to “missions” to “files” to describe a gang incident.

I informed the officers whom I accompanied on patrol of the nature, purpose, and goals of my work. I told them I was doing a comparative study in order to demonstrate that *gang* was a constructed term. The officers were all aware that I was working on a doctorate. I assured them that no names would be released that could identify them in a given situation and that I would not attribute specific comments to them without their explicit permission.³¹ I wrote field notes either electronically on an iPhone or iPad, or in a paper notebook. I asked the officers questions, and they observed me taking notes when they responded. Some of my observations were made with officers off duty in social environments, not operational environments, providing valuable and rich information.

These observations are of the participant nature; to some degree, my presence may have influenced the behaviour of those participating. My influence was both intentional and unintentional. An example of intentional influence was my decision to dress in plainclothes and wear body armour (except the ride-alongs done in London, as noted above). I wore my body armour under my outermost garment so it would not be seen. However, most people who have spent any time on the street can identify fairly quickly the unique and ill-fitting presence of body armour.

An example of unintentional influence is that I have been the subject of research in the past, and the presence of an observer arguably affected some of my behaviour. I was once asked to take a highly esteemed criminology researcher on a shift, and I agreed only under the term that the researcher had to ride with me on three shifts, to reduce the likelihood of his observations being unrepresentative.

³¹ Permission has been sought by follow-up emails.

Understanding the importance of accurate representations, I went on several ride-alongs in each city.

I believe that I am observant and able to read a variety of social cues; possess excellent interview and analytical skills; and displayed sensitivity with all the officers I rode with, as well as the people they dealt with. When asked, I made it clear that I was a police officer conducting research. These are important qualities to have when using a participant observation research method (Maxfield & Babbie, 2015).

Semi-Structured Interviews

I chose interviews over other forms of qualitative research because of all the qualitative research methods; I believed that interviews would facilitate the richest interactions. I considered surveys, and even created one, which I obtained permission from the VPD Planning and Research Section to send out via email, but I chose in the end not to use it. Ultimately, I believed the most powerful research data would be a product of listening to and recording people's narratives to acquire their experiences, insights, and stories.

Participant selection. Between January and June 2014, I conducted interviews with 17 research participants from three primary categories of perspectives—police, former gang members, and youth workers—relevant to gangs in BC:

- 7 police officers,
- 5 former gang members,
- 4 youth workers, and
- 1 gang analyst.

The research participants were chosen based on my experience with them in the past and my belief they were subject matter experts. The officers, youth workers and gang analyst were experienced people who had worked in the field for some time. The former gang members had been out of the gang life more than two years at least. I chose people who would enrich the research to the greatest amount while keeping in mind the breadth of the assignment.

Table 2 shows a description of each participant's background.

Table 2: Interview Participant Information

Pseudonym	Background	Background Details
Frank	Former gang member	Mid-level street gang.
Fred	Former gang member	Mid-level street gang.
Finn	Former gang member	Higher-level gang.
Fraser	Former gang member	Gang member.
Flanagan	Former gang member	Gang member.
Wendy	Gang youth worker	Social worker; predominantly worked in prisons and now works on the streets in the Greater Victoria area.
Winona	Gang youth worker	Did gang outreach work in prisons, and for schools and police.
Wanda	Gang youth worker	Works in a school district gang program.
Willow	Gang youth worker	School district program.
Peter	Police officer	Working in a police gang unit.
Paul	Police officer	Working in schools.
Paco	Police officer	Working in a police gang unit.
Paula	Analyst	Working in a police gang unit.
Pavel	Police officer	Retired; original member of VPD gang unit.
Paxton	Police officer	Former gang officer who worked in a surveillance unit.
Payto	Police officer	Former gang officer who worked in a criminal intelligence unit.
Pepe	Police officer	Former gang officer who worked vice.

All of the police officers I asked to participate in this research accepted and were interviewed. Several other officers indicated that they wanted to participate, but the scope of this research project required a limit on the total number of interviews. Seven was an appropriate number of interviews within the breadth limitations of this assignment.

I took precautions with the interviews with former gang members due to concerns for the participants' safety and my professional standing. Meeting with former gang members could place us in potential peril since being seen with a well-known gang police officer could be misinterpreted if we were seen by other gang members, who might assume that the former gang member was taking on the role of

a police informant. To address these concerns, I interviewed three of the five former gang members over the telephone. The other two had been out of the gang lifestyle for a sufficient amount of time that their safety was not of concern to either of us; however, we still conducted the interviews at covert locations.

Four youth workers were interviewed because of their unique perspective on dealing with youth involved in gang violence. They were all people who I have encountered within my professional duties and were very willing to participate in the research to ensure their voices were heard about the construction of gangs in BC. Finally, a (civilian) police gang analyst was interviewed and provided very rich data to consider in relation to her professional duties, which include reading every police report written about gang members in BC.

On some occasions during the writing of this thesis, I followed up with a research subject by telephone to gain clarification of his or her interview material. These phone calls began with a reminder of the research purpose and the rules of the research pertaining to consent and anonymity.

Interview conduct and analysis. Prior to the interviews, I provided all of the research subjects with a copy of the research intent and consent form (see Appendix C), which they all read and signed. This informed the participants that I am a serving member of the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit conducting the research as part of my doctorate studies at London Metropolitan University. The form also explained that the research subjects could review their interview transcript upon request. I also had a brief discussion with each participant about their personal safety and the potential psychological impact that the interview process may have on them. I also warned the participants that although their names would be kept in confidence, informed readers may be able to surmise the identity of a research subject due to the close-knit community of policing.

Two of the research subjects were accessed after being recommended by other research subjects. In both cases, the research subjects arranged for the interviews to occur. All of the interviews were audiotaped with permission and transcribed. The transcripts were then reviewed for accuracy. All interviews were conducted in private; for example, at the research subject's office, my university office, or the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit boardroom. A small number of the interviews were conducted on the telephone with the audio recorder in place to capture the interview. Most of the interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. In

the interviews, I asked the participants 11 questions about their expertise with gangs, their thoughts on current efforts to intervene with gangs, and their opinion as to whether *gang* was an accurate word to describe the phenomenon in BC (for a complete list of questions, see Appendix D). I often asked follow-up questions to ensure clarity, depth, and detail.

Testing the truthfulness of the research participants would have been difficult for me as they were telling their account of the construction of gangs. Even so, I never suspected that the research participants were dishonest. At one point, Fraser made statements about his gang life success, but when further questioned, he admitted that a lot of his wealth was the result of pre-existing family prosperity that he increased through criminal enterprise. The interviews were such that the police members essentially told me what I already knew, and the youth workers told me what I knew and suspected, but the former gang members consistently provided insights into their lives that I had not predicted. For example, I suspected that they all came from “good homes,” but they described their home lives with great admiration for their parents and the opportunities they provided.

A Simon Fraser University graduate student assisted me with the qualitative analysis of the interviews, using NVivo software to scan over 225 pages of the transcribed audio interviews. This resulted in 20 common themes being identified, which I combined into two overarching themes and discuss in Chapter 5 (see Appendix E for a list of themes).

Historical Analysis

Sources used. To conduct a historical review of gang activity in BC, I gathered relevant articles from the ProQuest online database, accessed through the Kwantlen Polytechnic University Library. Data was sourced from the ProQuest main menu database and collected from five linking databases: Canadian Newsstand Major Dailies, Canadian Newsstand Pacific, Canadian Business and Current Affairs (CBCA), CBCA Reference and Current Events, and ProQuest Historical Newspapers: *The Globe and Mail*. In addition to these primary resources, I used the website Prime Time Crime, which reports violent homicides in BC’s lower mainland and is published by a former Canadian police officer, as well as the blog of BC crime reporter Kim Bolan of the *Vancouver Sun* newspaper. I used media releases from the VPD, the RCMP, and the CFSEU websites as points of reference for verifying gang-

related activity. I also reviewed Jingfors, Lazzano, and McConnell's (2015) media analysis of BC gang-related homicides from 2003 to 2013.

In addition, I used several unpublished police reports to provide direction on where I could look for a public source that could confirm the violence. I was able to use the police documents as a starting point but could not release any information in them because they are confidential and protected police documents, and this would be a breach and a disciplinary default. Therefore, I relied on public records. This review of historical events is attached as Appendix A.

Thematic analysis. The coding process was initially tested with gang homicides alone, which was then tested by having two other researchers check the validity of the data. Less than five percent of the newspaper articles resulted in any discussion as to whether the data was to be included in the study. The following types of search results were excluded: review, general information, correspondence, commentary, letter to the editor, and editorial.

To code for this historical analysis, I used several search terms related to gangs.³² Because the word *gang* can be used in reference to, and as part of, other words and phrases, each article was then examined to determine its suitability for this research. Ultimately, this is not a perfect or timely system, and this type of research can be challenging and difficult research to code (Maxfield & Babbie, 2015, p. 349). In addition, the use of the term *gang-related* can be problematic (Maxfield & Babbie, 2015, p. 351), as is the identification of gang members and gang involvement (McShane et al., 2003, p. 26). However, I am confident that the reliability of this system, combined with practitioner experience and police knowledge, is high.

Another concern with using this kind of newspaper analysis to provide a thorough history of the problem is that the media are not always given access to

³² gang* NOT gange* OR gangl* OR gangre* OR gangb* OR "gang buster*" OR gangpl* OR gangway OR Ganga OR gangsta* OR Ganga* OR Ganguin OR Ganguly OR Gangre* OR Gangj* OR ganga* OR gango* OR gang-rap* OR "gang rap*" OR "chain gang*" OR "Peanuts gang" OR "Bloodhound Gang" OR "work gang" OR "Grandma's Gang" OR "Happy Gang" OR "Verdens Gang" OR "Gang Ranch" OR "gang troll*" OR "gang plank" OR "Stopwatch Gang" OR "Over the Hill Gang" OR "gang-plank" OR "Stop Watch Gang" OR "gang that can't shoot straight" OR "gang that couldn't shoot straight" OR "NDP gang" OR "Gangs of New York" OR "press gang" OR "over-the-hill gang*" OR "gang-b*" OR "Beaufort gang" OR "Kelly Gang" OR "Grovehill Gang" OR "Boyd Gang" OR "Sugarhill Gang" OR Gangch* OR "gang-tack*" OR "Sugar Hill Gang" OR "Bush & the Gang" OR "Bush and the gang" OR Gangn* OR "Gretzky Gang" OR "Newbie Gang" OR "Purple Gang" OR "Gang of Four" OR "McLean Gang".

information by police and other organisations dealing with criminal matters. While police departments release many news stories to the media, a lot of details are kept confidential for legitimate investigative reasons. The differences in definitions for the terms *gang*, *gangster*, and *gang-related* by media, police, and other institutions further complicates data collection and comparisons.

Ultimately, the purpose of this historical research was to provide a background to the construction of gangs in BC. Many people assume that gangs in BC are a new problem and that if gangs were present here in the past, they were just “kids getting into fistfights.” The historical analysis clearly demonstrates that past gang violence in BC was not only real, but also brutal; in fact, this research demonstrates that the nature of gangs was as violent then as it is today, if not more so.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed my methodology for this professional doctorate qualitative research project. In the spirit of a qualitative research project, 17 interviews combined with over a century of historical newspaper analyses and almost 250 hours of field observations provide a high level of confidence to describe gangs in BC. Moreover, my 27 years as a working police officer, half of which have pertained directly to gang enforcement, should provide some assurance as to the robustness of my conclusions. Admittedly, there may be some weaknesses in my approaches, and further research is required. With that said, this chapter provides the framework for how I approached answering the research questions:

1. How does the history of gang violence and police response to it influence the construction of the gang today?
2. How are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? Do these differences inform the discussion that gangs are a constructed term?
3. What motivates people to join gangs in BC, and how does this differ from motivations to join gangs in other cities?

Further, the methodology used has well situated me to provide numerous examples of why gangs in BC are different from gangs in other cities.

Chapter 4: View From the Streets

Giving context to the social construction of gangs in BC requires a comparative perspective. If gang is not a constructed term, then gangs should exist in much the same form in each of the communities I visited. This was not the case and is evidence that the local community gives context to the construction of the gang. Gangs exist throughout the world, so to conduct appropriate field observations, I chose locations that experience significant gang problems: London, England; Hobbema, Alberta; Toronto, Ontario; Los Angeles, California; and Chicago, Illinois. These cities were selected purposefully because they all offered an accessible research site with significant gang problems.

In designing the research model, I considered that my role as a serving police officer in a gang unit would provide me access to observations that would not likely be accessible to other researchers. Individuals involved in my field observations were advised that I was a serving police officer who was conducting the attachment³³ and subsequent field observations as part of my professional duties and doctoral research. I made assurances that the precise times and places observed would not be revealed, and specific quotes would be attributed to individuals only with their explicit permission. In addition, police ride-along forms were completed where requested, and ride-along permission was sought and granted.

London, England

As part of my professional duties as a police officer, I have participated in several attachments with a variety of British police agencies in the past, including the Merseyside Police (June 2000),³⁴ the Gwent Police (June 2000),³⁵ and the London Metropolitan Police (May 1995, June 1999, May 2012, and October 2014).³⁶ This included working in single-crewed panda patrol cars, Immediate Response Vehicles (IRVs), Armed Response Vehicles (ARVs), Public Order Units, and covert vehicles. I estimate that I have spent 80 hours on attachments. These experiences have been

³³ The North American term used is “attachment,” and the British equivalent is called a “unit attachment.” These experiences in the United Kingdom are much rarer than in North America, where police departments have liability waiver forms to accommodate attachments.

³⁴ Patrol with the armed response vehicle (10 hours).

³⁵ Welsh Police in Cardiff (8 hours).

³⁶ 1995, Public Order Van (10 hours); June 1999, Immediate Response Vehicles in Brixton (8 hours) and in Hounslow (8 hours); 2012, Serious Organised Crime Unit in Peckham (8 hours) and in Broadwater Farm (8 hours); and 2014, Newham (16 hours).

the source of my observations and conclusions on the differences between gangs in BC and London.

In June 2000, I was fortunate to accompany the Merseyside Police on an attachment. As the uniformed and armed police officers drove into the Toxteth Estate in their distinctive Volvo, the street quickly lined with people of African-Caribbean background, carefully watching us. The hostility that each group held towards one another was of great interest to me; the police observed the community as unforgiving and judgmental, and the community stood together in a display of solidarity based on their collective mistrust of the police. In my career, I had never experienced this type of observable animosity from an entire community. This would and continues to inform part of my thinking about the construction of gangs in BC.

A comparatively unique feature of BC is its distinct lack of ethnically dominant areas where the citizens have solidarity against the police. This void of racial marginalization is an important aspect of the construction of gangs in BC. In my experience, the vast majority of young men in gangs police encounter in BC are not impoverished, uneducated, living on the road, or in conflict with other vulnerable men. These BC “gangsters” are unlike those in the inner cities of some UK neighbourhoods, where gangs are banding together against perceived oppressive police and criminal justice tactics (Pole & Clancy, 2012). Additionally, the young men in London gangs are also unable to secure employment and education and are often attracted to life on the road.³⁷

History. British researchers Simon Hallsworth, Tara Young, John Pitts, Simon Harding, Dick Hobbs, and James Densley have all commented extensively on gangs in London, debating the presence of gangs as non-existent, or at the least the existence of gangs being over-stated. These academics have also commented on the uniqueness of these gangs to Britain and advised against examining them through an American lens. These academics are engaged in a sustained and healthy debate to assist the greater community in understanding the true nature of gangs in London.

Researchers in the UK have long searched for significant evidence documenting gangs. It was not until the 1990s that Peter Selfox was able to find any police agencies in the UK, albeit less than 15% of them, who reported any gangs in

³⁷ Newham has the third highest child poverty rate in London (32%), the second highest unemployment rate (10%), and the highest proportion of residents in low-paid work—a third of working people living in Newham are low paid (Rai, 2013).

their city (Pitts, 2008, p. 2). Arguably, London is a relatively safe city in terms of gang homicides; for example, in 2007, London (with a population of 8 million people) recorded 28 gang-related murders. In comparison, 26 gang-related murders were recorded the same year in BC, where the population is half that of London. After excluding recorded homicides in the Lower Mainland of BC, the province's murder rate is 24 out of 2.4 million people; this leads one to consider that if gangs objectively exist in London, they are comparatively non-lethal, even in comparison to Canada. Further, they are significantly non-lethal compared to gangs in Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hobbema. In this research, Hobbema is likely the most violent gang city of those observed.

My UK-based field observations have taken me from Toxteth to Brixton, Hounslow, Peckham, Broadwater Farm, and Newham. In each location, I have discussed with police officers what I would refer to as the "BC gangster," and I would argue that gangs in the UK are much different from gangs in BC. Specifically, it appears that gangs in London are geographically organised. They are based around council housing (estate), which in BC is referred to as social assistance housing. This has changed over the last 20 years in England, as council housing has gone from a place that *some* poor people live to a place where *only* poor people live (Pitts, 2008, p. 58). This has resulted in areas of London where a concentration of poor people living in close proximity are subject to marginalization by their mere post code alone (Harding, 2014). The Metropolitan Police has referred to some of the gangs as "post code gangs" (Lewis, 2011).

Further, the young men in many of these areas have an unemployment rate as high as 60 percent on some estates (Pitts, 2008, p. 60). Another characteristic that distinguishes gangs in London from those in BC is the link between ethnicity and poverty. By the mid-1990s in London, up to 70 percent of residents on the poorest housing estates were from ethnic minorities (Pitts, 2008, p. 62). In BC, with the exception of Aboriginal peoples, while there is a link between poverty and ethnicity, there are no significantly poor ethnic areas. For example, if one wanted to look for gangs in London, one would have a better chance to find them in Newham, Brixton, and Tower Hamlets rather than Kensington, Oxford Street, and Leicester Square. In Vancouver, the most likely place to find gangs is in and around Robson Street and the popular restaurants and bars.

My observations in London have led me to conclude that the gang members there have a great mistrust of the police. It is evident that initiatives such as “stop and search,” which arguably have a strong law enforcement impact, have problematic side effects in alienating communities against police. This mistrust of, if not hatred for, the police was evident to me while on attachment in the area of Broadwater Farm.³⁸ Despite the fact that we were in a covert police vehicle, within minutes of our arrival groups of young men were out on the street watching what we were doing, some even welcoming us to the area with a two finger sign unknown to me as a person from Canada.

Field observations: Toxteth. In Toxteth,³⁹ I experienced a similar hostility; between the time we drove onto the estate in the ARV and the time we left, I observed many young men intent on observing our actions. The officers explained that the mere presence of the police would attract interest on the estate, and it would increase greatly with the presence of armed police.

Field observations: Brixton. Finally, in Brixton,⁴⁰ whenever police members in the IRV exited their car to engage a member of the public, people stopped to observe them. Large groups of people would stop their daily activities to watch the police. I am not suggesting that people do not watch the police in Vancouver, but the difference was in Vancouver the public may watch initially, and if the policing task being undertaken seems mundane and routine, the public generally moves on. In London, whenever the police stopped a young African-Caribbean male several people stopped to watch, often inquiring why the police were

³⁸ This estate has a dark history with the police as it was the scene in 1985 where police constable (PC) Keith Blakelock was attacked by local residents during a riot and was hacked at 43 times with an attempt made to decapitate him. Rioting in Broadwater Farm had broken out after Cynthia Jarrett died of a heart attack after the police searched her home and arrested her son. PC Blakelock was trying to protect firefighters who were working to save the homes of the people on the estate. He suffered a particularly violent death at the hands of an armed group of men:

Blakelock was seen to slip by a grass verge where he was encircled and killed. Blakelock, while on the ground, suffered eight machete wounds to the scalp, a knife driven into the back of the mouth with only the hand visible, 13 knife wounds to the back of the body, and wounds to his body and arms (Dodd, 2014). The police have never successfully prosecuted a person for this brutal murder. One might suggest this is evidence of the entrenched gang mentality that existed and may still exist on the estate. The Broadwater Farm was built in 1976 and shortly thereafter deteriorated into a crime zone that police would not go to. Following the rioting, £33 million were spent on redesigning the physical environment of the estate and crime decreased considerably (Barling, 2008).

³⁹ Toxteth is an inner-city neighbourhood of Liverpool that suffered nine days of rioting in 1981 due to continued deterioration between the predominantly but not exclusively African-Caribbean residents.

⁴⁰ Brixton is an inner-city neighbourhood of London, which has had similar issues between African-Caribbean citizens and the police.

stopping and harassing the youth. Incidentally, I found the officers quite polite in these circumstances, resigned to explain themselves to the public. I also observed most that members of the public, while they were questioning of the police and their actions, were equally polite and often humorous.

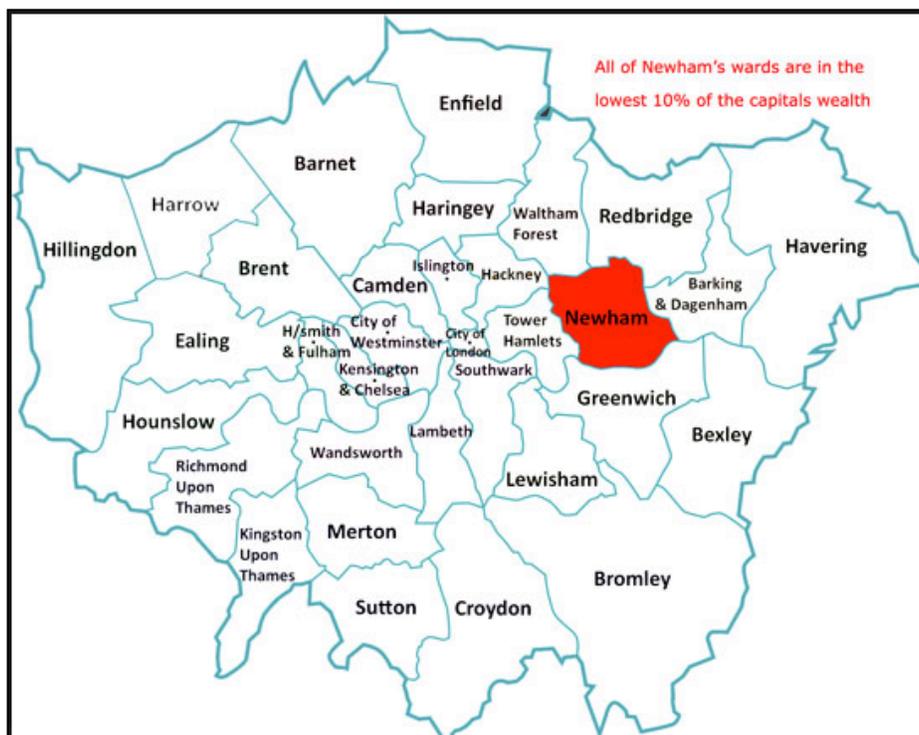
I found all of these experiences to be foreign to my policing experience in BC. I drew from this that these neighbourhoods are predominantly ethnic and segregated, and the police are not welcome. To my knowledge, this does not exist in BC.

London Serious Organised Crime Group. I was also surprised during my London field observations with the Serious Organised Crime Group that on one side of the street were homes valued at millions of pounds, and on the other side were council housing estates. I commented to the police officers I was riding with that in Vancouver, and as I noticed in Chicago, mixed use areas seem to be the new method of designing neighbourhoods. In Vancouver, the former 2010 Olympic Village was being used for mixed housing, as was the renovated and redeveloped Cabrini Green in Chicago. I suggested to the police officers that it was interesting how London was so advanced in this area of social planning, and the officer explained that credit could not really be given to the city planners of London: their “mixed use” housing was more the idea of the German Luftwaffe, as these neighbourhoods had been bombed. The older, classical, expensive homes had survived the bombings, and the new homes were recently constructed council estates.

In BC, and in all of the jurisdictions visited as part of the field study, the lifeblood of the gangs is the drug trade. The prices for drugs in London were quite staggering compared to Canada. The price of a kilo of cocaine in BC is anywhere from CDN \$30,000 to \$45,000 (Bolan, 2009b) whereas in London, that kilo of cocaine is £55,000 (Gifford, 2012), the equivalent of over CDN \$110,000. Drug traffickers in London are cutting the cocaine so deeply that it remains the cheapest in Europe, while still being more expensive than in Canada. My observation of the critical role that drugs play in the gang lifestyle in London was confirmed by the similar observations of Pitts (2008, p. 70) and Hallsworth (2013, p. 153). During my time with the police in London, on multiple occasions, while the intent of an operation was to arrest an identified gang member, the method was through drug enforcement. The police were more likely to be able to make an arrest based on the drug trade than waiting for the gang member to be involved in a violent act. While

with the Serious Organised Crime Group, I was observing the cover and arrest team of an undercover officer in Peckham making a large heroin drug purchase off a known gang member. While the dealer never showed for the deal, it was an interesting experience. The officers I was riding with took me to the trunk of the car to get a piece of equipment for me. I was informed that when the signal was given to move in, I had to make sure that I put on a police cap. I chuckled, thinking, “Not body armour, not a gun, not a baton, but a baseball cap.” I found this even more interesting when I learned that despite an undercover officer purchasing drugs from a gang member, no armed police were with the operation. This was a significant deviation from the protective measures that would be taken by police in Vancouver.

Field observations: Newham. In 2014, I accompanied the Newham Police Gangs and Firearms Unit (the Unit) in East London for two evenings of field observations. Newham was ranked 12 of the 29 boroughs for gang crime in London and accounted for 5% of all the gang crime that occurred in London in 2012–2013. Moreover, Newham was third for serious violent youth crime in London in 2011–2012, accounting for 10% of all serious violent crime in London with more young people murdered between 2005 and 2013 than any other London borough (Paul, 2014).



Photograph 1. Newham in London, UK.

Recently, the Borough of Newham has undergone significant changes as it includes the area of Stratford, which was the site of the London Olympics and is now home to the luxurious Westfield Shopping Centre. Despite the economic and demographic changes, a horrific incident of gang violence occurred on June 29, 2012, weeks before the Olympics began, when a running brawl broke out after a gang member threw a yoghurt pot at a rival gang member (Nolan, 2013). Out of this petty incident, 24-year-old gang member Liam Woodards was stabbed in the chest. Shoppers stood in shock at the blatant violence and ran into nearby stores for protection. Mortally wounded, Woodards walked away from the group in an attempt to find help, only to quickly lose his footing and die before his body hit the new shopping mall floor in front of a high-end jewellery store (Nolan, 2013).

I was permitted to review the closed captioned television footage on my attachment with the Unit and found the senselessness of the violence disturbing. Moreover, it appeared that the lack of concern for criminal apprehension overrode the desire to hurt another human being of the same ethnicity, albeit from a different neighbourhood. In addition, I was amazed at the level of hostility, rudeness, and attempts to provoke the police officers who were simply containing the crime scene. At multiple points, several of the victim's associates breached the crime scene tape, and the police politely engaged with them in a discussion as to why it was in their best interest to remove themselves from the crime scene. The response of police in Vancouver to a person acting so indignantly, especially while potentially hampering a police investigation, would be quite different. I can say with absolute certainty that in Vancouver, the person would be arrested for obstruction of police, whereas in London the police officers showed incredible tolerance and restraint.

Two sergeants lead the Unit, one being a detective sergeant. Members in the Unit work in plain clothes and drive covert vehicles. The Unit is informed and directed by the Metropolitan Police Gang Matrix, which is a listing of all of the known gang members who reside in the borough, ranked by a sophisticated system based on their likelihood to be involved in violent crime as either the offender or the victim. Each day, a detective reviews the matrix to assess if there have been any changes in the status of their gang members. In addition, the Unit lists all of its gang members on the national police database with a unit email so that officers in other parts of the country can advise the Unit of their people's movements. This was of interest to me because unlike other locations with geographically based gangs, some

of the Newham gang members will travel to other communities to set up drug lines for a week at a time. In fact, the police as far north as Aberdeen have checked several members of Newham's Custom House Gang.⁴¹



Photograph 2. Newham Gangs and Firearms Unit.

The Newham borough's main gangs are known as Custom House, Chadd Green, Becton Boys, Woodgrange and the Stratford Boys. While there are some White Europeans, the predominant ethnicities are African-Caribbean.⁴² These gangs are geographically based and spend a considerable amount of time out of their homes, for example hanging around on the street, in parks, and in front of stores. There is minimal graffiti marking their territory; social media is employed instead. The police indicate that a significant number of the violent incidents are predicated on a posted slight on YouTube and/or Facebook. On one occasion, Custom House Boys went to Stratford Mall and filmed themselves making disparaging comments about the Stratford Boys. These taunting videos often result in a retributive reaction, termed a "rideout," which is something I was previously unfamiliar with. A rideout occurs when the gang leadership notifies its members of a raid into another gang's area. They often travel in a convoy of cars, bicycles, and, interestingly, even

⁴¹ Aberdeen is a community in Scotland about 500 miles north of London.

⁴² British police use IC codes for radio communications. The IC codes are IC1 – White European, IC2 – Dark European, IC3 – Afro-Caribbean, IC4 – Asian (in the British sense, e.g. Indian, Bangladeshi, or Pakistani), IC5 – Oriental, IC6 – Arab/North African, and IC0 – unknown ethnicity. Some forces use IC7 as unknown ethnicity.

taxicabs. The taxi driver is ordered to wait when the gang members get out of the cab upon finding rival gang members to assault. This rideout phenomenon is not limited to the gangs in Newham: Harding (2014) also reports on Brixton and the violence started by the photographing of someone in a rival gang area, resulting in these armed rideout parties.

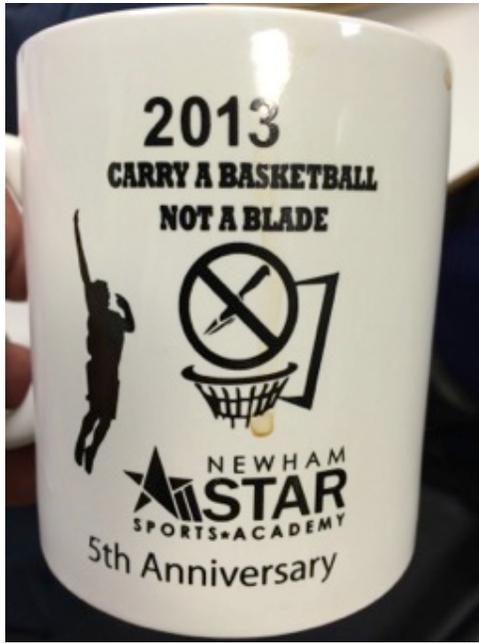
Here in Newham, gang members' weapon of choice is a knife. While the Unit displays the weapons seized off the streets, most are old revolvers, with the odd shotgun and even converted pellet guns that fire real ammunition. There were no particularly sophisticated firearms like police have seen in Vancouver.



Photograph 3. VPD gang crime unit seizure.

The UK has very strict gun control laws, and while laws are similar to Canada around the possession, storage, and handling of firearms, the country has gone further and prohibited knives as well. In the UK, the possession of a knife is an arrestable offence and carries strict penalties in the form of fines, and in certain circumstances, a prison sentence.⁴³

⁴³ The penalty for carrying a knife varies considerably depending on the age of the defendant and any aggravating factors. Penalties can include a fine (£5000), a community detention, a training order (for juveniles), or imprisonment. Generally speaking, the sentencing powers range between six months and four years.



Photograph 4. Newham anti-knife campaign.

One of the duties of the Unit is to conduct threat-to-life (Osman) warnings. This is a common task of a gang unit, as the officers specializing in this area are usually those with the closest ties to the gang members, and are therefore in the best position to become privy to information of that nature. Of interest is that while these officers warn the potential targets of the violence, they also warn the perceived suspects that the police have this information. This practice also demonstrated a difference in the construction of gangs in BC and London, in that the London gangs do not appear to have reached the level of organization and sophistication to use this police duty to their advantage to expose an informant, as occurs in BC.⁴⁴

The Newham police I encountered were very polite with members of the public. In one case during an attachment, the officers were conducting a drug operation that included a raid on a house. The officers maintained surveillance until the target of their investigation arrived, then they executed the warrant and proceeded with a dynamic forced entry,⁴⁵ absent of firearms. This was a practice

⁴⁴ In BC, gang leaders are often aware that police have a duty to warn intended targets or victims of violence. A technique they use to expose a police informant in their gang is to tell Gang Member A that they plan to kill Bill, then tell Gang Member B that they are going to kill Frank, then tell Gang Member C that they are going to kill George. When the police conduct a duty to warn on George, the gang leaders know that it is likely Gang Member C who is a police informant.

⁴⁵ “Dynamic forced entries” occur when police knock down the door of the house and enter after announcing that they are the police and have a warrant. The purpose is to catch the residents by surprise and decrease the chance of them destroying evidence and/or assaulting the police.

unlike any of the other locations where I have conducted field observations, and also very different from what I have experienced as a police officer in Vancouver. The most obvious of these differences is that the officers were not armed with firearms during the raid as we would be in North America, and the less obvious difference was that the officers conducted a dynamic entry during a drug raid. A debatable practice amongst police in North America, drug raids have resulted in significant losses of life, and as such, most tactically sound practices have officers now conducting a “contain and callout” or a “breach and hold” method. Neither of these methods require the officers to risk entry into a dangerous, unknown residence. This observation is not a criticism of the Newham officers, as they are less likely to encounter resistive suspects with firearms in the UK.



Photograph 5. Territorial Support Group conducting search warrant for drugs.

In the searched home were three people: an older lady in her seventies, and two younger men in their thirties. The main suspect was using his grandmother’s home as a supply location or a “re-up”, and the police located a substantial quantity

of cocaine.⁴⁶ The officers had the authority to search the primary residences of the men arrested without a warrant for similar evidence, and it was an offence for the suspects to refuse to open their cell phones for the police to search.



Photograph 6. Area of Newham where the drug raid occurred.

During the execution of the search warrant,⁴⁷ I was surprised by the sheer interest caused by the police officers' presence. I would estimate at least 15 to 20 people arrived at different times to check on the well-being of the lady who lived in the home being searched. The police warrant on the street clearly was of interest to the residents. I believe this is evidence of the construction of gangs in London, which is another indication of the difference between London and BC. The mere inquisitiveness of young men and women during the search is not evidence on its own of the presence of gangs; in fact, all of the actions described above might also be characteristics of a tightly knit, caring community. It was only when I observed one of the more keenly interested parties do the "Crip Walk" (Phillips, 2009)⁴⁸ in front of the police that I became more convinced of the possibility that some kind of "street collective" (Hallsworth & Young, 2008, p. 176) and/or a possible gang situation, was at play.

⁴⁶ A "re-up" location is used to supply street dealers who in turn go out onto the street and sell in smaller quantities.

⁴⁷ Likely the only time in my police career I will ever be offered a cup of tea during a search warrant by the lady whose house was being searched.

⁴⁸ The Crip Walk is a dance associated with Crips gang members that originated in the Imperial Courts Housing Project of Watts, Los Angeles.

The officers subsequently attended to another residence in London that was a considerable distance away, where they conducted a search of a home in a very wealthy area. Although the officers had the authority to break down the door to enter, they waited for a relative of the arrested man to arrive. Inside, police found evidence of drug trafficking. This was of interest as it suggested a progression or evolution of the criminal from the street level gang to that of the mainstream, reputable neighbourhood.

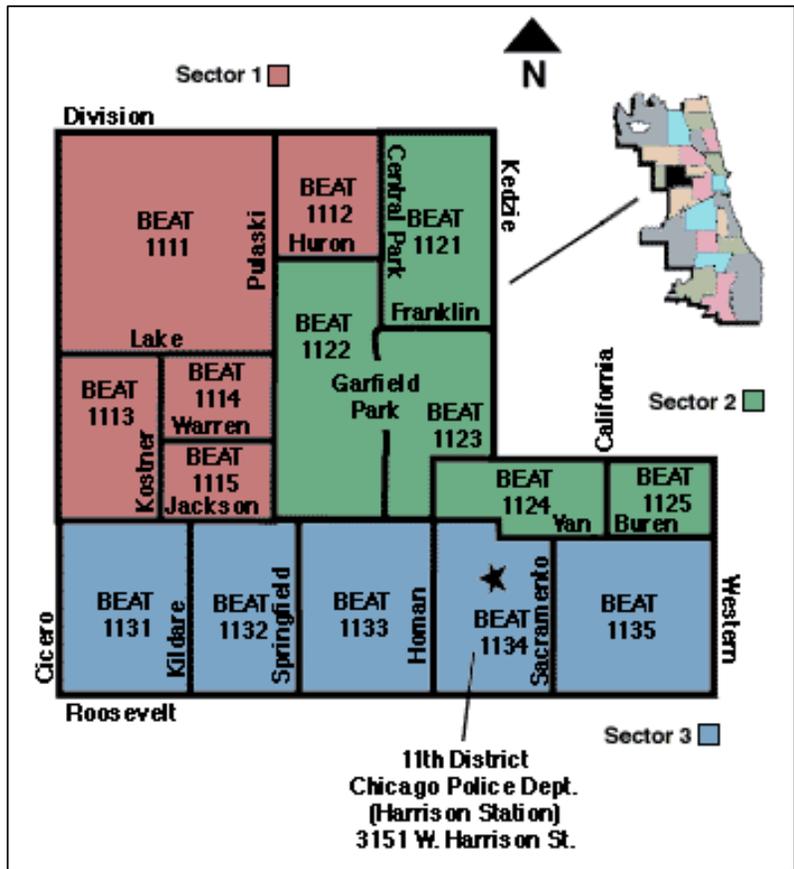
Summary. These attachments to various police units in the UK and specifically in Newham were valuable, informative experiences. I observed that gangs in London are less organised than in BC, knives are the weapon of choice, drugs are the main source of competitive violence, and most of that violence is based around postcodes and turf.

Chicago, Illinois

In August 2012, July 2013, August 2014, and August 2015, I was fortunate to be granted permission to attachments with the Chicago Gang Unit. This included officers assigned to the citywide Gang Enforcement Team and officers assigned to district gang units. Predominantly, my time was spent in the 11th district. In total, I did approximately 70 hours of observations and rode on seven shifts. On two occasions, I rode with squad sergeants, and otherwise I was with the gang officers.

Chicago has recently been referred to as “Chiraq,” a reference to Iraq, as the murder capital of the US. This is an identified gang-entrenched city and as such an appropriate place to gain an appreciation for street gangs in the US and how they compare to the phenomenon of gangs in BC.

In 2011, the Chicago Police Department declared that there were over 73 active street gangs, with a combined total of 68,000 to 150,000 gang members. This represents 8 to 11 gang members per 100,000 citizens. Further, gangs hold territory in all but one of the 25 police districts in Chicago (cited by Hubbard et al., 2012).



Photograph 7. Chicago’s 11th District Garfield Park.

History. Gangs are certainly not new in Chicago; it is home to the preeminent work of Thrasher. Many gangs in Chicago have found legitimacy within the society and are “embedded into the fabric of the city” (Papachristos, 2009, p. 2). Andrew Papachristos of Yale University explained that while he was entering a meeting at a downtown Chicago restaurant with an unnamed prominent gang member who was a former Gangster Disciple, as well as a confidant of both Larry Hoover⁴⁹ and Gator Bradley, they were interrupted by then-Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich and an anonymous *Chicago Tribune* editorial writer. Papachristos was surprised by how the governor, an editor, and his lunch guest, a former gang member, would know each other. In fact, these three men from different walks of life were well known to one another and shared associates. Further illustrative of the entrenchment of gangs in Chicago is that former Chicago mayor Richard J. Daley, who served for 22 years until he declined to run for re-election, was in fact a member

⁴⁹ Larry Hoover was the founding member of the Gangster Disciples.

of the Hamburg Club, which arguably was an Irish gang disguised as an athletic club (N. Moore & Williams, 2011, p. 18).

Papachristos (2009) believes that gangs in Chicago have gone through several stages of evolution, including the 1950s to 1960s formation of many of the gangs. This was followed in the 1960s with the consolidation and politicization of the gangs (Hubbard et al., 2012), and the 1970s to 1980s incarceration and reorganization of the gangs. The 1980s to 1990s featured corporations and political power of gangs. In the late 1990s, as a result of major police operations including Operation Headache (which targeted gangs in Chicago), gang leaders were incarcerated, leaving street gangs in unorganised sets. These sets are now based on the street and engage in violence city block by city block (Papachristos, 2009). This demonstrates that gang construction is fluid and evolutionary in nature.

In the 1960s, Chicago made the same choice that many other North American cities made by building social housing “up,” in high-rise buildings, rather than spreading it out across the city. Upon completion, the Robert Taylor Homes was the largest public housing estate in the US. At around this time, Jeff Fort (leader of the Black P. Stones) and David Barksdale (leader of the Black Disciples) each made alliances with other gangs, creating two rival nations: the Folks (including the Black Disciples) and the People (including the Black P. Stones). It is rumoured that the People Nation was considered the upper class of the poor class, and hence they were the “real people.” In 1963, with the assistance of Larry Hoover (Gangster Disciples), the gangs began to organise and collaborate. This included the gangs setting up riot relief centres for people to rest or seek help during the riots that tore Chicago apart after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., whereas the gangs on the Southside stopped people from joining the riot and called for calm (Papachristos, 2014b).

Following this period, the US federal government collaborated with the gangs to reduce the violence, and the Woodlawn Organization (TWO) was born. The federal government granted \$1 million to teach and train other gang members community job skills. Shortly after that, it was discovered that those being paid had to give back \$20 to the trainers; otherwise, they would not receive their salary. The violence continued in the area, and within 120 yards of the TWO office, an 11-year-old child was shot and killed (Papachristos, 2014b).

With Operation Headache in 1995, 38 members of the Gangster Disciples and one Chicago police officer were indicted. This resulted in a severe blow to the organizational configurations of the gangs but later proved that it is harder for police to control loosely connected sets than the more sophisticated structure. In addition, in the interest of social welfare, the City of Chicago demolished the Robert Taylor Homes in 2007 and the Cabrini Green in 2011. This further resulted in many families, including gang members in those families, being transplanted to another area of the city. The manner in which gangs in Chicago operated was changed forever, from fairly hierarchal pyramid-style gangs to loose sets of only a few members. Each of the factions has members within them who are struggling for power. Before this, a gang might occupy several blocks in a neighbourhood, but with the splintering, gangs controlled one city block only (Hubbard et al., 2012). In addition, being part of a larger gang in the past resulted in violence only when other negotiations had failed, but now with over 200 factions of the Gangster Disciples, the conflicts occur more often than not between Gangster Disciples fighting Gangster Disciples. There is no overarching leadership to control for this (Hubbard et al., 2012).

My attachment experiences were predominantly in the 11th District of Chicago, which is (as one would imagine) a ghetto with entrenched gangs members to be, but considerably worse. This district is home to the Folk Nation, Black Souls, Gangster Disciples, and the New Breed. In addition, from the People Nation Alliance, there are Conservative Vice Lords, Four Corner Hustlers, Imperial Insane Vice Lords, Latin Kings, Mafia Insane Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, and the Unknown Vice Lords (Hubbard et al., 2012, p. 215).

West Division Street borders the 11th District on the north, Cicero Avenue to the west, Kedzie Avenue, and Western Avenue to the east, and Roosevelt Road to the south. This community has approximately 90,000 people living within it. The murder rate in Chicago is about 18 per 100,000 people, and the 11th District alone is three times that (54 per 100,000). In 2009, the 11th District's murder rate of 54 per 100,000 was slightly higher than the US murder capital, New Orleans (Loury, 2010). This is a staggering amount of violence, especially when one considers that the shooting rate is described as four to six times that of the murder rate, equating to almost one shooting per day every day of the year in an area that is geographically

estimated at two miles by one and a half miles wide (N. Zodo, personal communication, August 10, 2014).

The use of cities' homicide rates as a barometer of comparing violence has long been criticised, and the situation in Chicago illustrates one reason why. With this city's sheer number of daily shootings, it has very well-trained emergency medical staff who have considerable experience in dealing with gunshot wounds. Proficiency in treating these particular injuries has increased across a range of professions, from medics working within fire departments to doctors in emergency wards. This grim expertise has also increased because many of these medical staff recently served in the war in Iraq and/or Afghanistan. As N. Zodo (personal communication, August 10, 2014) explains, the real discussion about the violence in Chicago should be based on the shootings rather than the homicides because the medical technology and proficiency of the medical community have increased, thus reducing the homicide rate.

Field observations. In 2011, I was assigned to attachments with the Citywide Gang Unit. I was advised that I would be picked up, and that I was to wear plainclothes and body armour. I rode with two officers who generously explained the area that they policed and what they saw to be the main issues.



Photograph 8. The gang officer unmarked explorer: “The Slick Boys.”

From 2011 to 2015, these issues remained the same and appeared absent of solutions. The police are underpaid, understaffed, and undergunned, and the community, for the most part, is disinterested. There are blocks of homes where groups of young African American men sit out front for extensive periods of time. I was surprised by how many clusters of people were out on the street at all hours of the night. I was further surprised at the number of children, perhaps three or four years old, walking around after midnight. I cannot imagine a child that age out walking in Vancouver without a response from the police and/or Child Protective Services.



Photograph 9. A street in Chicago's 11th District.

It also became apparent that a clear segregation occurred in these neighbourhoods: there were distinct African-American neighbourhoods and distinct Latino neighbourhoods. Integration occurred only on the borders. The 11th District is made up of 85% African Americans and 15% Hispanics, with the latter usually living all in the same block (N. Zodo, personal communication, August 10, 2014). The police I worked with were predominantly White and did not live in, or even close to, the neighbourhood that they patrolled. Several officers told me that even

though they grew up in Chicago, they would never have entered these neighbourhoods as a youth.



Photograph 10. Chicago gang unit making a drug arrest.

On one of the attachments, I naively asked the officers how the people in the neighbourhood knew they were police since they do not wear uniforms and often do not even wear a badge or any indication that they are police. They simply wore a police duty belt and a vest with jeans and a T-shirt. My ignorant question was met with an answer in unison that the people knew because the officers were White. This strengthened my understanding of the deeply entrenched racial segregation that has occurred in Chicago, and also highlighted the distinct difference between gangs in Chicago and gangs in BC by way of the racial distinctions, evident in both gang makeup and law enforcement units.

The observations in Chicago were fascinating and frightening. These police officers work in a community of distrust and violence, and people reside in these violent neighbourhoods. The police who patrolled here were much more matter of fact, curt, aggressive, and to the point than police in other places. Stop and searches were frequent, with the police motivation to find firearms and/or drugs. On all of the occasions that we stopped people, except one, the people were cooperative and almost docile to the police attention.



Photograph 11. A stop and search in Chicago's 11th District.



Photograph 12. Police stopping a car in Chicago's 11th District.

I did not see any abuse by police officers, but there was an underlying feeling of oppression. The tactics were aggressive, and on traffic stops the officers frequently rushed the car to reduce the chance of the occupants shooting at them. Additionally, the police patrolled in tandem with two other gang cars. While I was out with the police in 2015, I observed a homicide scene where the local residents refused to move out of the crime scene and yelled at the responding police officers. Abuses were hurled at the paramedics and the police while they tried to treat the

young man shot in the head.⁵⁰ Another interesting incident was when we raced over to assist other officers chasing a suspect armed with a gun. While standing at the scene of the arrest, and despite the fact that moments earlier the area had been awakened by the sound of sirens, horns, and a police helicopter, less than a block away someone fired several shots. More interesting was that if no person was shot and no property was damaged, no police report would be generated to record the incident.



Photograph 13. Police bumper sticker.



Photograph 14. A traffic stop near shots fired.

⁵⁰ Murder of Torri Williams (17 years old), shot in the head.

I found it curious that in Vancouver police often with drive lights and sirens and people still do not get out of the way, whereas on several occasions in Chicago en-route to a priority call the officers did not even use their lights, infrequently flipping their siren on, moreover, people still knew they were the police and got out of the way.

Summary. The field work done in Chicago provided further insights into how gangs are socially constructed and how the structure and activities of gangs differ across jurisdictions. Gangs in Chicago are made up of young African American and Latino males. They are geographically based and, for the African American gangs, are predominantly in place to sell and distribute narcotics. While the Latino gangs also participate in the drug trade, their gang involvement is also about “representing,” meaning it is important that they are known as gang members. Graffiti exists in all neighbourhoods, but social media has taken over as the place to represent. While African-American gang violence is usually about turf and drug disputes (M. Little, personal communication, July 21, 2012), and more recently, internal gang problems (Papachristos, 2014a), Latino gangs are often more about simply being in the gang. For example, 90% of Latino gang members in Chicago’s Westside must shoot a rival gang member as part of their gang initiation (Vanek, 2014).

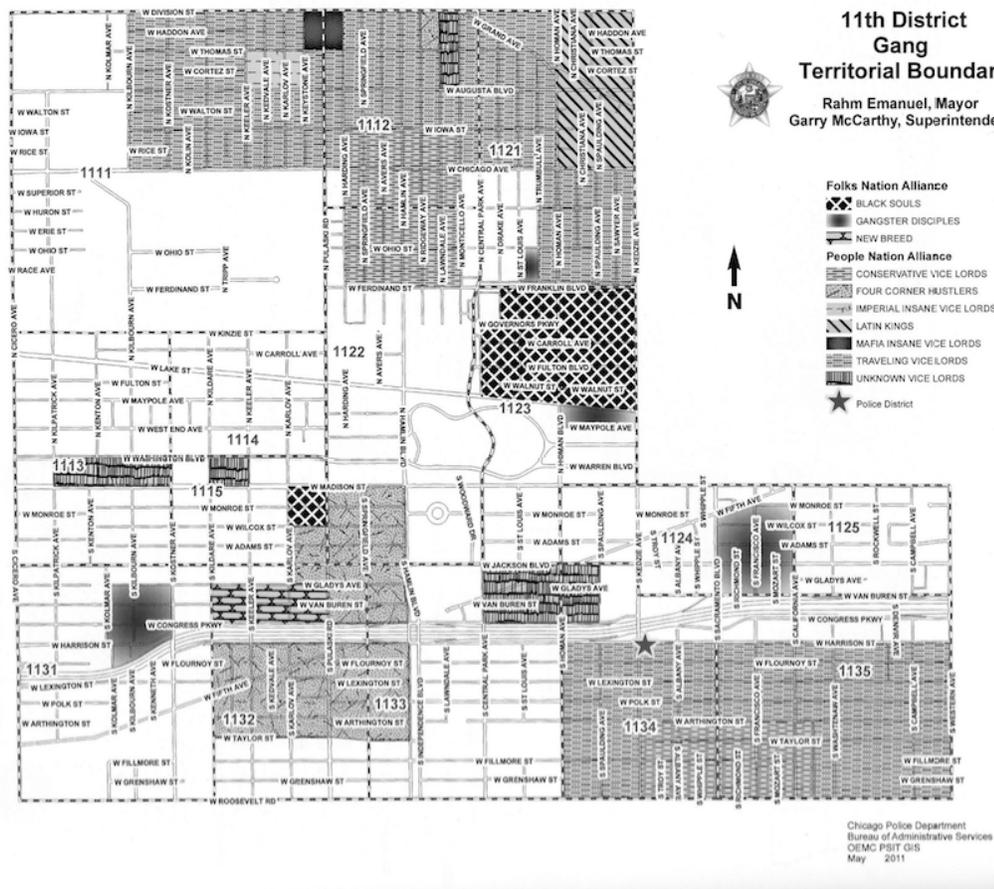
While in Chicago, I went to Cabrini Green, Back of the Yards, Pilsen, the South Side, the West Side, and Garfield Park. Admirably, with limited resources, long hours, limited rest days, mandatory overtime, inadequate equipment, and lack of community support, these officers do a very difficult job in a very difficult place. I also had a respect of sorts for the gang members, as they were in it for survival, bonding, love, and out of desperation. I saw this as a great distinction from the young men who I deal with in BC. In Chicago, they were not gang members because it was cool or trendy, or for the status and power associated with gang identity. The construct of gangs in Chicago is what one would expect from the media images that portray a poor neighbourhood.

The number of people who live in these gang-infested neighbourhoods who are not themselves involved in gangs or crime surprised me. In fact, Papachristos examined homicides in the violent Chicago West Side⁵¹ and found that 70% of all

⁵¹ The U.S. homicide rate is 5 per 100,000, and the West Side of Chicago’s is 55 per 100,000.

fatal gunshots and 75% of all non-fatal gunshots (including domestics) occur within a social network of 1,600 people or 5% of the population. This study was replicated in Boston, where it was found that 763 individuals, or 4% of the population, accounted for 85% of all gunshot violence (Papachristos, 2013).

The field observations in Chicago provided ample evidence to suggest that gangs in BC are different than in that city, and thus that gang is a constructed term. In BC we do not have gang graffiti, gang areas, daily shootings, or even near-daily officer-involved shootings (Richards et al., 2016). Further, BC gangs do not predominantly situate themselves around city corners or blocks. Police officers entering a block in the city of Chicago could quickly identify it as the territory of the Mafia Insane Vice Lords or the Travelling Vice Lords (see Photograph 15).



Photograph 15. Gang boundaries in Chicago’s 11th District.

Reprinted with permission from *The Gang Book: Chicago Crime Commission* by J. D. Hubbard, K. Wyman, and F. Domma, 2012, p. ???. Copyright 2012 by the Chicago Crime Commission.

Toronto, Ontario

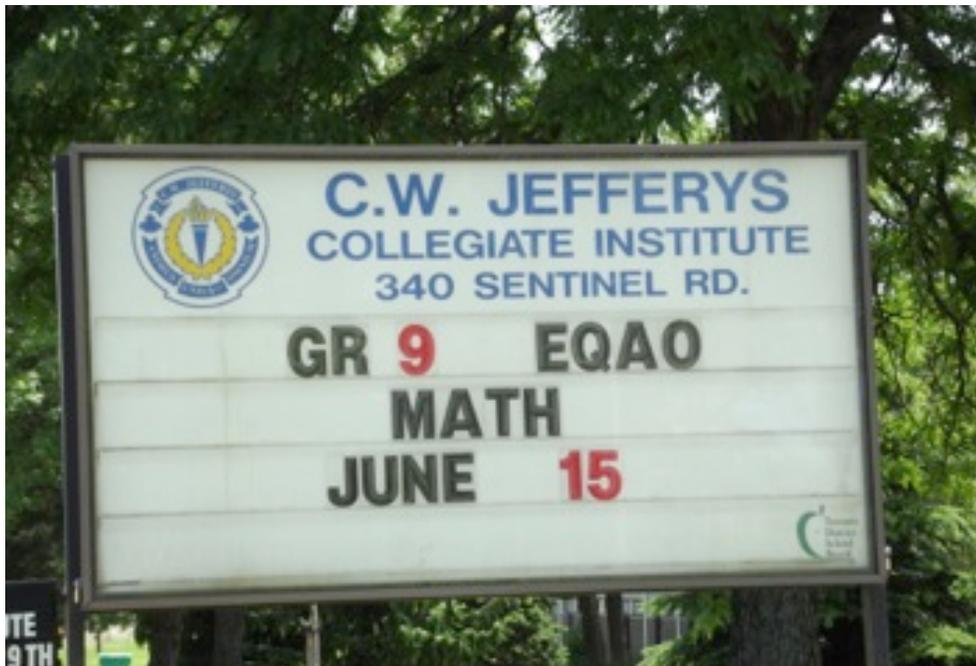
Toronto is one of the largest Canadian cities and has the fifth highest population of North America, with a greater Toronto population of just over six million people. With this population comes a large, US-like gang problem, with an estimated 180 groups identified, including Bloods and Crips. These gangs are like the gangs in Los Angeles and Chicago, with about 2,000 members (Blackwell, 2001).

History. Gang violence became a very real issue for Toronto on Boxing Day 2005 when 15-year-old, Jane Creba, who was not gang associated, was shot and killed in the popular Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto. Rival gang members were intent on having a moving gun battle as citizens scrambled for cover (Small, 2009). At the end of the battle, six innocent bystanders had been hit, six guns had been used, and Jane Creba died shortly after reaching the hospital (Pearce, 2009, p. 146). The Ontario provincial government responded to this shooting and the 52 other gun deaths in Toronto in 2005 with the dedication of 51 million dollars of funding to expedite police recruit training, hire additional Crown counsel lawyers, and assign more police officers to the gangs and guns mandate (R. Roberts & Laidlaw, 2009). A month later, in what would be almost a re-enactment of a scene from the popular gang movie *Colors* (Hopper, 1988), gang members shot and killed Amon Beckles as he stepped out of the church for the funeral of 17-year-old Jamal Hemmings (Pearce, 2009, p. 149).

After 2005's "Year of the Gun" in Toronto, the Toronto Police Service formed TAVIS (Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy). This elite squad of 16 police officers is moved around the city of Toronto to do gang suppression patrols in neighbourhoods to reduce gang violence. Targeted policing takes place in those neighbourhoods deemed to need the most policing. The police engage in an informal practice of carding, where officers stop people, identify who they are and who they are with, and record their contact information to be kept in police databases. Unlike the UK stop and search powers, Canadians are specifically protected from this action by the police under Section 9 in that everyone has the right not to be arbitrarily detained. The police have a search power only if they have reasonable grounds to believe that a person is subject to arrest, or in very limited and specific circumstances where a person can be searched for the safety of the officer. This practice, as in the UK, has not been without significant criticism.

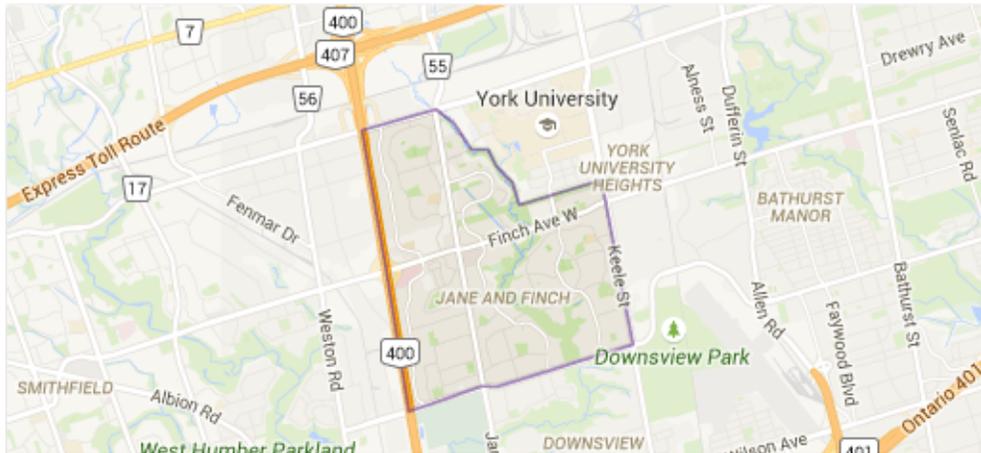
Furthermore, as in the UK, a disproportionate number of Black people are stopped in comparison to White people and their statistical representation within the population. In 2008, TAVIS carded over 24,000 people, of whom over 41% were Black, despite the fact that Blacks make up only 8% of the overall Toronto population (Welsh, 2010). This practice of carding was the subject of a documentary, *Crisis of Distrust: Police and Community in Toronto*, by the Policing Literacy Initiative Production, in which the Toronto Police were severely criticised for this practice by the legal community, community members, and to a lesser extent even Toronto Police officers (Epstein & Jivani, 2014). Unlike section 60 of the UK *Criminal Justice and Public Order Act*, which grants the UK police officers the authority to stop absent of suspicion, police in Canada may not detain a person arbitrarily.

In June of 2007, 15-year-old Jordan Manners was murdered in the school bathroom at C. W. Jefferys Collegiate in the Jane and Finch area. The school was also the scene of several stabbings. The *Falconer Report* subsequently produced in response to the violence at that school an article that set out that Black youth believed it easier to get a gun in Toronto than a job (Pearce, 2009, p. 164). In May of 2009, a five-year-old girl was shot in the chest at a family barbeque attended by her father who was associated to gangs (Pearce, 2009, p. 164). This resulted in an infusion of the Toronto Police TAVIS into the area.



Photograph 16. Jordan Manners was killed at this school.

My field observations in Toronto were the shortest of all areas and were conducted with a detective sergeant with the Gangs and Guns unit. The field observations occurred on a Sunday afternoon and were done in a covert capacity, in a covert car. I had minimal contact with gang members, unlike in the other areas. The area of focus during my field observations was the Jane and Finch area and Chinatown.



Photograph 17. Toronto's Jane and Finch area.



Photograph 18. Social housing in Toronto's Jane and Finch area.

The two gangs that we encountered were the Driftwood Crips in Jane and Finch, and the Asian Assassins in Chinatown. The Driftwood Crips were the subject of a major police investigation in 2007, which resulted in over 80 people being arrested (Erwin, 2006). This investigation was wire based, and what was quickly learned was that while the primary members of the Driftwood Crips continued to operate out of the Jane and Finch area, many of the leaders had moved on to better neighbourhoods. The other information revealed in the investigation was the significant role the wives and girlfriends played in the criminality of the gang members, in that they were active participants.

While there has been minimal academic research completed on gangs in Canada, Toronto has been subject to some recent research. In 2007 a study was conducted in Toronto of 3,393 high school students and 396 street youth, and from this survey, it was learned that 16% of the street youth claimed to be in a gang compared with 11% of the high school youth. In addition, when respondents were analysed and vetted for criminal or non-criminal activity, the high school respondents were reduced to 4% compared to 15% of the street youth (Cherry, 2007). Black, Aboriginal, and Hispanic youth were more likely to identify as being a gang member over White youth, despite the fact that White youth comprised a significant portion of the study. Nonetheless, these ethnic groups also came from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and communities (Tanner, 2010, p. 182). Of further interest from this study was that more Canadian-born youth reported gang involvement than immigrant youth, demonstrating that gangs were not a problem caused by Canadian immigration policies (Tanner, 2010, p. 182). Those who do not consult academic research and fall victim to media reports unfortunately often tout immigration as the cause of the inner city demise and crime.

Gangs in Toronto were similar to Chicago, Hobbema, London, and Los Angeles in that they had a specific name and claimed a geographical area (Tanner, 2010, p. 183). I show later that this is a distinction between these gangs and BC gangs. Two other characteristics of gangs and the general African Canadian community in Toronto is that there is a general mistrust of the police and a belief that police abuse the process of carding. Criminologist Scot Wortley states that African Canadians are stopped at a rate of three to four times that of White people (cited by Epstein & Jivani, 2014). In responding to that concern, Toronto Deputy Chief Peter Sloly stated,

To be clear, racial profiling by the Toronto Police Service and every other police service, . . . [is] where an officer uses race as the primary or only reason to stop somebody or carry out any other policing activity of an enforcement nature. It is wrong, it is illegal, and it is immoral. Does it happen? Yeah, in an organization with 5,500 officers, . . . does it happen? Absolutely. Unfortunately, carding has come to mean anytime a cop stops and talks to me, I am being racially profiled. I am going to be carded, and I am being treated illegally. That is not the case. People break the law all the time, they speed, they park illegally, they jay-walk, they commit minor acts of criminality, they are involved in unlawful public gatherings, and in any of those instances, a police officer may intervene. That's not carding. That's not racial profiling. That is police work and public safety in the context of a city like Toronto. (cited by Epstein & Jivani, 2014)

Race-based membership is a significant difference between gangs in Chicago and London and BC. The gangs of London and Chicago are predominantly, if not exclusively, ethnically based, with an over-representation of African Caribbean and African American, respectively. I did not see Latino gangs in London. This is not to suggest that there are no other ethnic groups involved in gangs, as this is known to be the case. There were White and South Asian males involved in gangs in London that we encountered, and in Toronto, Asian gang members were encountered as well. The presence of racial discord in these communities appears to me to be an element in gangs that BC does not have.

Hobbema, Alberta

In September of 2013, through a professional colleague, I was able to complete attachments with the Hobbema detachment of the RCMP. During my 36 hours of observations, I spoke with community members and police officers and even had two frank conversations with gang members. This set of field observations was shortly after my return from Chicago, and my expectation was that the attachments in Hobbema would be quite tame compared to Chicago. I was to be disavowed of that opinion.



Photograph 19. Hobbema, about 70 kilometres south of Edmonton, Canada.

Due to its oil reserves, Edmonton is one of the wealthiest cities in Canada, in one of the richest provinces in Canada. This wealth is evidenced by the fact that Alberta is the only province in Canada that does not have a provincial sales tax, while elsewhere in Canada, the lowest is in Saskatchewan at 5% and the highest is in Nova Scotia at 10%. Oil has made Alberta a wealthy place, yet that wealth serves to exacerbate the social disorganisation of the community of Hobbema. Hobbema is a townsite surrounded by four First Nations reservations of Montana, Louis-Bull, Ermenskin, and the Sampson Cree Nation (Tanner, 2010, p. 183). The community is characterised by over 70% unemployment, alcohol, and drug abuse, incest and child abuse, violence, malnutrition, inadequate safe and clean housing, lack of education, and a sense of despair. Moreover, over 50% of the population of just over 12,000 people is under the age of 18.

There is considerable trauma in the community, and further problematic is the entrenchment of gangs. Not only is the presence of gangs overwhelming, but the gang-related graffiti also marks almost every home, street sign, and other property

such as street curbs and hydro boxes. I saw more gang graffiti in Hobbema than I saw in Toronto, Chicago, London, and Vancouver combined. The gang graffiti pervades the community, and it is hard to imagine a child growing up in this community not being impacted by the gang graffiti and not feeling fear, as at every vantage point on the Samson reserve some form of graffiti can be observed.



Photograph 20. Graffiti from Hobbema's East Side Players gang.



Photograph 21. Graffiti from Hobbema's Always Strive and Prosper gang.



Photograph 22. Graffiti from Hobbema's Alberta Warriors gang.



Photograph 23. Graffiti from Hobbema's Brothers for Life gang.

The history of the treatment of Aboriginal people in Canada is shameful. The colonisation process has resulted in a lost generation of people whose scarred existence continues to hamper the fulfilment of generations of people not directly impacted by colonisation. Tanner (2010) notes,

In Canada, the Federal Parliament has exclusive legislation jurisdiction over Indians and lands reserved for Indians under section 91 (24) of the Constitution Act, 1867. The relationship with the Federal Government and the First Nations in Canada is complex, and has its roots in the historical nation to nation relationship recognised and embodied in treaties and other instruments, including the Royal Proclamation of 1763, the pre-confederation treaties entered into in the Maritimes and the Treaty of Niagara of 1764. (p. 183)

The Constitution Act of 1982 confirmed all previous treaties and the uniqueness of the relationship of First Nations people to Canada. While this relationship is embodied in law, the federal government has not always managed this responsibility well. Colonialism in Canada has a long history of oppressing Aboriginal people. The European settler society pushed Aboriginal peoples off their historic lands onto economically marginal reserves, where they were subjected to the harsh terms of the Indian Act and the control of the Indian agent. First Nations

people were prohibited from engaging in a broad range of activities. For example, they needed a pass from the Indian agent to leave the reserve (a system adopted by South Africa's apartheid regime), and many of their cultural and spiritual practices (such as the Potlatch and Sun Dance) were outlawed. First Nations and Metis economic and political systems were undermined or destroyed. The State forcibly seized their children and confined in residential schools where they were forbidden to speak their languages, were taught to be ashamed of being Aboriginal (Orvis, 2013, p. 2), and were subject to neglect and abuse. This process of colonisation and assimilation, with a particular focus on the residential schools from the late 1800s to 1996, has had a multi-generational negative and disastrous impact on the First Nations people of Canada.

Former Prime Minister Harper formally apologised to the First Nations people for the residential schools in 2008 (Office of the Prime Minister, 2008). Canada has been severely criticised by Amnesty International for its treatment of First Nations people and cites information indicating that more indigenous children now are in the care of the state than during the century-plus period of residential schools (Milloy, 1999). Hobbema was the site of the largest residential school in Canada.

Hobbema has also been the site of vast oil reserves. In the 1950s, oil was discovered on the Samson Cree land, and with that oil royalty cheques began arriving. The people of Hobbema received up to \$700 per month per person on the reserve; with that, it meant with the birth of a new child the family would earn an additional \$700 per month. Thus the reserve population grew quickly until Indian Affairs (now Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development) required that the royalty money go into a trust fund to be given to the children at the age of 18 (Campion-Smith, 2008). Some young adults in Hobbema at the age of 18 received more than \$150,000 (the equivalent of approximately £82,000). With this large quantity of accessible money, car dealerships, alcohol providers, and cocaine dealers soon came to Hobbema (Diebel, 2009). For example, in the video *Hobbema: Taking Back the Streets*, "Johnathan," a self-described former member of the Red Alert gang, explains that through the 1990s, the Red Alert, the Manitoba Warriors, and the Indian Posse were all vying for the Hobbema drug trade due to the oil wealth on the reserve (Weil, 2008; Stolte, 2012). The royalty cheques stopped in 1997; the last oil well closed in 2007, and the last gas well was capped in 2009. A generation of

people had had no reason to finish school or to work, and now the money had stopped. Whereas poverty is frequently blamed for the formation of gangs and challenges faced on resources, in Hobbema it was wealth that was a partial cause of the gang problem (Stolte, 2012).

In addition, Hobbema has high suicide rates: With an average of 18 suicide deaths per year, Hobbema had one of the highest rates in North America from 1980 to 1987 (Weil, 2008). By 2001, the Hobbema suicide rate was five times the Canadian average (Jacobs, 2011). Moreover, many school-aged children do not attend school in Hobbema. Of the 2,760 children aged 5 to 18 on the reserve, only 1,579 (57%) students are listed as registered to attend school. Often, the children who begin the year do not complete it.

My observations began on a Wednesday day shift and then followed with a Thursday night and a Friday night in late August. On the Thursday, I had the opportunity to speak with the officer in charge of the RCMP detachment, Inspector Charles Wood. It was clear from all the conversations that I had with the police officers that while Hobbema is a dangerous detachment, morale remains high. The officers were committed to one another, and they were committed to working with the First Nations people in a respectful manner. I observed respect towards the police from the community and even from the gang members.



Photograph 24. RCMP patrol truck near Hobbema.

Evidence of this respect was that two of the gang members on separate occasions volunteered to speak with me, knowing I was a police officer writing a doctorate thesis. These were impromptu discussions, and they were aware I was recording them for inclusion in my work. They gave their consent orally, and the circumstances were not conducive to having consent forms signed. I remained sitting in the passenger seat of the police truck and spoke to them as they stood outside of the truck through the open window.

These two gang members were very insightful about their experience on the reserve. One of the two identified himself as an East Side Player and a former Red Alert member.⁵² He had lost a brother in a gang homicide, and his hatred for his fellow First Nations members was shocking. He further indicated that for him to cross the two-lane Highway 2A was the equivalent of “going overseas,” as he would be sought out by rival gang members Brothers For Life and shot, stabbed, or beaten.



Photograph 25. Highway 2A “going overseas.”

When questioned about gang life, he described many characteristics of US-like gangs. For example, he described initiation, which was the equivalent of a

⁵² While Red Alert, Indian Posse, and the Manitoba Warriors had been present on the reserve during the oil boom, the scarcity of money had resulted in their departure to be replaced by smaller street gangs.

“beating in,” where one would have to withstand an assault by several members of the gang. In addition, he described a family life where his father was not involved, and his mother was frequently not at home. For him, the gang was a surrogate family, and the street he lived on was to be protected from intruders. These sentiments were similar to gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles, where the street and geographical identification are important elements to gang identification and life.

The second gang member was less open about his gang lifestyle but admitted ties to the former Red Alert gang and indicated that this past involvement caused him significant problems on the reserve, in particular with the Brothers for Life. He was very animated and full of bravado. Also, when asked about First Nations people killing First Nations people, he was unable to answer what the conflict was about. He was further silent when questioned about the lives of children on the reserve and how the gangs were destroying the community. The discussion ended quickly, and he walked away.

There are five main gangs left in Hobbema, which are the 27 members of the East Side Players, the 19 members of the Samson True Players, the 17 members of the Always Strive and Prosper, the 50 members of the Brothers for Life, and the 26 members of the Brother Killers. These small groups of individuals are still responsible for a significant amount of violence.

As “Johnathan” stated in the video *Taking Back the Streets*, the common saying in Hobbema is, “It is not babies having babies, it is babies killing babies” (Weil, 2008). The level of violence in Hobbema is in stark contrast to what one would expect from a community sitting within the shadows of a wealthy city like Edmonton, and the community has been struggling with the violence for some time. In 2005, drive-by shootings were a regular occurrence in Hobbema, with youth shooting at other youth, tragically sometimes killing them (Stolte, 2012). By 2008 the reserve was making national headlines because, despite double the police population to similarly sized communities, violence was regular and shocking.

In August of 2008, three people were killed in one month in Hobbema, one of whom was a 20-year-old mother, Delena Lefthand Dixon, who was the victim of a drive-by shooting of her home (Gregoire, 2008). These three murders followed the sad events of April 2008, where an 18-month-old baby girl was shot in the stomach by two gang members, aged 18 and 15, who were firing into a home on the reserve (Jones, 2005). In total, the police responded to over 230 firearms incidents in 2008

(Lillebuen & Senger, 2008). In 2009, Hobbema had nine homicides, and though they were not all gang-related, this number of homicides within a community of 12,000 put its homicide rate at 72 per 100,000. This is astronomical when compared to the 2009 Canadian homicide rate of 1.81 per 100,000 (Simons, 2008). In 2011, five-year-old Ethan Yellowbird died after being shot by a 13-year-old, a 16-year-old, and a 17-year-old, who took turns firing shots into the home where he slept (Lillebuen & Senger, 2008). Ethan's aunt, Chelsea Yellowbird, 23 years old, was shot and killed two months later.

The field observations in Hobbema illustrated to me that I no longer had to point south of the border to the US for evidence of gangs formed out of marginality. Hobbema is as challenging as Chicago's Garfield Park, or the 77th Area of Los Angeles, with Hobbema leading all of these cities in homicide rates per 100,000. Canadian gang expert Michael Chettleburgh claimed in the National Press in April of 2013 that hope now existed in Hobbema. He was optimistic that social conditions in Hobbema have improved, and the gangs had decreased from 300 members to approximately 100. The RCMP have created the Youth Cadets program that brings in over 70 youth once per week to learn life skills, along with traditional police training including physical fitness and drills. The dilapidated houses have been torn down, the street lighting improved, and the overgrown bushes cut back. Chettleburgh further claimed that the "plethora of gang graffiti that demarcated the territory of 13 active crews, and their 300 plus gangsters were eradicated and reduced to only 4 gangs" (2013, p 2). In addition, weapons offences have dropped by 39% from 2011 to 2012 and arrested persons from 3,800 prisoners in 2011 to 3,300 in 2011, a 15% drop. The biggest decline noted was that drive-by shootings and/or Molotov cocktail attacks had dropped to a "trickle" from a peak of 137 in a single month (Ibrahim, 2012). While Chettleburgh (2013) admits the battle against gangs is not over, he speaks of a time for hope. My field observations in September of 2013 did not lend much to such an optimistic prognosis. Where Chettleburgh claims hope, I saw despair. To suggest that dilapidated buildings and gang graffiti have been eradicated is simply not the case.



Photograph 26. Firebombed house still stands in Hobbema.



Photograph 27. Graffiti on lived-in homes in Hobbema.



Photograph 28. Graffiti over traditional First Nations art in Hobbema.

In 2013 Hobbema had six murders, with the youngest being a toddler and two others only teenagers, representing a murder rate of 48 per 100,000, which is considerably higher than the 2013 Canadian average of 1.44 per 100,000 (Snider & Yukselir, 2014). In addition, when considering police to population rates, Hobbema is at 280 police officers per 100,000 people compared to the Canadian average for 2013 of 197.⁵³

The purpose of my field observations was to explore what the term *gang* meant to others by visiting places where gangs were prevalent. Hobbema provided ample opportunity to draw drastic distinctions between the young men who joined gangs in Hobbema with those young men who join gangs in BC.

Los Angeles, California

My to visit Los Angeles was an excellent opportunity to conduct further research that would add to my theory that gangs are constructed by the communities in which members live. Los Angeles, being the home to Hollywood, has had many films made about the problems experienced with gangs. Despite the experiences my

⁵³ In 2013, the average was 42 officers assigned to 15,000 people; 100,000 divided by 1,500 is 6.66; 42 multiplied by 6.66 represents a police-to-population ratio of 280:100,000.

prior research ought to have prepared me for, I was overwhelmed by the situation that I found. The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) has worked very hard with the community to improve public safety; however, the department has an undeniable history of issues with the Black and Hispanic community. In addition, the Rampart scandal in 1999, in which three police officers engaged in serious violations of the law and corrupt practices, and several others were suspected and suspended for similar practices further damaged an already compromised reputation (Rice, 2012). In June 2001 the US federal government placed a Consent Decree on the LAPD, and a high-profile police leader, Bill Bratton, was hired in 2002.

The LAPD changed through this process, and the result is a police department better positioned to deal with minority communities who are for the most part living in poverty. This relationship has improved so much that prominent civil rights lawyer Connie Rice stated at a forum I attended while in Los Angeles that the LAPD of the new was not the LAPD of the old. She proudly described having sued the LAPD several times and having been quite antagonistic to the LAPD and to a lesser extent the LA County Sheriffs. She described meeting Chief Bratton shortly after his arrival in Los Angeles at a Christmas party, where she advised the new chief that it was nice to meet him and that not to be offended but she was launching a lawsuit the next week against the LAPD that would name Bratton as a defendant. Chief Bratton extended his hand and asked her rather than sue the LAPD, to come inside and help change the culture of cops. This was for Rice an unsettling and unfamiliar proposal, to work with the very people she opposed (personal communication, January 24, 2015).

Rice described that ultimately she decided to take Chief Bratton's invitation when on the Monday of the weekend after she won a class action lawsuit, she was informed that three of her client's children had been shot over the weekend, two to gang violence and one to an LAPD officer-involved shooting. Rice explained that while she may have been "winning first amendment rights cases against the police for discrimination, what was the point of getting a person the right to a job, if they couldn't walk to the bus to go to the job?" (personal communication, January 24, 2015). She decided then that most important thing was community safety. Rice worked with the LAPD, and together they designed several special units to police higher risk neighbourhoods. Further, they set up different criteria by which to rate

police officers. No longer were these police promoted on arrests and street checks, but on problem-solving and community relationships. Rice stated,

I did not want LAPD officers to see a young black child and think, “There is an arrest stat, fodder for a baton strike, or a person to be shot,” so the officer can have a righteous shooting on their record to apply to SWAT with. I wanted officers to see a young black child and feel love. (personal communication, January 24, 2015)

Rice describes how these officers in this new unit were to commit to serve for five years. She further described how the officers working the projects of Ramona Gardens raised private money to buy each child in the project a computer for use at home. The police relationship was so positive that in 2013 when ex-LAPD officer Chris Doerner was on a shooting spree, members of the Blood Bounty Hunters went to the local police captain’s house to protect the captain and his family. When questioned by Rice, they said, “We still hate cops, but Captain T is our captain” (personal communication, January 24, 2015).

I participated in research for the first three days with the 77th district. The first two days were with the area gang unit, and the third was with patrol.⁵⁴ LAPD has a policy that all ride-alongs must be with the unit sergeant, and this provided me an excellent opportunity to work alongside two senior dedicated and experienced gang officers. The unit wears the same uniform as every other operational LAPD officer except they have a small lapel pin that they earn once they have completed their field training period as a gang officer. The only other distinction that might be lost on the general public but not the gang members is that the gang officers drive marked police cars with no lights on the top.

⁵⁴ Ironically, the gang officers were not working the street on the last night as their duties had been shifted to the red carpet for the Screen Writers Guild Award Evening.



Photograph 29. LAPD 77th Street district.



Photograph 30. LAPD gang squad patrol car.



Photograph 31. Doors of car with ballistic panel.

The 77th Street area is home to about 180,000 people, and an estimated 7,000 gang members live in the area. This might suggest that gangs are not a major problem, but for the fact that so many gangs in the area are in conflict with one another. The 77th Street area is part of the South Central Los Angeles area, and it is home to over 25 gangs.⁵⁵ In some places, these gangs coexist, with Latino gangs

⁵⁵ Including 18th Street, 52 Hoovers, Florencia 13, 59 Hoovers, Moonlight Cats, Krazy Devils, 74 Hoovers, 73 Gangsters, Carnales, 73 Hustler Crips, Swans, South Side Watts, Main Street, 83 Hoovers, Menlow Gangsters, Rollin 90's, Eight Tray Gangsters, Street Villains, 67 Neighborhood

living on the same block as Black gangs. In other areas, the neighbourhood Crips fight with the gangster Crips. Each officer in the unit is responsible for at least one gang depending on the gang size, and officers must be prepared to complete an expert opinion on each gang for court purposes.

California law allows for an offender who has been proven to commit a crime for the benefit of a gang, or in concert with other gang members, to receive an additional prison sentence of between five to 15 years. Several of the officers in the unit's expertise did not start when they became LAPD officers, but in fact began when they were young men growing up in the same neighbourhoods they now police. One officer shared his expert opinion court document, and I was interested to read how his knowledge of gangs started so young and was so personal (see Appendix F). This officer and others did not join gangs and became police officers with the LAPD after a stint in the US military.

Of further note during this observational experience was the professionalism of the officers. The officers' uniforms were all pressed, duty belts and shoes were polished, badges were gleaming, haircuts were short, and physical fitness clearly was a priority, as none of the officers, including the veteran sergeants, carried any excess weight. This observation is important: the officers were clearly aware of the work, the area they policed, and the fact that violence could occur at any time. In June of 2013, the unit was involved in a relatively routine task of a probation/parole check when a man hiding in the attic shot at them. One of the officers in the unit was shot in the face, and the other officers returned fire. While the officer survived the shooting, he has still not returned to active duty.

On both nights that I rode with the 77th Street officers, they encountered people armed with guns. In the first instance, a man was hanging around outside a house. When he saw the gang unit drive by on the block, he quickly ran inside the same house and then returned shortly after that to the street. The officers found this suspicious. When they learned one of the men who resided in the home was a parolee, they searched the house under the parolee's conditions.⁵⁶ Despite considerable protest from the mother of the adult man, the police entered the home

Crips, Rollin 60's, 55 Neighborhood, 57 Neighborhood, Van Ness gangsters, 51 Trouble Crips, 46 Neighborhood Crips, Rolling 40s, and 62 Brims.

⁵⁶ In California, parolees must sign a form allowing police to search them without probable cause, or they will not be released back into the community.

after the sergeant explained thoroughly and in a polite and professional manner their authority to search, and they returned shortly after that with a handgun.



Photograph 32. LAPD officers entering a home.

I was then to witness to an exchange I have never witnessed in 26 years of police work and that clearly in my mind shows a distinction between our gangs in BC and these gangs. The police officer who found the gun asked the group of eight detained men who owned it. Up until this point, and as the police had searched the house, the men had been joking around with one another and the police. They were polite and not bothered by the fact they were lined up outside their home in handcuffs. The oldest gang member whispered to the guy beside him, and slowly the message went down the line to what looked like the youngest man of the group. A short period after that, the young man claimed the gun was his. I was incredulous. The man was going to take the charge of gun possession and go to prison for two years so that the older gang member did not have to. One of the gang officers explained that the gang is all about loyalty and respect and that if the younger man had not done that, once the police left he might face a serious beating or death.

I noted from this incident and from other less serious incidents that the public often requests the sergeant. It seems as if the public see the sergeant as the officers' monitor and that he or she is called to support the public in protecting them from the officers.

The second shift began with the officers having to qualify by taking a firearms test at the range, a task that VPD officers do once a year but that LAPD

officers do once a month, alternating between their handgun and a shotgun. The officers in the unit also stopped a suspicious car that they later learned had been stolen, but not yet reported, from a second-hand car dealership. Once the car was towed back to the police impound lot, a loaded firearm was located in the vehicle. In 2014, the gang officers of the 77 Street Division seized 279 guns off the streets of the district. That represented more guns seized by this gang unit than the guns seized by the four other divisional gang units put together. The team had seized 16 alone in the month of January 2015.

The gang members of 77th District are a combination of African Americans and Latinos. The district has Blood and Crips and Hoovers, who were once Crips. Graffiti is everywhere, and it is a language for the experienced gang officer to read. A simple name struck out can mean the war is on.



Photograph 33. Graffiti of crossed out Rolling 60s, 30s and 40s in Los Angeles.



Photograph 34. Graffiti on 18th Street, Los Angeles.



Photograph 35. Gang graffiti in Los Angeles.



Photograph 36. Community centre in Los Angeles covered in gang graffiti.

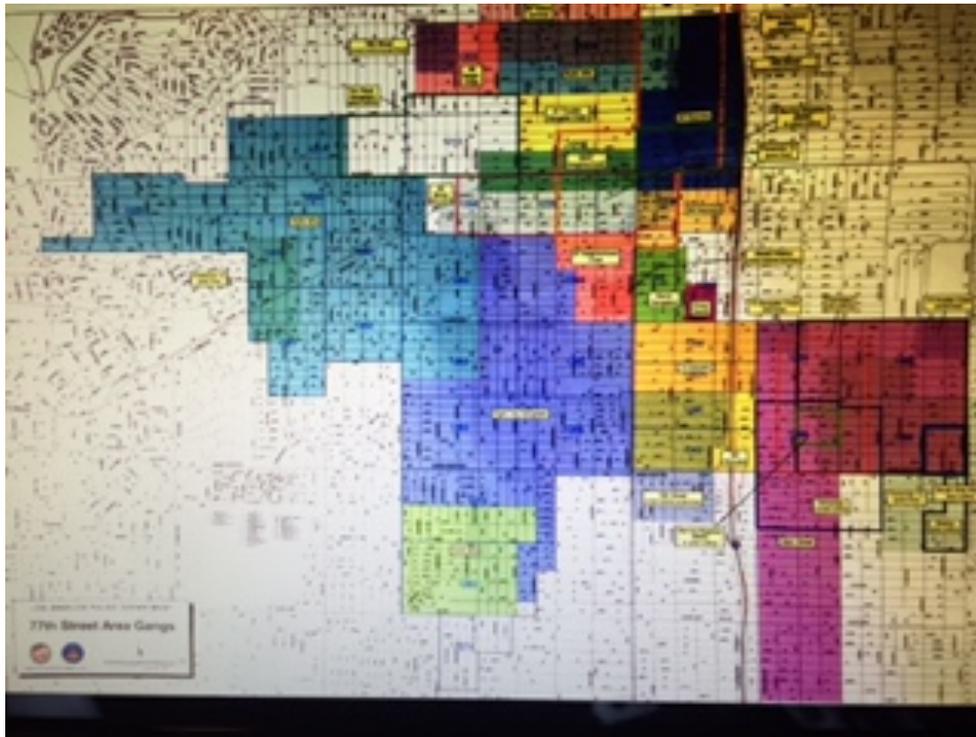
The officers carefully monitor this graffiti, as it provides background information for where they should allocate police resources. Some of the gangs coexist but many do not. In 2014, the division experienced 50 homicides and 372 shootings, with 210 people shot. If we consider the population, that is a rate of 29 per 100,000. The week of Christmas 2014 alone, the 77th Street Division had 19 shootings.

Another significant observation made while I was with the LAPD was in meeting three officers who had personally lost a friend or family member to a gang member. One officer lost a friend; one officer lost her brother to a gang shooting, and Stinson Brown lost his son to a gang shooting (Basheer & Hoag, 2014).

Chapter Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe that my field observations provided insight into the social and economic conditions that breed gangs in other areas of the world. The most gangs were observed in Los Angeles. Racial discrimination was an ingredient in London, Toronto, Hobbema, Chicago, and Los Angeles. The racial element is not present in BC; for example, this is evident with the UN gang, made up of people from all types of ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, I observed poverty in all of these places that is not present to the same degree in BC. While there was some graffiti in London, Toronto, and Chicago, in Hobbema and Los Angeles the graffiti was a language of the street that the trained police officer could read. All the police reported gangs using weapons including knives and/or firearms.

Another significant factor for all of these gangs was their relationship to the geographical areas in which they existed. Gangs in BC are not geographically centred. This marking of a territory simply is not the case. We cannot do what David Kennedy did in Boston and outline where the gangs are and who they are beefing with. “We put them around a Boston city map and said, ‘Tell us where the gangs are. They drew each piece of turf with a Magic Marker’” (Kennedy, 2011, p. 41). I cannot as a gang cop show a map of where gang members live or operate in BC, as was demonstrated to me in the 77th Street gang area.



Photograph 37. Gang map of 77 St. Los Angeles; each colour is a new gang.

The manner in which gangs are constructed is the focus of this work, and the field observations gave me the confidence to say that BC lacks the socioeconomic conditions, the racism, the historically dysfunctional relationship with the police, and the traditional at-risk criminogenic factors that are used to explain gang membership in other places. The following chapter presents findings from the interviews I conducted and affirms that gangs in BC are unique in comparison to other places discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Participants' Words

The primary research question of this study was how gangs are socially constructed in BC. To achieve this, I conducted research using a variety of methods, historical analysis, interviews and field observations. This chapter explores one of my research questions: How are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? This chapter specifically considers these questions through the voices and perceptions of the participants, using responses from our semi-structured interviews. These participants include youth workers who work in the realm of gang prevention and intervention; police officers who provide services primarily in suppression, and arguably work at prevention and intervention as well; and people who were formerly involved in the gang lifestyle. Everyone lived and/or worked in BC at the time of the interviews. As previously mentioned, I chose former gang members because interviewing those who are currently involved in the gang lifestyle could present ethical issues as I am a serving police officer. In the interest of complete transparency, as stated earlier, one of the participants has since been murdered, and one has returned to prison, the rest remain disengaged from the gang lifestyle.

Having considered the gang situation in Toronto, Hobbema, Chicago, London, and Los Angeles, it is clear from listening to the research subjects that I can draw a distinction between those gangs and the ones we see in BC. Just as David Charles⁵⁷ did not fit the stereotype of a gang member, neither did most of my research subjects.

The importance of this research in part is to inform those in academia as well as practitioners. I believe that by looking at the motivations behind people joining gangs in BC and demonstrating that the structure of BC's gangs appears to be different from other places, we may be able to situate the social construction of gangs in BC in a manner that is more productive to understanding the phenomenon, and arguably, finding solutions to preventing it. Equally important is that we do not blindly implement solutions from other cities that are costly and irrelevant to our circumstances.

⁵⁷ David Charles, the young Lotus gang member who I was in a car chase with during my initial police training, introduced in my introduction.

Twenty themes were identified from the interviews, but the breadth of this thesis does not allow for each to be examined in detail (see Appendix E). These themes assist in demonstrating that gangs in BC appear to be constructed differently than in other places. From these, two broad, overarching themes emerged. First, for many the motivation for joining gangs in BC appears to be different; second, the use of the term *gang* is constructed differently for BC. I chose to focus on these overarching themes as they illustrate, in combination with the history analysis and the field observations, that gangs in BC appear to be different.

I approached all 20 themes (see Appendix E) from an interpretive perspective. With the research subjects being police officers, youth workers, and former gang members, each had a unique perspective based on his or her own narrative. Arguably, the police perspective is the most consistent with government policy. The youth workers' perspective aligns best with the former gang members and the community. Finally, the former gang members' perspective is at a micro level, as theirs is one of lived experience.

I interviewed former rather than current gang members. One could suggest that because these men are no longer involved in the gang lifestyle, that they may possess certain characteristics that placed them in a position to relinquish their gang membership, while others have not. This difference could result in these former members having a different perspective on gangs than those who remain in the lifestyle. I believe that this potential limitation on generalisations is countered and bolstered by my historical review, the interviews with police and youth workers and the field observations, and I am confident to conclude that gangs in BC appear to be uniquely constructed.

In the following section, I will introduce the two overarching themes for analysis, to better situate the discussion. This will be followed by an in-depth examination of each theme before bringing the discourse back to demonstrate that gangs form in BC for much different motivations than in other places, and as such while we use the term *gang* in BC we must understand it is a constructed term, and in comparison to other places, and how they have constructed the term our phenomenon looks much different.

Introduction to the Overarching Themes

Theme 1: Motivation for joining gangs as a choice. One of the common themes emerging from my field observations outside of BC was that for many youth,

gang life is thrust upon them. While I will not deny that they had a choice, because ultimately I believe they all do, their choices are severely limited. They face a myriad of obstacles in their daily lives. This is a marked difference from most of the young men in BC, who do not deal with, for example, the constant presence of gang graffiti found in Hobbema or the regulation of daily life and restriction of movement to certain postal codes like the young men in London. For many outside of BC, gang life is a constant in their existence. As evidenced in my research, none of the research participants, including the five former gang members, described being immersed in gang neighbourhoods or feeling they had no choice but to join gangs. This theme was echoed by the youth workers and police officers and represents a significant difference in the creation of gangs in BC in contrast to gangs elsewhere and provides support for my suggestion that gangs in BC are different from gangs in other places.

Theme 2: Use of the term gang is constructed incorrectly for BC. As described in Chapter 4, while on patrol in a Los Angeles gang area, the police searched a home occupied by a parolee and found a gun. I then observed a senior gang member speak to lower-level members, and a junior gang member took ownership of the firearm, essentially taking a two-year prison sentence for his associate. This kind of blind, misplaced loyalty is not something that I have observed in BC gang members, nor it is something that any of my research supports. First, membership in BC gangs is fluid; self-sacrificing loyalty to one gang is rare. Second, BC gangsters are motivated by financial profit and social status, not defending their postcode (like in London) or their side of the street (like in Hobbema), or their block (like in Chicago and Los Angeles) from rivals. As this chapter demonstrates, BC gang members come together for the purposes of doing business and protecting their drug lines. This is further evidence of the differences in gangs in BC from elsewhere.

Exploring Theme 1: Motivation for Joining Gangs as a Choice

There was a common belief among the research subjects that many, if not the majority, of youth in BC should not be joining gangs. The social, economic, and marginalisation factors that exist in many gang-entrenched areas elsewhere are not at play to the same degree in BC. Finn, a former gang member, stated:

And you know, like here, you don't have that here. You have these crews that are, they have no reason to be there, they come from rich families, they're bored, they got nothing better to do, they just wanna be cool. It's the glamorization. . . . I was the breadwinner in my family when my dad and my

mom got really sick, so I made the conscious decision knowing that something was gonna go bad, and I had to make due, and, you know, not that it's right—I made that decision, whereas 90 percent of the guys that I know that are in this bullshit game have absolutely no reason to be there. Absolutely none. It's all about being cool and coking up with your buddies and stuff like that, and then like I said when shit hits the fan, they scatter, right?

This research participant hits on two key points: first, most of the people he met in the “game” were not doing it out of necessity. This was very unlike the young men I observed in my field observations, who were driven into the lifestyle because of intergenerational familial involvement, low socioeconomic status, and/or marginalisation, which provided few legitimate opportunities. Second, the gang members have no loyalty; Finn states that in times of hardship, they will not be there for one another. This is fairly inconsistent with the banding of gang members in my field observations.

Finn expressed contempt for most of the people involved in gangs, suggesting that they do not have the traditional at-risk factors for involving themselves in the lifestyle. His impression that their friendship and loyalty quickly dissipate when the lifestyle gets dangerous is quite a contrast to the gang member in Los Angeles I observed who claimed responsibility for an offence he did not commit that could have resulted in a two-year prison sentence. In saying that most young men in BC have no reason to involve themselves in gangs, Finn is suggesting that it is a choice made by them and not for them.

Finn also highlights that the push and pull factors to join gangs in other cities like Toronto, Hobbes, Chicago, Los Angeles, and London do not exist in BC. For a large percentage of gang members here, the journey into the gang lifestyle is fuelled by status, hedonism, and glamour rather than economic necessity or oppression.

When asked why people join gangs in BC, Payton, a police officer, replied:

I solely believe that here is, it's the influence to make money and the power . . . And if you were perhaps bullied in school and you have no way of getting back, and a gang guy puts his arm around you and takes care of you, you're going to join that gang.

There's no one set recipe. I don't know how, why someone would join a gang here, but some people do come from good families, and they come from two hard-working parents and they do the best, but that doesn't appeal to the kid. The fact of working hard and spending 20 years working doesn't appeal to the child or the person joining the gang. They want it quick, they want the power, and they don't want to work for it.

Payton describes the two predominant types of individuals who join gangs in BC: the traditional at-risk youth, and the non-traditional at-risk youth. Payton recognises characteristics in the young person from a good family including a lack of work ethic, a sense of entitlement, and an unwillingness to be patient and work towards a goal in a legitimate, legal manner.

Winona, a youth worker, added this from her experiences working in Vancouver:

I've had kids that have come from wealthy families. Again, you never know what's going on behind closed doors, right? So something can look really pretty on the surface, and what's going on at home could be a nightmare. It could be. There's kids that have come from, that I've worked with in the past, who've been criminally involved, who come from very upper, you know, middle class, they've got professionals as parents, judges as parents, physicians as parents, lawyers as parents, you know, those kids end up going that way sometimes too. Sometimes it's parents that aren't present. Sometimes I honestly, I can't put my finger on what it is with these kids. I don't get what the draw is for them into that lifestyle.

I do tend to think that there's a bit of a sense of entitlement with a lot of kids, with this upcoming generation, and I honestly think it bleeds into the generation just below us, that there is that whole work ethic and that belief that you have to work hard. They're so used to instant gratification. Everything is fast now. Video games are fast, your phone is right there, the information is right in front of you, you don't have to look in a book, you don't have to work for it, it's just handed to you, with a quick type and everybody's got all the latest gear, so there's no delay in gratification for any of the kids that we're raising. You want it, you get it. You want it, you get it. And so they look at, "Why would I work for 10 bucks an hour at some pizza place and have to save for two months to get the runners that I want when I can boost them or I can sell weed, or whatever," and even those lines of business are easy to get into. I had those boys from grade eight that were stealing iPads from their class and selling it on Craigslist to make enough money to start a business to sell drugs in their school. They're 13.

Winona adds to the description of gang members coming from non-traditional at-risk homes. This youth worker also makes an important qualification that while a young person may be coming from what appears to be a stable home life, there may other factors at play. While I agree with this caveat, I instinctually have difficulty comparing the lives of a young person growing up in Hobbema or Chicago's Garfield Park to the youth growing up in BC's nice, prosperous neighbourhoods, with good schools and access to many opportunities. When I returned to Vancouver from Chicago in 2014, I photographed the home of one of our gang members and sent it to the police officers working in the 11th District in

Chicago. The snow-capped mountains in the background of a home valued at over \$1 million dollars were in stark contrast to the dilapidated houses and neighbourhoods of young gang members in all of my field observation sites.

Winona also spoke to motivations to join gangs for traditional at-risk youth:

Cop Killing Villains or the Skeena Boys, some of those kids were motivated by circumstance. They came from impoverished neighbourhoods, they had single parent families, or they had drug and alcohol abuse at home, they were victims of violence at home, so there's those little check marks, right, of all the things that you think of.

As a police officer, I was familiar with the Skeena Projects in Vancouver; while they have a similar feel, and architectural look to the projects in Los Angeles, particularly in Hollenbeck Division, the plague of violence does not exist here. In Hollenbeck, I observed abundant gang graffiti and, more importantly, memorials to dead gang members. There simply is not the pervasive feeling of despair in Vancouver housing projects compared to what I observed in the research sites.

Flanagan, a former gang member, was a successful businessperson who grew up on the east side of Vancouver. Although he knew many people who entered the gang life, Flanagan avoided that life in his younger years, and it was not until he was a young adult with a successful business that he was lured to the gang lifestyle.

Flanagan explained his recruitment:

You know the money wasn't a big part of it. I was doing okay running my stores, and it was more about that sense of belonging, the Brotherhood, the identity, you know, that rock star status. Once I stepped in, back into the environment, it was red carpet treatment.

There is a strong attraction to the gang lifestyle in BC; historically, gang members have been treated like celebrities. They did not wait in line to go into bars, were provided the best seats in restaurants, and they were catered to like VIPs by establishment staff. These privileges ended after several high-profile shootings in and around restaurants and nightclubs resulted in the start of the Barwatch Program, Restaurant Watch Program, and Special Agreement Program. These are anti-gang initiatives that result in people being excluded from the establishments for a variety of reasons.⁵⁸ Staff and police have the authority to add patrons to the databases, along with an explanation. The patrons are then flagged for a specific time and are

⁵⁸ People are excluded when they (a) are known gang members, (b) are known associates of gang members, (c) have been convicted of a serious violent crime;(d) are involved with or have a history of for-profit drug offences; or (e) have a history of firearms offences.

refused entry into establishments that voluntarily participate in one of these programs.

When asked about gangs in BC, Wanda, a youth worker, stated:

Yes, it's very different than other places in BC working with youth. Going over a caseload, we have a large number of youth who engage in gang activity who don't come from the stereotypical gang profile you would see in the States or other parts of Canada. A lot of middle class, upper middle class, two parents at home, good income, food on the table, we call them in our program non-traditional youth, and they're quite prevalent in BC as opposed to other areas. . . . But I think BC was really ground zero for that phenomenon.

Wanda confirms and provides further evidence of how gang members in BC are distinguishable in that they typically come from non-traditional at-risk homes. In response to being asked what factors lead youth into gangs in BC, Wanda replied:

I think because of the large portion of youth that aren't joining gangs due to socioeconomic issues or fear of harm, I think the factors in BC, there's a lot of glamorisation around gangs in BC. It's high-profile, so I think youth who are missing something in their lives will fill it up with something else. So they attach to drugs, they attach to gangs, they attach to, they see the Bacon⁵⁹ brothers rolling down the street in their Escalades and their hot girls and all that, and the youth certainly idolise that. Almost every youth I work with talks about Scarface or Bindy Johal.⁶⁰ . . . So I think it's the image that's projected around gangs for a lot of the non-traditional [youth]. And for the traditional youth, for sure there's a lot of the traditional risk factors of needing money, family criminality, lack of supervision, single parents out working all the time, just the usual risk factors associated with them, but for the non-traditional kids, it's more about power, money, girls, and all that. Reputation.

When I asked Willow how many of the youth she had dealt with in her 25 years of work experience had come from traditional at-risk families, she responded:

My answer to that is that if you want to take traditional at-risk factors, so if you want to look at poverty and single moms and addiction in the family and whatever, I find that those kids that I've worked with that have had those things on their plates are too busy trying to survive and trying to, you know, look after mom or siblings or whatever, to invest the time that you would need to get gang-involved. I find it's the kids who don't have those factors. So my experience is that the majority of kids that I have worked with and

⁵⁹ The research participant is referring to Jonathan, Jarrod, and Jamie Bacon, who are infamous gang members in BC (discussed in Chapter 4). They were the subjects of a 2013 book by Jerry Langton called *The Notorious Bacon Brothers: Inside Gang Warfare on Vancouver Streets*. Jonathan has since been murdered in a gang shooting, Jamie is facing a life sentence for murdering six people in October 2007, and Jarrod is currently incarcerated on drug and firearms charges. These atypical gang members are from a middle-class family.

⁶⁰ As noted in Chapter 4, Bindy Johal is almost a cult figure in BC gang lore in that he openly mocked his rivals, killed many people, and was himself executed on the dance floor of Vancouver's Palladium Nightclub with 300 onlookers, none of whom reported seeing anything.

known that have gone into gangs come from your middle-class [families], you know, not your traditional kind of risk factors.

Willow, a youth worker, provided insight into the challenges that face youth growing up in homes of real economic risk versus the homes where many of the gang members in BC come from. She also provided further evidence that gang members in BC differ from gang members in the field observation sites.

Wendy, a youth worker, confirmed this with her observation of the difference in gang members on her caseload over time,

Here is the difference, because before when I was just working as a youth counselor, most of the kids on my caseload, I would say like 70 percent of the kids on my caseload, were traditional at-risk, whereas now, I would say, oh, it is probably 50–50. But it just seems surprising to me how high the number is of non-traditional.

Frank’s perceptions as a former gang member were as follows:

We do not have the same socioeconomic barriers that they do in the US, number one, and we don’t have the limitations in terms of resources that the United States has in meeting these needs, and we do not have a gun shop on every corner and a liquor store on every corner, so it looks completely different.

Wendy, a youth worker, added her experience about youths’ motivations to join gangs in Greater Victoria:

Street cred. . . . I think it’s been glamorised, and these guys are missing something, there’s something that they’re missing. . . . And a lot of them, there’s attachment issues, and you see that when you look at their Facebook and their Instagram, and the messages that they have back and forth. A big piece is messages like “This is the only family I need,” “WCGF [West Coast Goat Fuckers] forever,” that kind of, that connection piece. I think a lot of them are motivated by adrenaline, and again I think a lot of this is because they’ve grown up in homes where they might have witnessed violence or chaos or instabilities or neglect.

Wendy further described the WCGF as “these are two middle-class white boys, intelligent, very smart, and they look like preppy boys.” When asked what he thought attracted people to gangs in BC, Frank stated:

Culture. I mean money—prestige, social standing, right? So it’s not frowned upon to be a gangster in this city. It’s actually kind of cool. People look at you, people want to party with you, people want to smoke with you, people want to invite you to their penthouse suite and be like, “I got that one gangster friend.” It’s almost a prestigious thing.

Frank clearly identifies that in BC, gang members are seen in a positive subcultural manner. They are glamorised and not shunned for their choices; in fact,

they can be idolised. When asked why people are joining gangs in BC, Wendy described her experience in working with youth that:

One kid that I was working with, absolute middle-class kid, absolute middle-class family, and he started smoking pot to deal with just anxiety—but he started owing, and so these two guys who are adults and are being watched by police then started using him as a mule, and so he was slowly becoming sucked in. And then fortunately he got arrested and I got this frantic call.

When asked why people join gangs in BC, Paxton, a police officer, answered:

Easy money, I think that would be the first [reason] that comes to mind. Some sort of maybe emotional, psychological issues of power and respect and whatever people's perceptions of those are. There's a glamorous side to the lifestyle. I mean, I know when I was 20, I was worried about how to pay my food bill at university on, you know, 10 dollars an hour. Well, I'm certain someone at that same age group, they sit there and say, "Hey, tax free, here's a nice car, here's a nice watch," and you can entertain pretty ladies with this, you know, that can be a pretty good incentive. You don't think of the consequences.

Once again, the evidence from this research subject suggests that BC gang members' motivation is the glamorous and financial side of the lifestyle. We can further draw from this the distinction between the gang members in BC and the field observation sites; those in the latter category do not join gangs to be cool, but so they can be safe in their neighbourhoods.

Fred, a former gang member, described the reason he joined a gang:

If you were gonna run lines,⁶¹ you needed other guys around to kind of back you up, 'cause things were getting scary and people were taking lines, stuff like that. So you basically had to have a crew kind of thing, and it just, it evolves from there. It starts off as a crew of guys and you all kind of got a little something going, and then you get a little more going and a little more.

Even growing up, I was almost a police officer when I graduated high school, that was what I wanted to become, right, but then slowly, I met these group of guys and basically, it's just like a network of drug traffickers. You meet these guys, and they show you how to grow weed, or they show you how to do this or that, and then you begin doing it.

Fred described his initiation as a process of exposure to the positive sides of gangsters' lifestyles, rather than being actively recruited. He stated:

No, what basically happened was, I was sick of school, like that wasn't clearly taking me anywhere, and my options for jobs were like, junk, like it was, "You wanna work here for 10 bucks an hour, or nine bucks an hour,

⁶¹ "Dial-a-dope" drug lines entail users calling the cell phone of the dealer, who then delivers the drug.

that's like the best you're gonna get.

It is worthwhile noting that when Fred speaks about being 'sick of school', he is referring to University, which he chose to leave to join a gang. This is further evidence to support the differences between gangs in BC and the other cities studied.

Fred went further when questioned about gangs recruiting members:

What I basically did was, I've got a good personality, and I'm reliable and I can get along with people. Ryan and those guys liked me, and I just started hanging out with them, and you know, we started going clubbing, and Ryan's fucking blowing like five grand at the bar, and here I am trying to cash a fucking 300 dollar paycheck for two weeks' work. And I'm just like, "I wanna do what you guys are doing," like teach me, kind of thing, so it started out like that. I started going around and watering the plants at all these houses, and doing stuff like that, and basically just being a bitch, being a gopher boy, and then just kept my eyes open and learned.

When questioned about motivation for joining gangs, Fred replied:

That's a good one. Money. It's all about the money. It's one hundred percent about the money. There's tons of drugs here, there's tons of money here, there's tons of people who do drugs, there's tons of people who sell drugs. . . . I can't speak to the climate of today, but five years ago, there was so much weed, there was so much coke, like, basically, and if you knew enough people, there was always gonna be someone that had, and someone that needed. And the easiest way to make money was not to be either of those guys, because having a lot is a risk, 'cause you get busted and you got a crap load of stuff on you. You're in trouble, you know. But if you're the guy who puts the two guys together with a commission, a hefty commission that you tack on for yourself, there's really no other easier way to make money I could imagine. It's like trading stocks or anything else, like you used to—literally, I'd be driving around with 20 pounds of weed, and a cop would be behind me, and I wouldn't be nervous 'cause I would forget that I was even doing anything illegal, do you know what I mean? It was just such a daily, no-big-deal kind of thing.

Wanting to further explore money as a motivator, I asked Fred, "How many of the guys that you were with would you say came from traditional bad family situations?" Fred responded:

Bad socioeconomics? I would say like almost none. There was two kinds of guys. There was guys like me who were normal kids who were just being immature retards for a couple of years and got into it because they wanted to make a lot of easy money, and then there was the jail dummies, the kids like the Scorpions, guys who started out in YDC [Youth Detention Centre] at 13 and just kept going back to YDC, and then back to YDC. . . . Those are like the two different almost categories that I would put guys in. But in terms of people I was exposed [to]—like, perfect example, I mean the guy who got me started, . . . his dad is like extremely, extremely rich. He owns his own engineering business, his family is very well-off, there was absolutely no reason for him to get involved in any of that, but he just wanted to make

money.

. . . And I can only speak to my personal experience, and I know other guys have had my personal experience. You grow up in this upper-middle-class upbringing, your parents give you basically whatever you want, and then you come of age at 18 or 19 and you start to realize, you know, I gotta go out and make a life for myself now, and I want a nice house and I want a nice car, I don't want to work at Wendy's, I don't wanna do four years in school, you know, and the easiest way to make money, unfortunately, is to do crime. And with it being that, and like I said, my downfall was just meeting the wrong people. If I would have never have met those guys, I guarantee you I would have never got into it myself, but basically I just saw how—I was shown how easy it was, and then it was just too easy.

I stated, "You saw the life and wanted it?" and Fred answered:

Yeah, absolutely. And they could have been clandestine about recruiting me and showed me all that stuff, but to be honest, there was no point that I wasn't more than a willing participant. I was the one bugging them, if anything, like for jobs, for work, for this, for that, you got something to do? I want to make some money, kind of thing, you know, like I was not complacent.

When I asked Fred how good the gang life was that it kept him involved, he stated:

Well, what happened is you'd get like, you'd pay for like a VIP table and then, it's just bottles, bottles, bottles, bottles, drugs, anything you want, right? And that was back in the golden days, too, before Barwatch and all that stuff, where you were the rock star at the bar. I'd go to the bar and the bouncer would let you in, big line down the block, you walk up to the front, boom you're in, you know what I mean. . . . And then, you know, all the girls that are standing in line watching that front door and waiting to get in, they see you breeze on past. Man, I used to go and pick some of them out of the lineup and bring them in with me, like that's straight celebrity stuff, that's like, you literally would feel like an absolute rock star.

Fred's comments are akin to the work of J. Katz (1988) and the seduction of crime, these young men because of their illicit wealth, and their status as gang members have a lifestyle they would not be able to achieve absent of their illegal activities. This seduction that Katz speaks of, the lure, the ability to be successful with beautiful women is attractive to most people, but even more to a susceptible young man. This is much different than the rewards that gang members see in other places.

Fred provides considerable insight into the pull of the gang lifestyle in BC. Fred's comments show without question why the BC gang lifestyle might be popular. His comments once again show a distinct difference between gangs in BC

and the field observation sites, where gang members are not feted as celebrities and any notoriety ends with a change in postcode.

Peter suggested that the use of drugs and the ability to be involved in the for-profit drug trade were the primary reasons for people to join gangs in BC. It should be noted that this officer has worked with gangs since 1985, and continues to work with them in this current role, 30 years later. Peter said:

Well, I think the common element is drugs that a lot of the gangs are formed to protect the drug lines and to run their drugs, and a lot of the violence occurs over the turf wars. You know, of course, I see it from a different perspective now, working older gangs and I guess so-called organised crime, but they're more sophisticated, more violent, they use technology, [and they are] definitely more difficult to arrest. I do think the gang lifestyle has been glorified over the last decade, but I think the tide is turning on that. I think that people are sick of the violence, and you're slowly seeing the attitudes towards gangs and gangsters changing, you know a lot of them are glorified. . . . So yeah, I think you definitely see the gangs aren't necessarily—some of them were broken down by ethnicity, whereas you're not seeing that so much now. It's all about profit and protecting your drug trade.

Paco, a police officer, also started working with gangs in 1985 but finished in 2014. He explained:

I don't think really there's much to do about turf. I mean, it's about drugs, and there's a certain amount of turf involved in that because, you know, people are stepping on other people's toes if they're selling from the wrong area and stuff like that, but back then it was about neighbourhoods, and really so L.A.-based as far as "This is my neighbourhood, don't come into my neighbourhood unless you're wearing black and red," and those kinds of things. And one of the groups I think wore purple or something like that, but, you know, now it's not about machismo, it's about making money, it's about the dope. And it's not even about the dope, it's about making money. It just happens the only way to make money is through the dope.

These two senior police officers, Peter and Paco, have seen the evolution of BC gangs, from constructions similar to gangs in Los Angeles (geographically based, colours, tattoos, graffiti) to the more sophisticated modern-day drug-based gangs, who are engaged in the movement and sale of illegal commodities. Gang lines and neighbourhoods, and even ethnicity, are secondary to profits. Willow, a youth worker, further stated,

I can start dealing drugs and start making some real quick, you know, even more cash, right. And so I think again it is a choice based on that get rich quick [mentality]. . . . The glory, their perception of glory, the glamor, I mean what are we—BC bud, right? I think, you know, this perception that, you

know, hey fast bucks. You grow one crop, and you strike it rich. I think, you know, the fast cars, the hot girls.

Willow understands through daily conversations with youth that they equally understand that there is minimal risk to growing marijuana and that the profits are very good. She has to compete with this construction of the drug trade in BC as a lucrative means to achieve success with minimal consequence and try to steer them towards much less lucrative legitimate means success. In the Mertonian sense they are the innovators, in rejecting legitimate means in favor of illegitimate means to success.

Peter, a police officer, added,

[There has been] a lot of violence and all around drugs, you know, fighting over drug turf, drug lines. . . . Well, I think the common element is drugs, that a lot of the gangs are formed to protect the drug lines and to run their drugs, and a lot of the violence occurs over the turf wars. You know, of course I see it from a different perspective now, working older gangs and I guess so-called organized crime, but they are more sophisticated, more violent. They use technology, [and they are] definitely more difficult to arrest.

I do think the gang lifestyle has been glorified over the last decade, but I think the tide is turning on that. I think that people are sick of the violence, and you are slowly seeing the attitudes towards gangs and gangsters changing. You know, a lot of them are glorified, or, you know, when a gangster's killed, there is a ridiculous amount of coverage on the Internet, on Facebook, or whatever means they are using, to celebrate the person's life. And then they go on about what great people they were, where in fact their whole being is about increasing their profit in the drug trade and really hurting society in a big way through their drug trafficking. "Merchants of Death" . . . some of them were broken down by ethnicity, whereas you are not seeing that so much now. It's all about profit and protecting your drug trade.

Frank, a former gang member, further added to the Mertonian theme presented by Willow added:

Kids now short-circuit the process from doing the required steps to what creates a foundation for success . . . [to] just going to the money. 'Cuz you told me I needed the money. So gangs have really found a foothold because of our cultural standard around success and money, so that's the big appeal, that money will give you that . . . sense of happiness and belonging and those things that are needed for every human being, right? That's why it's so different here than it is everywhere else. So it's not about survival, it's about social status, in many ways, in this community.

These gang members are the innovators that Merton (1968) describes in that they accept the standards of success but do not wish to seek it out by the same means. When asked about the status of gangs in BC, Flanagan, a former gang member, added:

When somebody's born into the lifestyle and you know they don't have the

choice, they don't have the option, they don't have the resources readily accessible [that's one thing]. If we take a look at the current state of affairs when it comes to gangs in BC, they were not what you'd consider your youth at risk, they didn't come from poverty, they didn't come from broken homes, they didn't come from all these, what you'd consider risk factors to move into the lifestyle. A lot of them were athletic, some of them were academic, but none of them were truly at-risk, poverty-riddled, born into the lifestyle, second-generation gangsters. You just didn't see that, and some of the behaviours you see in BC is dad's a gangster, but in no way, shape, or form does he want son or daughter to be in the lifestyle.

Flanagan is uniquely positioned to make these comments about the youth because as a former gang member, he now works for a school district in BC, where he works with youth at risk of joining gangs.

Wendy, who has worked primarily in the Greater Victoria area, added to this line of thinking with an acknowledgement of recruitment from middle-class homes:

I don't know, but out here it seems to be all related to portraying wealth and power, whereas, you know, when I think of Compton, . . . it feels more desperate. And that's something for the guys that I'm working with, and the guys that they associate [with]. I don't feel there's that same level of desperation. It's different. The draw is different.

I think a lot of it in other places has to do with poverty and desperation, You know, a lot of them are broken families, but they are middle-class White kids. I also have a group who are, you know, kids who have been through the foster system repeatedly, but their presentation is all the same. The kid from foster care and the kid from the middle-class home, they look the same. How they dress, how they present.

Notably, Greater Victoria is a safe community with only one recorded gang homicide in several years.

Exploring Theme 2: Use of the Term *Gang* Is Constructed Incorrectly for BC

Constructing the typology of gangs in BC. In response to whether use of the term *gang* is constructed incorrectly for BC, Payton, a police officer, stated:

Absolutely, and I just talked about it previously. Gangs in other parts of the world, you look at . . . the neighbourhoods and gangs, they're jumped in or kicked in or they're trying to make money, the same as the gangs here, but they're a lot more poor, they may not have a choice for socioeconomic reasons, their family, everybody's into it, and the sense of belonging and they have really no choice to be in those gangs, and then, it's just a way of life. The gangs here are very organised, and people do choose to be in these gangs, and their sole purpose is to make money. So the gang here, a gangster here or a gang guy here, a part of groups perhaps is Independent Soldiers, the UN gang, they're just big drug trafficking groups.

Payton added specifically that,

Gang is the proper term to use. I do not think that we could have the type of street gangs and the street disorder that we have in like poor cities.

Vancouver is an extremely wealthy city with the second highest property value in North America, so these gangs operate differently. These gangs operate in the same demographic as the homes and people here. There is expensive homes, expensive lifestyle, so the gangsters live like that. Gang is accurate. But once again, the gangsters here are multi-kilo drug traffickers.

Payton is clearly stating that the use of the term gang in BC is appropriate, but he makes the crucial point to describe what that means here in BC. That is the heart of the constructive nature of the discussion of this thesis. The gang members I observed in the research sites visited were not multi-kilo drug traffickers as in BC. Many would suggest that in BC we have organized crime, but once again, most of our gangs lack the sophistication or organization required to meet most typologies developed thus far.

Frank, a former gang member, also described this ambiguous phenomenon of the BC gang when he stated, “Gangs for me in Richmond means more organized crime.” Frank further went on to say,

What is happening here in Vancouver is uniquely different than anywhere else in the world. I almost call it the hybrid of gangsterism and its evolution and it’s taking place in our city. . . . I call it the pretty-boy gangster syndrome, where these guys are so manicured yet they’re carrying Glocks in their Louis Vuitton bags, you know, it’s very unique, very different than the individuals involved in other parts of the world.

Frank strongly suggested that the use of the term gang was not an appropriate construction of the phenomenon, and he preferred organised crime:

I use organised crime. Gangs, for me, kind of brings it to a level of making it like, we are kind of like hood rats. We are not hood rats in this city. Maybe a little bit of stuff in East Vancouver or Surrey, but for most of the scene, I think it’s more of an organised crime feel. Sophisticated operations. Some people call that mid-level gangs, but nobody understands that. I like the word organised crime.

Paco, a police officer, stated,

We did some stuff with Lotus [Asian Street Gang], not a terrible amount back then. You know, I mean Lotus even back then was more organised crime than street thugs, . . . You know, we’re chasing the tail. We’re chasing the kids that are shooting each other and doing stupid things.

Former gang member Finn countered, however, and suggested that there was minimal organisation to these groups:

I would imagine a gang would be an organised crew of individuals, you know, with like-minded desires and views on things. And what I know it to

be is clearly the opposite. It's very unorganised, there is no common goal, there is no common view

Payton agreed with this characterization of the gangs as being more organised in BC and rejected the idea that they are street-based like gangs in other places. Payton stated,

When I hear the word gang, well, a few different things come to mind for me, but specifically here in the city of Vancouver, I think of gangs as organised groups of drug traffickers here, with the tentacles and reaches all across Canada. The groups of gangs here are not your traditional gangs that you will have, like the Crips and Bloods in the United States, and those street-level or neighbourhood-style gangs. I think of gangs here as very organised groups, a lot of them are culturally-based groups, that their sole purpose is just to make money.

In speaking to the use of the term *gangs* in BC, Willow added the following to the discussion regarding the construct of gangs:

I think it's totally inappropriate, myself. I don't know how to explain this, but . . . I mostly resent the fact that they call themselves gangs, because in my head they're punks . . . It's almost like they're wannabe gangsters. . . . I think that there is something, you know, there is integrity in being an actual gang or organised gang, but I'm not sure what word I'm looking for, it's like, let's just say I see them as a bunch of punks. And I see that the reason that they go into gangs is very, very different than say in L.A., or Chicago, or, you know, Detroit. It's different here, right. I look at a lot of the young men who have gotten into gangs here in the Fraser Valley, and I sit there and think, "Oh my god, it was absolute choice, right. It wasn't circumstance." You know, the guy who founded the UN⁶² actually went to school here in Chilliwack, and was bullied, you know, throughout his high school [years], and it was like his payback. So yeah, there's something that just doesn't fit well with that.

In response to the same question, Winona replied:

In the sense of what my traditional belief that gangs are, you know, where they've come from— . . . I think it's changed. . . . I do believe that the Hells Angels are a legitimate gang, and Lotus and Red Eagles, those were gangs, back in the day, right. I think it's changed considerably in the last, I would say the last 10 years, there's been a huge shift, and now we have a lot of kids that are growing up that are entitled and bored and want to make quick, easy money, that are falling into this lifestyle.

As with many of the research subjects, Winona dismissed the current situation in BC as fitting the traditional gang situation. She also noted that BC gang members did not espouse the level of commitment that is found in places like Los Angeles and Chicago:

But they're pretty fluid too, and that's the other thing about gangs that I

⁶² Clay Rouche of the UN gang is seen as the original leader.

always thought, was there was a degree of membership, and it was stable, and we don't have that with the South Slope Kids. Kids come in, kids go out. You have some that are players and the next, you know, six months later they're no longer players, not because anything's happened to them, but because they've either grown up or moved on or they decided to go to college or university because that's what a lot of them are able to achieve, and they go on and do that. And there wasn't this, sort of, "You live by the gang and die by the gang and it is your life," which I still feel like, HA [Hells Angels], that's kind of the way they roll, right: you're in, and you're in forever unless you're no longer in. And so, that's interesting to me too, how that's definitely changed. And if we weren't going to call them gangs, I don't know what you would call them. They're groups of kids that are engaging in criminal activity for a lack of anything better to do. And there's a degree of permissiveness around their behaviour. . . . They're not gangs, they're assholes.

Winona stated:

My education around gangs as a youth, as a teenager, came from movies, and so then you saw all, you know, the *Boyz n the Hood*, and that's a good example. They're coming from these really impoverished neighbourhoods, drug-torn, and there's drug wars going on, and that's, you know, the Bloods and the Crips, and you hear about those things, and the Raiders and all these different gangs coming out of L.A. And in my purview, that's what gangs were, and that they had come from this really difficult background and were committing crime and banding together to commit crime for survival, because that's what they needed to get out of their situation. Not because it was a pastime, that they were living in four-thousand-square-foot homes that were over a million dollars, and mom and dad worked out in the valley, and they were attending high schools and on sports teams, "Hey, for kicks let's go do this." I mean, that to me was never what it was about.

Winona, as a youth worker, notes an additional difference in the typology of the gangster, stating further that:

Kids that were coming from, like immigrant kids that were coming from countries where they've been unattached from their parents because their moms maybe came here first, left them when they were six or seven, and moms came here and worked for seven years as caregivers and then brought their children over, and now their children are fourteen and they're completely unattached from their parents. I think that could be a huge issue. Those are huge influences.

Willow and Winona are rejecting the traditional construction of a gang and stating through their perspective this simply does not fit within the BC context. The narrative exists but the reality is not poor, marginalized ethnic kids joining gangs.

Finn, speaking from his experience as a gang member, added:

I'm sure you know they're crews of people, and if I had to characterise them as what they're like, they're definitely not organised crime. It's very unorganised. I would say maybe three to four percent of all the guys that are in and around doing this, out of that, three to four percent are organised.

Organised enough to be considered like mobsters, right, and the rest of them, they're wannabes, they're part-timers. They maybe sling a little dope or they move weed or sell pills at a club, or whatever, and there's no organisation, there's no accountability. If you, you know, ripped off one guy, his boss went to your boss, they called you up and they gave you a beat down and a lecture. And it doesn't happen like that. This is not an organised crime, it's not an organised gang, and I would say it's more like a mob mentality, like a mob where, monkey see monkey do, right?

Finn fully rejects the notion of the gang as being an organized entity. So while other research participants are describing their experience and suggesting a high level of profitability, Finn believes that it is much more chaotic than what one might see from organized crime, where there is leadership, clearly defined controlled geographic markets, and illegal infrastructure to support the movement of illegal commodities. Paula, a police analyst, suggested:

I think with street gangs you have a lot of the common identifiers, so the tattoos, the gang colours, you know, the gang signs, and you don't get those traditional identifiers in groups in BC necessarily. I mean, I think some of the tattoos are starting to make a comeback in prison gangs, and certainly with some of the Aboriginal gangs, you do have those markings, but the organised crime groups in BC are a lot more sophisticated in that they know that any identifiers are basically gonna expose them to law enforcement, right, and to us sort of catching on [to] their operations and their activities in our current landscape. So that's different. I think the groups in BC are a lot more entrepreneurially minded, so they're willing to work together, there are no gang territorial lines necessarily, as you would get in places like Chicago or Hobbema or Toronto even, right? They're much more willing to collaborate criminally for profit. You don't get the territorial lines, conflicts, and they can coexist.

Paula further proposed:

I think it's just the glorification of the gangster lifestyle. Kids nowadays, I believe, they have a lot of access to a lifestyle that a lot of kids my age back then didn't have. So it's a generational difference, but now I think once these kids come into contact with criminally entrenched or gang-affiliated youth, it's a little bit harder for them to want to get out of the lifestyle because it is so seductive. And you know, the reasons for them wanting to spend four years in university, take out a student loan, actually work hard, it's a lot less appealing than having money from, you know, selling a couple of ecstasy pills and having the money to go out and spend on designer apparel or alcohol or substances and stuff, right? It's going to be hard to make a case for individuals who don't have that work ethic.

When I asked Paula, "What makes it cool?" she commented:

I think it's because it's fun and it doesn't require any effort, you know. It's instant gratification in terms of the fun factor, right? You're not actually working hard towards a certain goal, and putting in the time to be able to enjoy disposable income, to have a lifestyle like that. I have friends who

grew up who were seduced by that lifestyle because it was easy, it was the easy way out. And I think that's the reason why a lot of kids have entered that lifestyle: because it's easy. We have a very diverse population, you know, a lot of children from immigrant families. Their parents are constantly at work, they're not being supervised properly at home, and it's so easy for these kids to become involved, because they're not getting that proper supervision and support on the home front. And they also don't really want to work as hard, necessarily, as their parents. . . . It's easy to just go out and hang out with a bunch of gangsters, and be able to do bottle service at a club. Unless you've worked really hard for that money, you don't really appreciate it, and I think that's sort of the generation that we're in right now.

Paula once again adds to this construction of the gang in BC being much different than in other places in that the people joining gangs are seduced into gangster lifestyle. This lifestyle in BC includes a Hollywood-like image of a fast-paced life of pretty girls, nice cars, expensive restaurants, and VIP passes to nightclubs.

Fred, as a former gang member who claimed to have had a profitable illicit business, said:

You couldn't compare it to a gang in the sense of, like, the Bloods or something in the States, where you're jumped in and jumped out kind of thing. It's not really like that, it's like, it's almost like a union, like a network of drug traffickers who band together, depending on the climate, under a common symbol or a common interest for protection and stuff like that.

Fred stated that these criminal networks form out of necessity to move commodities such as drugs:

It was easier to move all your dope, 'cause you can't, I mean, moving a hundred pounds of weed, you're not—it's very rare to find one guy who could take all that. Usually you need to find six different guys who can take 10 pounds, or five different guys who can take 20 pounds, kind of thing.

Fred further illustrated the differences between the Gangster Disciples of Chicago, the 18th Street Crips of Los Angeles, and BC gangs by clearly identifying the "band of brothers" mentality:

I mean, some guys pay lip service to the whole brotherhood and all that other things, and we respect this symbol, we respect that symbol, some guys would do stuff like that, but when I was in it, I was purely in it for—it was just commodity-driven for me, 'cause it was just, I wanted profit. And everybody I knew was the exact same way.

Fred further suggested:

You gotta think all these guys, too, it's all about the money, it's just all commodity, who's got the commodity to make the money, and who's got the money to take the commodity, and that's it. It doesn't really matter. I mean, there's long-standing personal beefs, and there's long-standing bad feelings

over lots of different stuff, and there's this group versus this group, but at the end of the day, it's each member is gonna run their own thing. And you know what, nobody's gonna turn down 10 grand because this gang's fighting with that gang, you know, if you can make the money, you're gonna do it.

Winona, a youth worker, added:

I think it [the word *gang*] is overused by our society. . . . I think a lot of that has to do with what we are force-fed from the media: "There's a gang shooting, there's gang warfare, there's gang ties, there's a gang problem in Vancouver, there's gangs, gangs, gangs." I mean, we've been ingesting that for the last six years, pretty much non-stop.

Winona further commented,

I do believe that the Hells Angels are a legitimate gang, and Lotus, and Red Eagles, those were gangs, back in the day. I think it has changed considerably in the last, I would say the last 10 years. There's been a huge shift, and now we have a lot of kids that are growing up that are entitled and bored and want to make quick, easy money, that are falling into this lifestyle.

Willow suggested,

I think of gangs and I think of like, you know, organised like Hells Angels, whatever, right, and you know maybe UN and Red Scorpions and whatever. But drugs is probably the first thing that comes to mind, right, and then, you know, all of the stuff associated with that, like the violence.

Police impact on the construction of the gang. Willow commented on

police-conducted gang checks:

I just mean "we" as general public, as a member of the general public—we're much more apt to apply that term to groups of kids to define them. But it's having an adverse reaction because it's giving them their own definition, which they didn't have before. And that was that piece when we were talking about doing the gang checks and having GCU [Gang Crime Unit] go to the schools and checking kids. And my hesitation with that is that we're going to give them more street cred. If you guys show up with your jackets on, everyone else is going to go, "Holy shit, they're getting checked by GCU, they're serious," and that's the last thing we want to do with those kids. You gotta jack them up for sure, because they're engaging in criminal activity, but you don't want to give them any strength to what they think that they're already doing.

Willow's comment directly speaks to the role the police have in the construction of gangs through the labelling process that occurs when youth interact with them. The other youth observe the gang unit checking "those kids" outside of the school and in turn those kids' street credibility goes up because they are of such a concern to the police that the actual gang police are interested in them. The school staff and pupils see this attention, and it adds to the constructive nature of the gang as being "deviant and bad."

Several participants spoke about how the various police gang units may be giving more “street cred” to gangsters and in turn, play a role in the construction of the gang. Frank stated,

Suppression? That I think we are doing a much better job than we were in 2001. Before then you know it was not so much, and now with the integrated approach that they are taking, is, that’s been effective in bringing down sort of like the bravado of these guys. They used to run around and piss on anybody, like the mafia, and nobody says anything ‘because “Those guys are in a gang. Cannot say shit to them.” . . . With the whole Barwatch initiatives and, you know, pull the cars over, you know, any Escalade, any big car, pull it over! I think that was huge. So in that regard, I think we are doing much better than we were 10 years ago.

Frank’s comments provide a perspective that the police may have an impact on the glamorization of the gang lifestyle as a recruitment tool, in that the police are removing some of the perks to being a BC gangster. However, Fraser, another former gang member, disagreed that the police efforts were effective:

On the current gang situation? Yes and no, because here’s the thing: you as police officers, you guys have a job to make sure, to suppress the gangs. The gangs and the gangsters have a job to go work their way around you and break and bend all the rules and everything you guys do to go against it. And again, cat and mouse that realistically has no end until the day they completely legalize everything that’s criminally active that gangsters do, from drugs to whatever. The gang life will always be there, and even if you take away the drugs and you legalize them and everything, there is always in some way, shape or form gangsters are going to be around, whether they are loaning money or whether they are extorting money. You can never take the criminal aspect away from it. I applaud you guys for the amount of work you guys are doing, but you guys, the numbers you guys boast to the public is great, but in all honesty, every gangster in town laughs at it.

Flanagan suggested that in his experience as a gang member police have always been reactionary and not capable of being on top of the gang issues,

I think the police, once they make the move, they pounce like wolverines, so yeah once, you know, and currently with everything, our huge fallout in two thousand nine, it was a huge learning curve, sorry to say, even for police.

Finn discussed the role of gang suppression and how his gang lifestyle past still resulted at least from his perspective in additional police attention. He stated,

In January I was going to the airport at 5:30 in the morning to go to work for a site, and I had, I was driving my wife’s car, I was coming from the office, I had a bag in the front seat with all my clothes and stuff like that, I was pulled over by a police officer, and he broke my balls for half an hour, I almost missed my flight, and it was about my past and people and now all of this and that, and I said you know, like, and I said to him, you know I hope this is the attention that you put out on everybody.

Wendy, a youth worker, discusses the disconnect even within a police agency about the construction of gangs when she stated,

A lot of the patrol members you know said “Oh no, there’s no gangs,” but the intelligence guys said, “Oh no, there is.” And they were able to corroborate what I was hearing and seeing just in my little efforts of research.

These comments are illustrative of the construction of a phenomenon, including within a police agency. Some officers perceive a gang problem to exist while others within the same agency dismiss such an assertion. Further, in this case, the patrol or front line officers are dismissing the construction of groups within their community as a gang, while the intelligence officer of the same community is asserting the claim.

Wendy described the impact of the Victoria Gang Ejection Program when she described the recent experience of one of her clients,

I have a kid, actually, who I saw yesterday. He asked me why he was on Barwatch, and I said, “I don’t know,” and he was at Earl’s, actually, and was told to leave because he was on Barwatch. . . . He was quite upset.

Wanda, another youth worker, is critical of the way gang programs are administered when she stated,

Abbotsford Police, Prince George and I think Vancouver got some funding. Having said that, it’s not committed funding, it’s throwing some money here and there and seeing what sticks, it’s not consistent, we’re, as far as we know, out of a job in September, so it’s a very politically-driven issue and, for prevention piece, and I don’t think there’s a lot of appetite all the time in the public for supporting the prevention as much as suppression.

Gangs in BC are neither geographically centred nor mono-ethnic.

Research participants recall that gangs in BC have been historically geographically centred and dominated by various ethnic groups. For example, Paco, a senior police officer, stated, “La Razza was a bunch of Hispanic kids that hung out at China Creek Park, and the Los Cholos hung around Tupper High School. The East Van Saints were based around Gladstone Community Centre.” Pepe, a senior police officer, also recalled geographical characteristics:

East Van Saints, localized around Gladstone High School, Tech, Windermere, Tupper a little bit. Primarily started up to oppose Los Diablos and more on social than criminal reasons, [they] did not like them claiming territory over that area, did not like them claiming their girlfriends, did not like all of the publicity and favourable chat around school that Los Diablos got, and so they wanted to stand up to it. Some of them were second generation with their parents being Clark Parkers, so you know they had that

East Van cross mentality about, you know, my neighbourhood and we're not afraid to use muscle.

Flanagan, who is in his late 40s, further confirmed the historical presence of geographical gangs in Vancouver:

You know, the Templeton Boys, Burnaby Boys, we were all parkers, and our gradual escalation was—you know, I was watching guys be made, I was watching guys making millions, I was watching guys being successful in the lifestyle, I was part of, you know, what I grew up in.

Wendy, a youth worker, suggested, "Yeah, it's changed, because a few years ago it was geographical, like we had an Esquimalt gang." Zone isolated and ethnically dominated gang activity, hallmarked by the regional names of the crime groups is historically evident. However, in recent years, BC gangs have become increasingly less geographically localized and restricted. Fred, in response to the question of geographic limitations in BC laughed and stated, I operated in Langley, Coquitlam [two cities 35 kilometres from each other], anywhere I wanted, or anywhere they wanted to meet. The only fear is, and that only thing that I could say is a definable commodity in terms of possession of ownership, would actually be people. Customer base. Guys would shoot each other over stealing each other's customers. There was also quite a bit of violence over SIM cards. If I have an active drug line, I can make sales all day and all night.

Winona, a youth worker, also provided evidence on the absence of zone isolated gangs in BC in her statement,

This place is not Los Angeles. I mean, I have spent a lot of time in L.A. because I have family down there, and there are large parts of L.A. that I would never go to, ever. Not even in a car. Because I'm not—it's going to be obvious when I get there that I'm not—one of these things is not like the other, like, you know? But I don't feel that here [in Vancouver].

Winona provided further insights on the mobility of the youth in our community when she explained,

And you know how mobile kids are, has to do with their transit system and Sky Trains. You know, kids before, 20-odd years ago, they could not get to Surrey in eight minutes or less. Now they can. . . . And that's made a huge difference in how mobile kids are. I have kids that are Caucasian coming from two-parent families in good parts of the neighbourhood, and they're hanging out with kids that are really in impoverished neighbourhoods in Surrey getting into a ton of trouble.

Wanda, a youth worker, added,

So we are, we deal with Surrey, but we can see how it affects a larger area, whereas I think traditional gangs that you see in other places in North America, they stay in their little zones and pockets and they do not have the mobility, they do not want to connect with other gang members. [It's] not about business, like it is here. [In the US] it is about I am red or I am blue or I am, you know.

Traditional territorial lines and boundaries of gangs appear to have been eroded by way of increasing mobility and community diversity. Winona dismissed ethnicity as an essential factor for gang identity.

It's got nothing to do with ethnicity. . . . It's the way they [gang members] carry themselves, it's how they dress, it's that they all wear the same thing, it's the neck tattoos, the forearm tattoos, the chains, it's that, it's physically what their appearance is. It has nothing to do with their ethnicity. And the way they carry themselves, you can just, you can feel it. There's something about them, they just scream "entitlement."

Paula, a police analyst, also rejected the ethnicity of the gangs as a primary function when she stated,

I think there's a huge cross-pollination of different ethnic groups right now, and we see that a lot of our crime groups are multi-ethnic, right, so I don't think that's an issue. I don't think there's necessarily a difference in terms of how law enforcement is dealing with these groups, but certainly in terms of their activities and how they become connected, I don't know if racism is a factor given that we don't have those territorial lines when it comes to race.

Despite increasing race tolerance within crime groups, Indo-Canadian dominated gangs remain evident in the makeup of some BC gangs. Payton, who is an Indo-Canadian police officer, stated this,

I believe that the Indo-Canadians here, who we do have a population base here in BC, specifically Surrey, they come from India and they have a desire to make money, be successful in this country. Now the parents that came here and wanted to be successful and make money and worked hard, they did it the legitimate way. Now these Indian kids want to make money, but they don't care how they make it, so they get influenced by other people and their group, and there is a lot of the high-profile murders that happened here in the lower mainland, specifically the Dhak brothers, and they were just, their parents worked all day and they took care of themselves, and they went down the bad route in life, and with other Indos, they see the flashy cars, the going out, the money they're spending, and it attracts, it attracts anybody, but they just think that's the way to live.

Commenting on Indo-Canadian gang dynamic, Payton stated,

There is a very large East Indian/Indo-Canadian community here in BC, and I just believe that there is always that desire to be a success and like Indo-Canadians become successful in the police departments, successful in politicians, doctors, and become successes in like all aspects of life, and unfortunately I think in the drug world, they want to be a success in the drug world, so they take that same high energy and want to be a success and make it ahead, but they put their energy in the wrong things. They put it towards gangs and drugs, and if their uncles are selling drugs or, it is easy for them to go, and unfortunately like a lot of Indo-Canadians have truck-driving companies and are truckers, and for many years, they were quite heavily involved in the drug trade here.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the overarching themes identified through the interviews. These specific findings around motivation and structure were examined in detail with subthemes as they provide the clearest evidence that the construction of gangs in BC appears to differ considerably in causation, structure, motivation and activities from other cities examined. Many people, albeit not all, involved in BC's gangs are often there by their choice. This willingness and desire to join gangs and risk death, wounding or incarceration, while there are many legitimate opportunities for success, is a characteristic of BC gangs not observed in other places where gangs dominate. Arguably, in BC gangs appear to be formed by individuals who are making seemingly irrational choices in life circumstances that appear otherwise quite rational. The basis for these choices will be more fully analysed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6: Analysis of the Current Research

In this chapter I examine the data obtained in this research, analyse existing academic gang research, and consider how my research intersects or conflicts with the existing knowledge of the debates. Furthermore, I examine how the construction of the gang has occurred in BC and what the potential implications are from this research. As this research is exploratory in nature, two specific questions arise: First, does the work of previous researchers provide relevant insight to understand the phenomenon of gangs in BC? Second, does the uniqueness of BC gangs warrant further study, and does this uniqueness provide evidence of the constructive nature of terms such as *gangs* and *organised crime*? What does *gangsta*, *mafioso*, or *thug* mean to the policy maker, the academic, the police officer, and the gang member? While answering these questions, I highlight how my research adds to the current discussion on a local level within BC. I also rely on my personal experience of working as a gang enforcement officer for over a decade and as a police officer for over 27 years.

I suspect that most qualitative researchers find, as I did, that the data collection phase of the research is the most interesting phase. People opened up their lives to me and told me their stories, and in doing so they also told me what informs their knowledge and assumptions of reality. Their narratives, in combination with the ethnographic field work, provided the data to assess how the gang is perceived and constructed from multiple sources.

The researcher who takes a qualitative approach, underpinned with a constructivist ontology and with an interpretivist epistemology, can examine how individuals construct a social phenomenon. This approach demands caution because while the research participants' perspectives are real for them, many factors may shape their perspectives, consciously and unconsciously. All of the research participants—and the researcher as well—are susceptible to previous experiences and claims by others that shape our view of the issue. Over time, the phenomenon in question becomes embedded into the popular consciousness with little attempt to check the empirical reality of its existence. The social constructionist demands the pause to examine the means by which all of these collective viewpoints come together to provide meaning to the phenomenon. In this case, the word *gang* in BC has been greatly influenced by the media, including US media; the police; academics and educators; and government and politicians.

Gangs and Organised Crime in BC Are Difficult to Define

The first conclusion of my research consistent with the findings of other researchers is that gangs and organised crime are difficult to define (Hobbs, 1997; Spindler & Bouchard, 2011; Richardson & Kennedy, 2012; Fleischhaker, 2012; Densley, 2013; Hallsworth, 2013; Harding, 2014; Silverstone, 2015; von Lampe, 2016). While conducting observations, I noted both gang-like behaviours and characteristics of organised crime within the same group. This indicates that a strict and consistent delineation of the two terms is not possible. This continues to be an observation within policing: Assistant Commissioner of the RCMP, Wayne Rideout, in charge of BC Criminal Operations, confirmed this ambiguity in the construction of gangs by recently stating at the 2016 Gangs and Guns Conference that “gangs in BC are somewhere between street gangs and not quite organised crime” (February 16, 2016).

In Chicago, Los Angeles, Hobbema, Toronto, and London, there appeared to be an understood difference between the terms *gangs* and *organised crime*. In all of these places, the officers I rode with described and pointed out groups of young men on the road that the police claimed were street-based gangs. The officers further described the more sophisticated criminal groups that engaged in business with the street gangs but were removed from the street operations, and these groups are considered “organised crime.” In BC, the lines are blurred, as if we have a hybrid composition of both. I consistently made this observation throughout my fieldwork, and several of my research participants made similar supporting claims. The police, even though they are a significant claim maker in the discussion about gangs in BC, are not clear on what a gang member is and is not. This inconsistency is not new: as research participant police officer Paco described, as far back as the mid-1980s the police were struggling to characterize the Lotus group as either a gang or organised crime. This blurring is a common theme raised by other research participants. The police, who play a critical role in the construction of the phenomenon, are not unified in the definition of gangs or organised crime, nor in the approach to suppressing them. Other research participants, for example, former gang member Frank, rejected BC as having a gang problem and preferred to call it an organised crime problem.

Frank and other participants further characterised Vancouver gangs as organized groups of otherwise wealthy youth, “hybrid pretty-boy gangsters,” who have no genuine economic need to engage in criminal opportunity structures. Indo-

Canadian police officer Payton stressed that gangs in BC were organized cultural groups bound together to “make money.” In addition, it may be that the construction of the gangs as composed of well-off youth may well allow for a broader social acceptance of this criminal adaptation as an appropriate pathway for youth in BC; a path of further enrichment. This is unlike other areas of the world where gang members are perceived to be predominately poor and marginalized, and gang activity is not a method of further enriching those already advantaged by financial security.

Frank’s comments support the typology of Prowse’s (2012) “new-age gangs.” Frank recognizes that in some parts of Surrey and Vancouver there may be “hood-rats” (street gangs), but most of the scene in BC is much more organised. This demonstrates uniqueness in BC in that most of the gang crime appears to be more organised than it is in Toronto, Hobbs, Chicago, Los Angeles, or London. This is an important distinction as it impacts upon the construction of the responses to the phenomenon. If a former gangster himself is rejecting the notion of street-based gangs as being the dominant feature of the constructed gang in BC, then the community must think critically as to how to respond to this phenomenon. Moreover, Frank’s perception provides evidence of the constructive nature of the word *gang*, in that if gangs were all the same without consideration of the local context in which they arise, then what appears to be a street gang in Los Angeles should be very similar in characteristics to a street gang in BC.

Former gang member Finn offered an opposing view to that of other participants, including Frank and Payton, who suggested a more organized composition of gangs in BC. Finn said rather that in his experience gangs were without a “common goal” and “very unorganized.” Once again this perception may provide evidence as to the unique construction of gangs in BC versus other places in the study—that in fact, gangs in BC may be best described as hybrids of criminal organizations and gangs, and that multiple factors may be at work in this dynamic. Throughout the data, elements of the unique cultural and economic makeup of BC are apparent in the construction of the gang.

In summary, it is evident that the delineation between gangs and organised crime is difficult to distinguish, and in BC there appears to be considerable overlap of these terms. Arguably, my research suggests that BC gangs may possess the same attributes as organised crime groups, based on the opportunity structure available in

the community at the time, and that in BC gangs and organised crime groups share many characteristics.

Opportunity and the Lure of Criminal Subculture in BC

My observations on the criminal opportunity structure known as gangs in BC may be consistent with Cloward and Ohlin's differential opportunity theory (1960, as cited in Williams & McShane, 2014) in considering how the structure of the community can contribute to the formation of delinquent gangs. Theoretically, where the community offers access to a criminal subculture, youth will adapt to this opportunity and learn to engage in it, thus producing "the ongoing forms of delinquent subculture" (Williams & McShane, 2014, p. 99). In BC, the "ongoing form" may be the loose and inconsistent connection of organised crime and criminal gangs characterised in part by the unique cultural and economic makeup of BC's population. Furthermore, both my observations and my research participants' words imply the presence of a subculture in the community that makes it acceptable to acquire mainstream cultural goals through illegitimate means. As suggested by Plecas et al. (2012), the lack of impactful formal sanctions for the for-profit drug business may, in fact, contribute to the acceptance of the delinquent subculture. For example, the clear profitability of the cultivation of marijuana in BC, absent of further effective deterrents, reinforces the choices and adaptability of the delinquent subculture.

In addition, the individual choices apparent in the formation of gangs in BC as described by the research participants suggests that the traditional risk factors of familial involvement, marginalization, and low socioeconomic status are not strongly present. For example, Finn, a former gang member, stated that "90 percent of the guys . . . in the game have absolutely no reason to be there," that "they come from rich families, [and] they're bored." Instead, it appears that these individuals join or form gangs out of near pure self-interest; they make a rational decision that serves to maximize profit and satisfy hedonistic needs. This is consistent with the complex gang model espoused by Sanchez-Jankowski (1991), whereby gang members join for material incentives as a "rational decision to maximize their own self-interest" (p. 446).

Traditional At-Risk Factors Are Not as Relevant for Gangs in BC

Many of the researchers who have considered the cause of gangs have considered traditional criminogenic characteristics as a factor (Thrasher, 1927;

Cohen, 1955; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960; Spergel, 1964; Horowitz, 1983; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Sante, 1991; Venkatesh, 2008; Carlie, 2010; Siciliano, 2010; Densley, 2013; Fast, 2013; Gravel, 2013; Harding, 2014). Again this has been demonstrated not always to be a factor in joining gangs in BC. Gordon found this in his 1994 study in BC where he concluded that 50% of youth involved in gangs in BC did not have traditional at-risk characteristics.

The factors reflect my experience in dealing with gangs, from David Charles in that very early car chase at the beginning of my career through the next 27 years of policing. Many youth come from situations of poverty and blocked opportunities, but many do not. This was a consistent message by research participants, who rejected that gangs in BC were a product of traditional at-risk youth.

Most researchers point to traditional at-risk factors such as poverty as a major push into gangs (Dong, Gibson, & Krohn, 2015, p. 91). I did not observe middle-class youth involved in gangs in the research sites I visited. Most of the youth I observed pointed out by the police officers as gang members were from neighbourhoods of low socioeconomic status. The neighbourhoods I observed were derelict; there was graffiti, litter-strewn streets, abandoned cars, and other indicators of crime presence.

The perception of several research participants is that the traditional risk factors espoused as the source of criminal gangs by so many academics simply do not exist to the same extent in BC gangs. Specifically, Flanagan said that the youth he knows from his experience as a gang member did not face the same types of hardships that youth in other places face, youth who turn to gangs as a survival coping mechanism. Wendy suggested that many of her clients came from “white middle-class homes,” while Wanda and Frank both dismissed “socioeconomic factors” in the development of gangs in BC. Wanda further suggested that on her caseload, 50% of the kids were from nontraditional at-risk homes.

My research aligns with McCuish et al. (2015), who have cautioned on the transferability and applicability of gang research to other places. Both McCuish et al. and I found that neither racial segregation nor poverty was *perceived* to be a significant factor in the formation of gangs in BC. This finding was echoed through the words of my research participants, my professional observations, and my field research in London, Toronto, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Hobbema. However, as with my research, McCuish et al. are also clear that gangs in BC are different from

gangs elsewhere. They recognise, as does my research, the conventional viewpoint of why gangs form is different in BC (2015, p. 331).

Gangs in BC Form for the Purpose of Profit From Drug Crime

A number of research participants shared my perception that the for-profit drug trade in BC causes the gang lifestyle to be an attractive choice. Frank specifically commented that “weed is the lifeblood of this movement, and that is the reality, and we have to, we have to oppose it.” Winona described that kids that she worked with as young as 13 years old were setting up drug lines, and Willow agreed that the drug trade was about fast cash so that people could have a glamorized lifestyle. In none of the places that I visited did I see the same level of wealth on display by gang members that I have observed in BC. In BC alone, the Civil Forfeiture Office over the last 10 years has seized \$64 million worth of property from a province of 4.6 million people (BC Government-Civil Forfeiture Office, 2016); this amount indicates that crime, in BC at least, is profitable. Once again, this is evidence of the construction of gangs being different than in other places: research in the US and the UK has found that gang members are generally not wealthy. In the US, Levitt and Venkatesh (2000) found that street-level dealers made about minimum wage; with all levels of gang members taken into account, the mean wage was slightly above legitimate market alternatives (p. 758). In the UK, Densley (2013) found that while the gang members in London had the “bling” for street appearances, their homes had well-used carpets and floor mattress for beds (p. 61).

As J. Young (2004) suggested, in the post-modern age, standard criminological theories explaining crime may no longer apply. Both J. Young (2004) and J. Katz (1988) indicate that in the post-modernist world, the thrill of the crime or the seduction of crime may be a greater motivator for many people. This certainly seems to hold true in BC. Gang members here have grown rich through the cultivation, production, and exportation of marijuana. Through their business processes, they have connected with purveyors of other drugs, and now BC is linked to the international sale of cocaine, with BC being the transshipping point of the Asia-Pacific economic region. Drug profits are enormous with minimal risk, and gangs form in BC as a means to protect members from rivals and competitors. Gangs in BC do not form to protect neighbourhoods or the pride of a gang name: they form to protect grow operations, transportation lines, and drug safe houses.

BC Gangs Are Not Geographically Centred

The bulk of the research suggests that gangs form from neighbourhood groups (Thrasher, 1927; Whyte, 1943; Spergel, 1964; Short & Strodbeck, 1965; Joe & Robinson, 1980; Chin, 1990; Taylor, 1990; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Padilla, 1992; M. Young, 1993a; Wortley & Tanner, 2006; Vigil, 2007; Venkatesh, 2008; Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008; Descormiers & Morselli, 2011; Hobbs, 2013; Harding, 2014). In all of the research sites that I visited, similarly to what Thrasher (1927) and Whyte (1943) suggested in their early work, I observed geographically based gangs. In Hobbema, Los Angeles, and to a lesser extent Chicago, these turfs were highlighted by the existence of clearly marked gang graffiti. Graffiti used to mark territory was not observed in London; however, in all of the research sites that I visited, including London, the police had produced maps of the areas they believed to be controlled or inhabited by gang members. These quilt-like images were powerful in demonstrating the geographical territory of various gangs.

In contrast, despite my years of service in a gang unit, I could not say with any certainty that there was a geographical area controlled by one group or another in BC. There may be in select locations street-based knowledge that a certain group is controlling the open air drug market, but this is the exception and not the rule. My research in BC is more aligned with the work of Taylor (1990), who found that territorial gangs were not limited to geographical areas but were distinguished by involvement in criminal markets. Further, akin to the BC experience, Taylor suggested the corporate gangs were organised and used violence to assert control over criminal enterprises (1990, p. 4).

When asked about the geographical nature of gangs in BC, several participants described the mobility of gangs in BC. In contrast, in London, the police described the gangs as being situated around postal codes; the police in Chicago described children who had never left a two- or three-block radius other than to visit family members in jail, to go to jail themselves, or to go to the hospital for emergency medical attention. Wanda also confirmed this mobility that Fred spoke about when she stated, “Burnaby, Vancouver, Surrey, Abbotsford—our kids move around. They don’t stay in their city, in their block, in their neighbourhood, in their houses, in their apartments.” In fact, recently, three BC gang members were charged with trafficking cocaine in the Philippines (Teves, 2014), while two other unrelated

gang members were charged with trafficking 500 kilos of cocaine in Spain (Bolan, 2013a).

Geographical characteristics have in the past been part of the BC gang landscape. Through the historical review (see Appendix A) it is clear that until the early 1990s, gangs in BC did have some geographical basis. M. Young (1993a), in his examination, found sufficient evidence to conclude that gangs in Vancouver were situated around neighbourhoods or parks. Further, some of my research participants recalled geographically centred gangs. Paco and Pepe described Vancouver gangs associated with high schools, while Flanagan suggested some associated with city parks. Further, when I was a new police officer working in District Three of Vancouver, in the area of 12th and Commercial, there was graffiti on the fences and underground parking lot walls of the “Midnight Rockers,” who were a street-level gang involved in stealing cars and street-level robberies.

The gangs in Vancouver may have grown out of the connection to neighbourhoods, but now, however, they operate with minimal connection to geographical areas. One explanation for this is that gangs in BC, unlike in other places, are now commodity based. The gang lifestyle in BC is not predicated on protecting a gang reputation or neighbourhood but rather on the successful movement of illegal goods. Gang members in my research sites were geographically centered: in Los Angeles, they celebrate “hood days,” in London gangs are centered on postal codes and neighbourhoods, and in Hobbema a two-lane highway divides the reserve.

This contradiction and difference in the manner gangs are constructed in BC may be in part due to BC’s ethnic diversity and multiculturalism. I suspect that when Winona stated this “is not Los Angeles,” she was referring to the large populations of ethnic minorities living in certain areas of Los Angeles and other US cities. For example, in the 11th District of Chicago, over 85% of the population is African American (US Census Bureau, 2011). This is not the case in BC, where African Canadians represent less than 1% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2011) and few areas are ethnically dominated. There are some exceptions, such as the Asian population centered in the city of Richmond (55%) and the South Slope neighbourhood of Vancouver with a concentrated Indo-Canadian population (Statistics Canada, 2011). As a consequence of colonization, First Nations reserves are dominated by Aboriginals. However, most neighbourhoods in BC are ethnically

diverse. This lack of dominant ethnically based neighbourhoods may be one factor that explains why gangs are not geographically based in BC.

These respondents' observations demonstrate the uniqueness of BC and show a departure from the work of many other academics, from Thrasher (1927) to Harding (2014), that research reveals a connection of gangs to the neighbourhood. I certainly observed this connection in Toronto, London (postal code gangs), Los Angeles, and Chicago. In Hobbema, the gangs were separated only by a two-lane highway, but ultimately they saw their own side of the highway as their turf to be protected from invaders. Further, in London, gangs would go outside of their area to pose in front of another gang's landmarks and post a video on social media as a taunt. This has become such a cause of violence that the Newham Council has requested YouTube to take the videos down (BBC News, 2013).

While serving at CFSEU, my supervisor was being asked where we patrolled on a daily basis as the police chiefs who had supplied officers to the gang task force wanted to know what percentage of time we were spending policing their specific cities. The analogy I provided to him was that unlike gang units in Chicago and Los Angeles, who could "go fishing" in very small lakes, we had a large lake that we needed to fish in. Not only did we need to fish all over the lake, often it was important due to political pressure to be seen fishing in all parts of the lake despite knowing the likelihood of catching fish in some areas was considerably less than in others. In Los Angeles or Chicago, not only did the police appear to know exactly where to go fishing, they knew with some certainty they would catch a certain kind of fish. Certain gangs control City blocks; this is not the case in BC.

Currently, geography is not a significant factor for gangs in BC. Gang members in BC can travel and conduct business all over the province. In Chicago, Hobbema, and Los Angeles, I met gang members who described not ever leaving their neighbourhoods other than to travel to a prison or a hospital. Gangs in BC are very mobile, and while I was with CFSEU, we travelled extensively to smaller communities such as Whistler, Penticton, Kelowna, Campbell River, Nanaimo, and Victoria. In all of these communities, we were regularly able to locate and engage with local gang members and/or gang members from the Lower Mainland who had travelled there for the purpose of business, entertainment, or vacation. In one instance, we were flown to the small town of Cranbrook (population 20,000), as it is a 10-hour drive from Vancouver, to work over a weekend. Despite the local police

cautioning us that compared to what we were used to, it would be very slow, we made seven arrests in two duty shifts for drug offences related to gang members. In another out-of-town duty, we went to Kelowna, albeit during the Centre of Gravity Festival in August of 2012. We wrote more gang intelligence reports in those three days than we were averaging in a month of patrols in the city.

BC Gangs Are Neither Exclusively Mono-Ethnic nor Aligned on Ethnicity

Another prominent feature of gangs in places other than BC was that they were mono-ethnic. This has been a fairly consistent finding of many researchers (Whyte, 1943; Spergel, 1964; Joe & Robinson, 1980; Horowitz, 1983; Zatz, 1987; Chin, 1990; Padilla, 1992; Gordon, 2000; Kwok & Tam, 2006; Vigil, 2007; Grekul & LaBoucane-Benson, 2008; Siciliano, 2010; Descormiers & Morselli, 2011; J. Howell, 2012; Hobbs, 2013).

My field observations revealed the significance of ethnicity in gang development in the research sites. In Chicago and Los Angeles, there were African American and Hispanic gangs, and in Hobbema there were First Nations gangs. In London, there were African-Caribbean and Pakistani gangs, while in Toronto there were predominantly African Canadian and Asian gangs. In sharp contrast, gangs in BC are strongly characterized by multiple ethnicities within the same gang and are also multi-ethnic within their business networks. This is because gangs in BC are profit motivated; their focus is not on protecting their block, their colours, or their gang name. The BC experience is that gangs are concerned with the movement and sale of illegal commodities and solely ethnocentric business practices are impractical.

A review of the history of gangs in BC (see Appendix A) suggests that gangs were not always multi-ethnic groups. In the 1970s, most of the gangs were centred on new immigrants from Asia, and Chinese and Vietnamese gangs were prominent. With the arrival of the Dai Huen Jai, the street-level Asian gangs were placed in the position of being subservient to the older gang members, who brought leadership and control. Violence was discouraged and considered only as a last resort because the more sophisticated gang members recognised that violence brought police attention, which was detrimental to business.

The Hells Angels as an organization are mono-ethnic, as its world charter demands, but in BC, in following with other gangs, the Hells Angels are relatively loose with this rule. The Hells Angels in BC have had an African Canadian member,

as well as a Filipino full patch member. Their business networks have them frequently working with Indo-Canadians and other ethnic groups.

Other gangs in BC are similarly not mono-ethnic. For example, the United Nations Gang formed by Clay Roueche was so named because of the variety of ethnic groups in the gang. The Red Scorpions were primarily Asian until they combined with the Caucasian Bacon brothers, who took on the leadership role. Some groups are predominantly one ethnic group over another, but even these groups, unlike in the other research sites, will accept other ethnicities into the group and will also conduct substantial business with other ethnic groups.

Frank suggested this multi-ethnicity early in his interview, noting that gangs in BC are different:

Gangs for me have different connotations. It doesn't mean the kid on the corner, with different colours, it doesn't mean a marginalized group of individuals because of the colour of their skin.

Paula, a well-informed police analyst, also rejected ethnicity as a primary function of BC gangs as she finds “cross-pollination” in the ethnicities of gang members. Paula is well placed to understand the structure and trends of gangs in BC. Race is not a significant factor in who forms gangs or who will do business with a gang. This lack of a significant ethnic factor to gang formation is another characteristic that appears to make the construction of gangs in BC different from other places. It was only in 1994 that Gordon found that 85% of the gang members he interviewed in BC were ethnic minorities (2000, p. 51). In the current study, of the former gang members, 60% were Caucasian. This is not to say that in Canada we do not have ethnically centred gangs because many researchers have found this characteristic elsewhere: First Nations gangs in the prairie provinces (Giles, 2000), African Canadian gangs in Toronto (Siciliano, 2010), Haitian gangs in Montreal (Gravel, 2013), and Central East African gangs in Winnipeg (Fast, 2013).

A Unique Role for BC Indo-Canadians in the Gang World

In all of the places I travelled for field observations, when asked what gangs are like where I am from, gang officers expressed surprise when I explained that many of our gang members were immigrants from India, or their children, in combination with other ethnicities. This surprised the officers because in all of their experiences, except to a lesser extent in London, people from India are perceived as being law-abiding, hard-working, and, from a Mertonian strain theory perspective,

“conformists” and not “innovators” (Merton, 1968). In BC, the Indo-Canadian population is similarly very hard-working. However, a small percentage have been lured into the gangster lifestyle with the appeal of quick and easy money through the trafficking of drugs.

While Indo-Canadian people represent only about 6% of the population in BC, they represented over 24% of the gang homicide victims between 2003 and 2013 (Jingfors et al., 2014). The over-representation of Indo-Canadians in the gang homicide rate is unique to BC. In other regions, this ethnic group is not over-represented in the gang lifestyle, and the question then arises as to why in BC this is the case. This observation was borne out of the historical analysis and the field observations. It was not explored in the interviews in any great depth as it was not the focus of the research project, but it should be considered in future work.

The Police Construction of Gangs in BC

I suggest that in BC the term *gang* has gained popular usage yet may, in fact, be a misnomer in the sense that we also experience an organised crime problem or a disorganised crime problem. The role the police take in this construction of the word *gang* was evidenced when Vancouver Police Chief Chu announced in November of 2007 that we have “a gang war, and it’s brutal” (Bailey, 2009). This announcement was made to inform the public but also to place pressure on the government to improve funding to the police. It was not an admission that police were failing or that other methods (prevention and/or intervention programs) to reduce gang violence were not appropriate. This was a plea to the public that our communities were not safe and that the police with their current resources were powerless to do anything about it. When the community views its safety at risk, the public demands action from the government. Unfortunately, the most expedient action with the greatest political currency is more police. As Father Greg Boyle, Los Angeles Homeboy Industries, says, providing all the resources to the police to fight gangs is ‘as useful as providing all the money to the undertaker to fight cancer’.

This plea by police as a claims-maker in the construction of a moral panic is not new. Zatz (1987) found this situation in Phoenix, Arizona. C. Katz (2001) found it in a study of “Junction City,” and Ruddell and Decker (2005) found it in their review on juveniles’ use of assault rifles. In addition, academics have found the media to be complicit in this attempt by police to construct the gang problem in the news. This was found in Fasilio and Leckie’s 1993 study that concluded Canadian

media characterised gang activity as widespread and a threat to society (cited in Gordon, 2000) and was followed up on by Richardson and Kennedy (2012), who equally found the media overused and applied the term *gang*.

In the classic constructionist essay “On the Sociology of Deviance,” Kai Erikson (1966) examined the role of law enforcement, media, and the broader citizenry in locating and defining the boundaries of acceptable behaviour in society. He made several points specific to the role of law enforcement in the formation of social norms. First, he sets out that communities, meaning “all kinds of human collectivity, share a common sphere of experience which makes them feel that they belong to a special ‘kind’ and live in a special ‘place’” (1966, p. 12). Erikson’s general constructivist arguments are particularly useful in understanding the value and meaning held within a collective group, such as a gang, in maintaining the boundaries of a “specific territory in the world” beyond a “geographical nature” to that of a “cultural space” with its own “ethos” (1966, p. 12). Erikson stresses that the group space provides an important point of reference for its members to know who they are within it and in relation to larger society. Arguably, the value of the group space lends itself to the development of solidarity among its members (Durkheim, 1893). This phenomenon is observable in the formation and maintenance of gang-like and organised crime groups. From the inception of gang research, Thrasher (1927) equally found this to be true in his study, in that youth groups were just youth groups until conflict arose, and then the solidarity of the group in protecting itself caused the group to form a gang.

Following from the observation of a perceived special and valuable nature of defined groups from within, Erikson (1966) further asserts that collective group members learn about the “boundaries of the territory they occupy in social space” (p. 12) and, importantly, what lies beyond the margins of their group by the behaviour of the members of the group that link them together, even into further generations. When applying these simple sociological processes to the construction of deviant groups, gangs among them, constructionist theorists, Erikson key among them, argue that the most important definition of a group lies in the interaction between the deviant persons on one side and “official agents of the community on the other” (Erikson, 1966, p. 13). It is apparent in applying and further considering Erikson’s insightful analysis that the process between “community agents” in the role of police

can, likely inadvertently, assist in establishing a “unique identity and distinctive shape” (1966, p. 13) of a gang by several means:

1. Declaring a “war” against the behaviour, thereby identifying the opposing group as an adversary.
2. Establishing a “ritual” that dramatizes the difference between the group under scrutiny and that of larger society.
3. Having confrontations between the group members and police.

It is not necessarily an overt or plainly stated confrontation between the police and the deviant group that defines and communicates that group’s unique role in society; however, these confrontations are often highly visible. Take, for example, the formalized responses of the government and the police in the formation of high-profile gang units to respond to the deviant behaviours of gangs in BC and elsewhere. These highly visible police agents represent the “war” against the behaviour of the deviant group. Some plainly visible symbols of this war may be the distinct uniform, vehicles, and weapons issued to the gang enforcement officers. The words “GANG UNIT” on the uniform itself define, communicate and create the “we” and “they” distinction noted by Erikson (1966, p. 13). It may, in fact, be empowering to the deviant group to warrant special recognition as dangerous deviants deserving of a high-powered and formal response from official agents of the community. Further, the regularized “ritual” of enforcement, from the interdiction elements to court processes and dispositions, is evident. Interdiction elements in BC, for example, are numerous, with several communities now having gang units to bolster the efforts of CFSEU (the provincial gang unit), to which many of these communities already supply officers.

Also, police gang units in BC are often housed in larger organised crime sections; this is true for the Abbotsford Police, CFSEU, and Vancouver Police. While the uniform gang teams interdict with the gang members on the street, the larger organised crime sections engage in project-based policing using the Provincial Threat Assessment Program. These projects are based on assessing the group, the risk it presents to the community and its vulnerability to successful investigation and prosecution. When charges are to be laid, the police will further the construction of them as “the good guys” and the gangs as “the bad guys” by displaying for the media seized drugs, weapons, and money.

Another element of the construction of the gang in BC is the demonstration by police to work with one another and with other law enforcement agencies, such as the CBSA and US-based agencies. These gangs gain further notoriety in that they are targets of so many agencies, with many types of agencies involved. If the US DEA is looking at a local BC gang member, then that person must be of some substance.

Vancouver has also initiated successful gang patron ejection programs such as Barwatch and Restaurant Watch, discussed earlier in this thesis. It should be noted that these programs add to the construction of the gang. While the positive outcome of excluding gang members from the ordinary activities of social life is appealing, it is apparent as well that this interaction further secures the identity of the gang member to the community. Members of the public observe the restaurants that police enter to seek out gang members, which also communicates that there is a gang problem.

The establishments that participate in these programs are required by the Trespass Act to have notice that they participate. Although the notification stickers are often in unobtrusive places and are quite small, they are present. The presence of a sticker on the door of a high-priced restaurant is part of the construction of the efforts of the police and the community to combat gangs. It should be noted that these are community initiatives, and there is no pressure on establishments to participate. These establishments, however, are clearly indicating that they do not want “those people” as patrons.

In addition, bars and pubs use an identification swiping and storage system that patrons must submit to upon entry that determines if someone is inadmissible, and one of the categories is ‘gang member’. The implementation of these systems further builds on the construction of gangs in BC, in that the public understands that the problem is of such an extent that these costly and intrusive measures need to have been put into place.⁶³ Identification swipe and storage systems continue to identify gang members as inadmissible patrons even when and if they desist from gang activity. The police should be concerned that this will, in fact, drive people back into the gang life if they cannot shake how they are constructed and labelled by the police and the community.

⁶³ The BC Privacy Commissioner has approved this data storage system providing that the data are purged every 48 hours, with the exception of manually entered alerts.

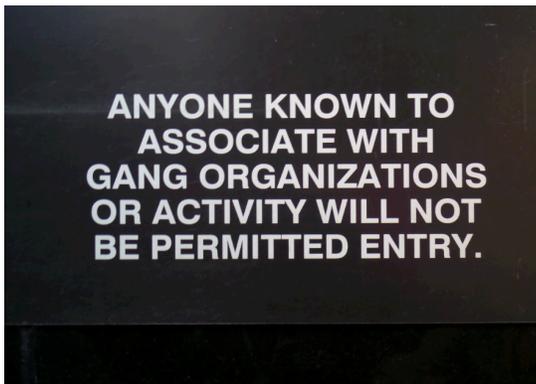
As Photographs 37 to 40 indicate, the Barwatch sticker, the Restaurant Watch sticker, and the signs that appear in front of several bars send a direct message that gang members are not welcome, and the police will be contacted should they appear in those locations. An unintended consequence of these stickers is sending the message to the community that sometimes gang members are present in these establishments, as otherwise, they would not participate in an anti-gang program.



Photograph 38. Barwatch sign being displayed.



Photograph 39. Restaurant Watch sign being displayed.



Photograph 40. Sign outside of a Barwatch establishment denying entry.



Photograph 41. Sign outside of a Barwatch establishment allowing searches.

Further constructing the gang as a social problem are the government legislative changes discussed previously which have the ability to segregate further and heighten the fear factor around these gang members. The neighbouring province of Alberta has enacted provincial laws to make its voluntary gang ejection program, similar to the one in BC, mandatory by statute. Time will tell if this initiative will affect legislation in BC.

This construction of gang members as more dangerous than other criminals does not end on the streets; the construction of gangs as a significant public safety risk does not end on the streets. Correctional Service Canada (CSC) equally constructs gang members as a more dangerous group of offenders, and thus in need of special treatment (Nafekh & Stys, 2004). Literature speaking to the impact and effects of incarcerating gang members in prisons indicates an increasing concern for “operation impacts” to the CSC (Nafekh & Stys, 2004, p. 1). CSC researchers pointed to the increased activity of gang and organised crime and law enforcement initiatives intended to curtail gang crime as directly resulting in a culmination of the growth of a gang-affiliated offender population.

Research participant Frank acknowledges the significant power and reach of gangs within Canadian prisons, from youth correctional facilities to maximum secure facilities. On warrant expiry, it is unlikely that the gang member has abandoned his identity as a deviant. This fact has obvious consequences to law enforcement when that individual returns to the community. Further complicating the reintegration process for gang members is that they often will not be able to transition from prison

through the traditional means of a halfway house as gang members are unwelcome in those settings. Following the murder of Rajinder Soomel on September 29, 2009, as he left a halfway house in the residential area of 7th and Cambie, CSC has been reluctant to place those with gang affiliations into halfway houses. Ironically, this limitation results in gang members, who arguably need the most support to keep them away from their past associates and lives, being released from prison into their own homes.

In summary, from the constructionist perspective, all of these boundary-maintaining conflicts may empower the gang by permitting it to gain a distinct and indeed a kind of perverse “valuable” place in the cultural sphere. The constructionist argument suggests that we are wise to acknowledge that conflicts between police and deviant groups continue to define the cultural and geographic space of gangs from generation to generation as an evolutionary process, subject to the shift of cultural norms. From a pragmatic view, what are we to make of the social process that constructs the deviant group by persistent testing of the boundaries of deviant behaviour? While it is imperative that law enforcement act in the interests of public safety through formal sanctions and a powerful response to limit the damaging consequences of gang-related deviance, law enforcement policy may wish to address what Erikson (1966) argues is a “delicate theoretical issue [whereby] . . . deviant forms of conduct often seem to derive nourishment from the very agencies devised to inhibit them” (p. 14).

Are BC Gang Members Different From Other Gangs?

One may be critical of my research assumptions in that it appears that I have had an expectation that gangs in Vancouver should be similar to those in other places. I may be criticized for taking a starting position that *gang* is a universally applied and understood term, particularly in light of the vast academic evidence presented in earlier chapters that demonstrate it is a contested term. Indeed, my assumption that they should be the same has been revealed in the research. This recognition is important to the discussion of how gangs are constructed in BC. Further, while I claim the uniqueness of the motivations to join gangs in BC, it should be noted that several other authors writing on the US experience have similarly found that status, hedonism, and glamour are motivating factors to join gangs (J. Katz, 1988; Short, 1996). The difference in BC is that many of the youth

joining gangs to seek those rewards have equal legitimate opportunities available to achieve them.

I could be criticized for comparing Vancouver to Chicago and Los Angeles, which are entrenched US gang cities, and London to a lesser extent in the UK context. In addition, hybrid gangs have been found in other locations, so the uniqueness of gangs in BC may be criticized as being overstated. The weakness in my thesis demonstrates the point of the constructionist perspective: gangs and organised crime are localized issues. The manner in which they are discussed and understood can begin from a global perspective of the understanding of the words, but an insightful discussion requires a local analysis. We must ask who have been the claims-makers, and what agendas are at stake? Does it matter if these groups are hybrid gangs, or street gangs, or organised crime, or is it more important we understand the phenomenon in a local context?

As discussed in Chapter 1, I cannot adopt a strict constructionist perspective on this issue. I have been immersed in this subject for over 12 years. I have presented to police executives, politicians, government, community groups, academics, educators, and the judiciary. I have been one of the claims-makers. Few people in BC have the same number of years of experience working gangs and even fewer who have taken on an academic endeavour to study this phenomenon. I have examined through my research how gangs are constructed in BC. I now align with the work of Lavorgna et al. (2013) in their determination that “definitions of organized crime depend on conditions found in the areas where the groups emerge” (p. 282). For example, in Chicago, police define gangs as “an associate of individuals who exhibit a gang name, recognizable symbols, a geographic territory, and an organized course of criminality” (Chicago Police Department, 1992, cited in Lovorgna et al., 2013, p. 277). While this definition works for the Chicago Police, this same definition of a gang would in BC be inaccurate, as several of these characteristics do not exist.

Law enforcement leaders are also claims-makers in gang construction. In speaking to the media about the gang shootings in 2009, RCMP Deputy Commissioner Bass refers to them as “unprecedented,” and the Attorney General Oppal called them “unparalleled,” (Bolan, 2009) but this is simply not true. It is evident from the historical analysis that BC has gone through several waves of gang violence. Some of this history has been public and shocking. The violence has seen running gun battles out of moving cars, a fourteen-year-old being tied up and shot in

a basement, a young man shot in the head while watching a movie, and shooting over the heads of 200 commuters at a Skytrain Station to establish gang dominance (see Appendix A). The claim that gang violence is worsening may be used as a tactic to convince the government to further fund gang policing. Shortly before these statements were made, BC had been allocated part of the \$400 million Police Officer Recruitment Fund for the purpose of establishing gang units (Canadian Press, 2013), and the Integrated Gang Task Force had 28 uniform gang investigators, one of which was me, added to the unit in 2009. This funding would be replicated again in 2015 when the municipal government announced funding for another 100 RCMP officers to police the community of Surrey (Dhillon, 2015), where 55 shootings occurred in 2015, and by July of 2016 41 shootings had occurred (Manglone, 2016). In April of 2016, the provincial government announced another \$23 million to gang enforcement in BC (Bolan, 2016).

In addition, the research participants' perceptions of the police in combating the gang problem further indicated the construction of the gangs through enforcement. The research participants were mixed about the police response. Frank believed the police anti-gang patron programs were effective in deglamorizing the gang life by removing gang members from the bars and clubs where they got to show off their ill-gotten successes. Fraser, however, suggested it is all for show and that the gang guys have simply evolved to be smarter and less obvious around the police. Flanagan believed the police were more effective today than in the past but felt the police as an institution are slow to react to the emerging gangs, inadvertently allow them to get a strong foothold, and hence are always reacting.

Finn described how the police are unyielding in their construction of someone they have identified as a gang member. Finn explained that despite the fact that he has been out of the gang life for several years, the police still treated him on a recent traffic stop as they would have at the height of his gang involvement. This is an important consideration in how the police construct those in the gang lifestyle. Equally important is how police accept desistance where gang members attempt to change their lives and reject their former lifestyle. Police officers appear to be reluctant to make these positional changes quickly, which may result in some gang members becoming further entrenched in a way of life they are trying to exit.

Chapter Conclusion

The common narrative by gang scholars the world over that gangs are predominantly poor and minority dominated is not manifesting itself in BC. Many scholars further argue that gangs are formed as a result of poverty, racism, and disaffection. Other scholars claim that gangs form as a result of poor education, disruptive and dysfunctional families, or issues of masculinity. Albeit exploratory in nature, my research did not find these traditional pushes and pulls in BC to be major contributing factors. While these factors are observed in some gang members, the difference is that an equal number, if not more, of the individuals joining gangs in BC do so by choice, not to escape limiting social conditions that swallow young men in other cities into the adverse influences of gangs.

What I believe to be the quintessential explanation of why gangs in BC are constructed differently was best provided by Frank, a white, middle-class kid going to university when he decided to join a gang:

Prestige, social standing, right? So it's not frowned upon to be a gangster in this city. It's actually kind of cool. People look at you, people want to party with you, people want to smoke with you, people want to invite you to their penthouse suite and be like, "I got that one gangster friend." It's almost a prestigious thing.

There is an acceptance of gangsterism as an available, even somewhat legitimized, option in BC that has to be effectively challenged. The larger community must reject this lifestyle and emphasize for youth the pro-social values of attaining success through legitimate means.

In all of the places I visited, I observed neighbourhoods where the majority of residents were law-abiding people facing much adversity. They were often poor, with limited opportunity, under-resourced schools, and unsafe streets in front of their homes. However, they were all trying to survive. In retrospect, I wanted to think these were neighbourhoods of "bad people" and hence the living conditions they experienced were a product of their own doing. The reality is clear: most people in these neighbourhoods are not gang members, and most of their kids are not gang members, but they are clearly living in gang-entrenched neighbourhoods.

This experience makes it difficult for me to accept the predominant social strain explanation for the existence of most gang members in BC. They do not grow up in those great tracts of impoverished neighbourhoods. They do not experience daily violence based on where they come from or the colour of their skin. My

research suggests that there is a general perception that our gang members choose to be gang members. According to the research participants, people join gangs in BC because they can; it is an option, an opportunity. In several of the places I visited, young gang members expressed shock and disbelief that youth joined gangs to be cool. Elsewhere, youth join gangs out of desperation and to find protection; youth in BC join gangs out of a lack of motivation to succeed through legitimate means and a desire to be seen as socially accepted. Several of my research participants described a good upbringing and a desire to make easy money with minimal consequence.

Critics of my work may say that I fail to address relative deprivation in my analysis of BC gangs. They are correct, as I cannot reconcile the social conditions that I observed in places like Chicago, Los Angeles, and Hobbema with the social conditions that I observe here in BC. We have many good schools, community centres, legitimate job opportunities, and minimal street violence. If relative deprivation exists in BC, for example, because one young man is frustrated that his BMW is a 2011 model and not the 2016 model, then we as a society are responsible for emphasizing certain types of cultural goals. I accept that we live in a capitalist society, but suggestions that our youth join gangs predominantly due to poverty, limited opportunities, and relative deprivation are not supported by the evidence of this research.

Several of the research participants shared their perceptions and were blunt about the motivations to join gangs in BC. Their comments mirror Frank's, noted above that it is prestigious to be a gangster in BC. Finn stated, "They [gang members] come from rich families. . . . They just want to be cool." Flanagan echoed this when describing his own reasons for leaving a successful business he owned: "Money wasn't a big part of it. . . . [It was about having] a sense of belonging, . . . identity, you know, that rock star status." Wanda believes from her years of experience and observations that people in BC are "not joining because of socioeconomic reasons or fear of harm, but because of the glamour that gangs appear to offer." Finally, arguably the most powerful statement was made by Fraser. After being asked to describe his childhood, he stated,

The most phenomenal. My parents, I love them to death, they gave me the most amazing childhood that any child could ask for. I have, there was not a single thing I did not have, there was not a single amount of attention that I did not receive from them. I am ashamed of my life.

Key differences between Chicago or Los Angeles, for example, and BC are the social conditions that compel criminal adaptation in gang-infested neighbourhoods. In BC, these conditions do not exist in any form on par to those cities; these young men appear to choose this life.

In consideration of the data from the participants' views and explanations, this analysis must move beyond theories of criminal adaptations to blocked opportunities or related theories that rely on need and deprivation as the factors that push youth towards crime. In BC, the data suggest that some, perhaps many, who choose the gang lifestyle do so for reasons not related to economic need or lack of legitimate opportunity. The participants in my research all described childhoods that would have allowed for success. For example, Finn was a university student and Flanagan a successful business person. Rather, the data suggest a process more in line with a cultural variation theory, much like that argued by Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958). Thus in BC, the seemingly unique nature of gangs in comparison with those of the comparative research sites is a reflection of the variation in our cultural makeup. In this regard, it is apparent that the "mechanisms of status, rituals, roles, etc., made available to adolescents" are part of the social construction of gangs in this region (Bloch & Niederhoffer, 1958, cited by Knox, 2006, p. 45). Youth in the prosperous region of BC generally, and in Vancouver specifically, where wealth is continuously on display, may not have blocked opportunities, yet the sheer ease of earning illicit income with minimal risk presents as very attractive. Additionally, the criminal status of the gang is not necessarily perceived as a negative, but rather an additionally desirable benefit.

Robert Gordon found in 1994 that 50% of gang members came from non-traditional at-risk homes. My research suggests that not much has changed in the last 25 years. I note that Gordon also argued that the "cool" factor of gangs needed to be confronted and reduced, yet this appears to remain part of the ongoing perception of gangs in BC.

This research, although exploratory in nature, does assist in the debates about constructionist theory. The objectivist believes that things in society are real, that they exist absent of interpretation, whereas the constructionist believes that the meaning of things such as gangs occurs only through the lens of interpretation. I am not suggesting that gangs do not exist in BC, that organised crime does not exist, or that either presents a danger to the community. I am suggesting that they are

constructed terms: they have been constructed by the police, academics, government, the media, and even the gang members themselves.

In closing, in this chapter, I have sought to demonstrate the value of my research in explaining and or adding to the work of other gang scholars. In addition, I have demonstrated the perception of the uniqueness of the gang in BC and specifically the manner in which the gang is constructed. I accept that we have likely constructed our phenomenon into a gang problem, whereas others might call it an organised crime problem; it is apparent that these are debated and contested terms. It is only in a localized context that meaningful knowledge about the construction of the gang can be acquired.

Chapter 7: Summary and Recommendations

This thesis focused on the distinctive nature of gangs in BC and was designed, as outlined in Chapter 3, to investigate three key research questions. First, how does the history of gang violence and police response to it influence the construction of the gang today? To inform this aspect of the study, I conducted a historical review of gangs in BC from 1909 to 2012 (see Appendix A). Second, how are gang operations and gang members in BC different from other cities? Do these differences inform the discussion that gangs are a constructed term? To gather data on this question, I examined social construction theory (see Chapter 1) and explored research on gangs historically and in different locations (see Chapter 2). As well, I conducted field observations in five cities known to have gang violence (see Chapter 4). Third, what motivates people to join gangs in BC, and how does this differ from motivations to join gangs in other cities? To answer this question, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 people who either work with gang members or were former gang members in BC (see Chapter 5).

This thesis adds to the debates on several accounts. First, although gangs in BC included an element of traditional at-risk youths, the known social determinants of crime, poverty, and marginalization, in particular, were not present for all those involved in gangs. This was evident from the declarations of former gang members, youth workers, and police officers. Moreover, my field observations supported this in the notable deterioration of neighbourhood social cohesion and safety in all five research sites compared to where the former gang members in my work location originate. From Thrasher (1927) to Klein (1971), to Decker and Van Winkle (1996), to Hallsworth and Silverstone (2009), research suggests similarities in gang members of deprivation and marginalization. On the contrary, my research has broken free of stereotypical conclusions and identified young, non-marginalised men who join gangs in BC. A more concise determination of the extent to which this non-stereotypical gang member is prevalent in the BC context requires further research; thus I suggest that it would be beneficial to policing policy and practise not only to disseminate these findings but also to explore this matter further.

It is important to note that as part of a professional doctorate, my observations and experiences as a police officer have set the overall context of the thesis, and present a methodological strength by way of insider access. Approximately 245 hours were spent in field observations in Chicago, London,

Hobbema, Los Angeles, and Toronto. I note that the hours were not evenly distributed between each site, but were based on whatever negotiated access and goodwill could get me into the seat of a gang officer's police car. Nonetheless, my time in these communities was sufficient to make meaningful observations as detailed in this thesis. I believe my professional reputation, the reputation of the Vancouver Police, and that of the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit, and further, the uniqueness of a "copper" working on a doctorate likely opened doors that are most often closed to academics. Thus this research approach is uncommon and consequently valuable in its perspective and method. The research experience was immensely educational on a professional level, as I stood by men and women whose daily duties focused on the policing of gangs in not only incredibly challenging places as in Chicago where racial tensions run dangerously high and where the composition of the gang environment differed in almost every regard from that of BC. The educational value of this field work leads me to recommend the experience of cross-jurisdictional observation to other gang officers. This can serve to inform us better of the differences in environments where gangs take forms unlike those we encounter in our working environments, where the term "gang" may in practicality mean substantially different things.

The interviews conducted were rich with data, which has transformed my own knowledge and will contribute significantly to the scholarly literature on gangs. At this time, I have found that academic literature on gangs in BC is woefully inadequate. These interviews can further contribute to professional training for policing and other public safety professions. I am grateful to the research participants who opened up and shared their stories and journeys with me. It was obviously a challenge for former gang members to speak to their former nemesis about their actions. This was a real gift for these participants to give me, and through their evident trust they are also giving back to the community so that their choices can be examined for research purposes. I say "choices" because while this research is not sufficiently focused enough to lay firm claims in the debates of rational choice theory and gang life, it was evident from the former gang members interviewed that their accounts indicated consideration of a deviant economic cost-benefit analysis.

The following recommendations are presented as tools, to inform policy makers, police officers, social workers, and gang youth outreach workers. I offer recommendations mostly for policing practice, but these ideas will likely have some

value to other criminal justice practitioners and outreach and social workers. When claims-makers and community members speak of gangs in BC, it is important that we appreciate and understand their distinguishing characteristics so that ultimately, when we identify solutions, they can be applied effectively to the BC context to reduce—or even eliminate—gang activity.

Recommendation One: Consider the Differences Present in the BC Context When Devising Police and Community Responses

The social construction of gangs is such that society, whether in Canada, the US, or the UK, tends to view them as having a static nature or a predictable, expected set of characteristics. The overall conclusion of this research, rather, is that we must see the “gang” as highly dynamic. Its characteristics are largely a reflection of the society in which it arises. Time and place are essential considerations in appreciating the differences between gangs. Thus, no one traditional theoretical approach, accounting, or tactic can fully capture the definition, function, or effective social policy response to gang crime. Gangs in BC must be defined and confronted in light of such a perspective as explored in this thesis.

Gangs in BC have similarities to gangs in other locations but are characterized by some distinct differences particularly important to the development of public policy in response. This research examined the views of those who have experienced the gang lifestyle and those who work to prevent and intervene in gang violence and whose duty it is to suppress gangs and their violence. The research further explored what drives the formation, membership, and the evident characteristics of gangs in BC in comparison to other locations, as observed in London, England; Alberta and Toronto, Canada; and in Chicago and Los Angeles, USA. The operational definition of a gang is challenged in this thesis with evidence emerging that gangs in BC also operate like organised crime, with a distinct overall hybrid of the two entities.

Recommendation Two: Design Policies and Programs to Recognise the Different Motivations for Joining Gangs in BC

Gangs in BC appear to be constructed differently in relation to local, opportunity-based conditions and as such police and community responses need to consider these differences. This research demonstrates that the motivation for joining gangs and the daily activities of BC gang members differs from those in the other research sites. Despite the fact that other researchers and academics in BC have

concluded that new members are primarily recruited into gangs, my research and personal experience of being a police officer for over a quarter of a century and a gang squad officer for over a decade do not fully support those findings. The research participants did not consistently describe the traditional pushes or pulls into gangs, including recruitment. Rather, they indicated rational choices to seek out and join gangs based on the ability to make quick money and enjoy a lifestyle of hedonism and decadence. The perceptions expressed clearly rejected the conventional construction of the gang(sta) experience. If these traditional pushes and pulls are variable, and not the primary reason for gang formation, then the community in response must effectively educate our youth of the real consequences of choosing the gangster lifestyle—among them, death, violence, and incarceration. My recommendations for policing practise and community responses are intended to engage in a broad educational process to challengee the assumptions made about gangs in BC.

Recommendation Three: Address the Motivations to Join Gangs in Educational Programs

Prevention and intervention-based educational programs in BC must be designed in a manner that recognises the differences in motivations for joining gangs, rather than assuming those of other times and places. Findings from this research suggest that youth are not joining gangs in BC because they need to protect their block from invading gang members; they are joining gang consortiums for the sake of a profitable commodity-based illegal trade. Drugs are the lifeblood of gangs in BC. Our proximity to Mexico and the cartels; our ability to grow large quantities of high-grade marijuana; our lax sentencing laws for cultivation, importation, and exportation; and finally our open border with the US and proximity to the Pacific Rim make BC a sound transnational shipping point for the international drug trade.

The central role that drugs appear to play in the formation of gangs in BC requires us to consider either alternative non-punitive means to address this factor or a polar opposite approach: those who engage in these gang-like behaviours for the purpose of illegal commodity transactions must face much stiffer consequences so that the hedonistic calculation makes gang life less attractive. Either of these alternatives is likely to present as highly controversial public policy responses to a significant source of a criminal enterprise. Further strategic and purposeful research

on the extent and role of drug trafficking in the gang landscape is needed, as it appears to be much more of a significant draw to gangs than in other places.

Recommendation Four: Employ the Terms ‘Gang’ and ‘Organised Crime’ With Caution

The terms *gang* and *organised crime* are social constructions that have powerful connotations and social impact. Our society has allowed a constructed discourse to suggest and define gangs in BC, when we may have an activity that is better described as organised crime, and more likely, a hybrid version of both. This research has considered that gangs, organised crime, and disorganised crime are all socially constructed entities in that they mean different things to different actors. The claims-makers may prefer to call these entities gangs in BC, as it is a term readily accepted and understood by most. Regardless of what we call this phenomenon in BC, we must be alive to differences that exist between our gangs and those in other places, and my recommendations for police practise are reflective of this reality.

Recommendation Five: Conduct Further Research, Including Insider Research

This thesis demonstrates that practitioners can do meaningful research on gangs if ethical considerations and boundaries are established early. Practitioners should be encouraged to involve themselves in research, and when properly conducted, some new and highly relevant data may emerge that can guide both current practice and future policy. The access that my position as a gang officer afforded me with other police agencies and with research participants was relatively unique and added considerable value to my findings.

However, there are limitations in the methodology, and the findings must be considered within this context. I interviewed only former gang members. I did not speak to current gang members for this research, albeit I do this daily in my work environment. Also, I talked with youth workers who indicated alongside police officers that they are influenced by institutional cultures that construct the gang. In the research sites, I rode with police officers, and I am a police officer. Thus, this study was clearly completed through a police officer’s lens, and this is to be understood as part of the methodology that guides this research. Rather than view this as a limitation, the positioning of the researcher as an insider not only made the interviews and observational experiences as they occurred possible, it also informed the analysis of my position of on-the-job experience. There is much more work to be done in this area, and from this particular approach. This study, however, should

inform the current debates of gang realities and geographic and cultural differences, even as merely a catalyst for future research by posing new questions and revisiting those of the thesis question itself.

Recommendation Six: Police Need to Understand Their Role in the Construction of the Gang Problem

Broadly speaking, police must consider that we are part of the construction of the gang problem, as discussed in this thesis from the social constructionist theoretical perspective and supported by my observations of the perilous impact of our being over-inclusive in what we deem a gang crime or a gang member to be. This police-directed recommendation is not specific to BC, broadly speaking: police have a tendency to put things into boxes of meaning so that they can be understood and managed more easily. My observations support that police in many jurisdictions, including Vancouver, Chicago, and London, are reviewing their links between enforcement action and the blurring of the organised crime figure and the lower level street gangs. The Internet, the dark web, and the globalization of drug markets have changed the nature of crime and crime control, including that of gangs and organised crime. Police need to recognise the construction of the phenomenon and be flexible in their approach to different crime groups.

Recommendation Seven: Make Policy Approaches Relevant to the BC Gang Landscape

Program implementation must carefully assess the uniqueness of the BC gang landscape to ensure relevance and applicability. This research addresses how BC gangs differ from the constructed norm, and as such we must respond to them differently. In developing policy approaches, communities often want to take what is working somewhere else and just transplant it into their community. Such an approach may be viewed as both faster and more affordable than the development of a new approach; if something is effective there, it is assumed to be useful here. However, successful programs such as Los Angeles' Homeboy Industries and the Chicago Violence Interrupters cannot be transplanted to BC with the expectation that they will be 'silver bullets' to our problems; we need to be more strategic and better informed. Nonetheless, some particular, site-appropriate programs may have the

potential for successful modification for implementation here in Vancouver, such as the Surrey WRAP Project⁶⁴ or the London GAP.⁶⁵

This study has demonstrated that Mafioso, gangstas, or thugs are a localized problem that requires tailored solutions. While I recommend that further research is needed in each locale, I would urge the exploration of solutions that others have utilized while considering the important elements of local social and economic conditions. For example, Vancouver Barwatch is unlikely to work in Chicago where most of the gang activity occurs on the street corners, while Chicago's Violence Interrupters program is not likely to work in Vancouver where street-based gangs do not exist.

This research serves to indicate better considered starting points in the policing of gangs in BC as well as the development of interventions to effectively address the needs of youth who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs. Further research must be conducted to contribute to our knowledge of the gang situation with specific emphasis on additional subcultures including the roles of females in gangs, Aboriginal gangs, motorcycle gangs, and other emerging gangs. The dynamics of the construction of the gang demands a constant and well-informed analysis of the phenomenon to ensure we are striving for current, accurate knowledge to respond to this issue that impacting significantly on public safety.

⁶⁴ Surrey WRAP is a program that provides services to youth to divert them from gangs.

⁶⁵ A British version of the US GREAT anti-gang program.

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Appendix A: Historical Analysis of Gang Violence in BC From 1909–2012

Notes:

- A “--” indicates that the information is not known, available, or listed.
- A “youth” is a person under the age of 18.
- An asterisk (*) indicates a suspicion (as opposed to a conviction or verified fact).
- “Van” is short for Vancouver.

Table A1. Analysis of Gang Violence in BC from 1909–2012

Date	City	Description	Name, Gang & Age of Victim	Name, Gang, & Age of Offender(s)	Description
1909		Gang activity reported			(M. Young, 1993a)
1920s		“Corner Lounger Gangs” reported.			Involved in burglaries, thefts and robberies with firearms (M. Young, 1993a).
1928		City Hall and Police Corruption by gang members			Shue Moy, gang member corrupted the Mayor and Chief of Police resulting in resignation (Dubro, 1991).
July 1944	Van	Rioting, shootout, and robberies	Two adults	Zoot Suit gangs	In 1944, tension existed between the merchant seamen involved in the war and the Zoot Suiters, who were too young to serve their country (M. Young, 1993a). This culminated in rioting, a gang shootout, and robberies that left two VPD officers dead (M. Young, 1993a).
3 1947	Van	--	--	Youths	Up to 300 youth from Kerrisdale and the East End met at 41 st Avenue and Granville and fought it out (M. Young, 1993a).
Mid-1950s	Van	Gun battle	--	The Alma Dukes, Vic Gang, and Zoot Suits	Gangs had a gun battle in the 1100 block of Granville Street (M. Young, 1993a).
1960’s	Van	Park Gangs		Grandview Park, Clark Park, Victoria Gang, Memorial Park	Gangs are geographically based around city parks, with youth fighting for territorial based conflicts (M. Young, 1993a).
1976	--	Stabbing	--	Red Eagle member	Red Eagles were involved in a fight at a

					Chinese New Year party and stabbed a Bak Mei gang member to death (Ennis, 1992).
Late 1976-1977	Van	Gang fights	--	Multiple members of the Ching Tao, Lotus, and Red Eagles	These three gangs had conflict with one another, resulting in several fights around Templeton High School and Britannia High School (Schneider, 2009).
Oct 1978	Van	Stabbings with cleavers and machetes	Multiple, Ching Tao	20 Red Eagles	Several Red Eagles, wielding cleavers and machetes, attacked Ching Tao members in Kingsland Restaurant at 987 Granville Street (Ennis, 1992).
Oct 1978-1985	--	Generally swarm attacks with knives and assaults; no firearms	--	Lotus, Red Eagles, and Ching Tao gangs	Multiple attacks occurred between these three gangs (Ennis, 1992).
Jan 16, 1979	North Van	--	--	Lotus and Red Eagles members	Attack between the Lotus and Red Eagles at the Stardust Roller Rink (Ennis, 1992).
1985					
Jan	Van/Squamish	Kidnapping and knives (murder)	Jimmy and Lily Ming, adults	--	The victims, who operated a popular restaurant in downtown Vancouver, were kidnapped and a ransom of \$700,000 was demanded. It was not paid, so the kidnapers killed and butchered them; police found their bodies by a rural highway near Squamish (Gould, 2005).
Apr	Surrey	Drive-by shooting	--	Lotus*	Ricky Choi, another popular restaurant owner in Vancouver, was shot outside his establishment. Choi was believed to be in the upper echelon of the Red Eagles, an enemy of the Lotus Gang (Ennis, 1992).
May	Van	Firearms seized: sawed-off shotgun, Remington shotgun, and a .45 calibre semi-automatic pistol	--	Two Red Eagles	VPD searched two Red Eagle's workplace, found weapons (Ennis, 1992).

Sept	Gastown	Fight	--	Red Eagles and Lotus members	A large fight broke out in Joe's Piano Bar (Ennis, 1992).
1985	--	Ongoing violence; firearms seized (revolver, rifle, and two pistols)	--	Lotus, Red Eagles, and Viet Ching	Ongoing gang battles (Ennis, 1992).
Sept 1985-1986	--	Ongoing fights; firearms seized (revolver with silencer); stabbing	--	Red Eagles and Lotus members	Fighting continued. In June 1986, a Red Eagle was arrested in possession of a revolver with a silencer attached to it. Later in September, the Red Eagles stabbed another male, and three weeks later they stabbed a student at John Oliver High School (Ennis, 1992).
1987					
Jan	Van	Shooting (murder)	14-year-old male Lotus member	17-year-old male with suspected ties to the Viet Ching	Gang member shot victim in the head during a movie in the Golden Princess Theatre on East Broadway (Vancouver Sun, 1987b).
Early 1987	--	Pipe bomb	Lotus member	--	Pipe bomb was thrown through victims' bedroom window (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	--	Car firebomb	Lotus member	--	In February 1987, a Lotus member had his car firebombed (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	Van	Attempted murder	--	Lotus	Occurred at the Asaka Club (Ennis, 1992).
Mar	Van	Firearms seized (several guns, including a .38 revolver); assault	--	Lotus	Several firearms seized from a residence and two vehicles in three separate incidents, including an assault in Gastown (Ennis, 1992).
May	Kitsilano	Gang swarming	--	Lotus	(Ennis, 1992)
May	Chinatown	Armed robbery, handgun	--	Dai Huen Jai*	DHJ suspected of an armed robbery in an illegal gambling den (Ennis, 1992).
Aug	Van	Assault	Lotus member	Red Eagles	Assault occurred at the PNE (Ennis, 1992).
Sept	--	Assault; gang fight; shooting	Multiple Lotus members	--	After a Lotus member was assaulted on September 1, a large gang fight occurred at Robson and Granville Street (Ennis, 1992), which culminated in a shooting outside of the Gandy Dancer Club in

					the 1200 block of Hamilton Street (Vancouver Sun, 1987a).
Sept	--	Shooting (murder)	16-year-old Los Diablos member	--	Victim was tied up in his home and shot in the head (Rose, 1987).
Late 1987	--	--	--	Lotus and Dai Huen Jai	A confrontation between Lotus and Dai Huen Jai members occurred where the Lotus gang told the Dai Huen Jai to stay out of Chinatown. This resulted in shootings, kidnappings, attempted murders, and many assaults. Some DHJ members threatened prison and police officers, which was and still is very uncommon in BC (Ennis, 1992).
1988					
Apr	Van	House firebombed	Lotus member	--	Victim's home in the 3400 block of East 25th Street was firebombed (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	Surrey	Drive-by shooting	Young male Lotus member	--	A young man stood outside a Lotus member's house and was fired upon from a moving car but wasn't hit (Ennis, 1992).
June	Van	Stabbing	Los Diablos member	Patooks	The victim, a high-ranking Los Diablos member, was stabbed in the neck at Queen Elizabeth Park by members of the Patooks gang, who were associated to the Red Eagles. This violence likely stemmed from competition in drug distribution (Ennis, 1992).
June	Van	House firebombed	Los Diablos member	--	Several firebombs were thrown at a house in the 5700 block of McKinnon Street where two Los Diablos members lived. They were not at home, but several non-gang members within the homes were put at risk (Ennis, 1992).
July	Van	Stabbing	Los Diablos member	Gum Wah	Several Gum Wah members grabbed the victim, dragged him into an alley, and stabbed his

					face with a screwdriver (Ennis, 1992).
July	Van	Shooting; firearms seized (shotgun, 9mm pistol, rifle)	Multiple	Gum Wah, Los Diablos, and Mara Latinos	Within hours of the above stabbing, a running gun battle ensued between members of the Gum Wah, Los Diablos, and Mara Latinos. At least six people were involved with over 16 shots fired, and police seized several firearms. Two of the shooting victims were thrown out of a car in front of a responding ambulance unit (Engler & Munro, 1988).
Sept	Van	Beating with baseball bats wrapped in barbed wire	Two males: a Los Diablos member and his father	Two Gum Wah members	(Ennis, 1992)
Sept	Van	Firearm seized: loaded .303 rifle with 17 shells, and a toy handgun	--	Three Los Diablos members	Retaliation for the above beating came two days later when police stopped three Los Diablos members circling Killarney High School and seized firearms. Several Gum Wah members had been seen leaving the area prior to police arrival (Ennis, 1992).
Sept	Van	Moving gun battle; firearm seized (.45 handgun)	--	Los Diablos and Gum Wah members	Members from both gangs engaged in a moving gun battle between two cars that lasted over 10 blocks in the area of East 41 st Avenue and Fraser Street. When police finally stopped one of the vehicles, they seized a firearm and charged four Los Diablos (Ennis, 1992).
Sept - Dec 1988	--	General trend of knives and bats; one instance of firearms seized (.38 revolver)	--	Lotus, Viet Ching, and Red Eagles members	Several incidents of violence between these gangs (Ennis, 1992).
Nov	Van	Shotgun round	--	Los Diablos members	In response to the emerging presence of the East Van Saints around the Nanaimo SkyTrain Station, Los Diablos members went onto the SkyTrain platform and

					fired a shotgun round over the heads of approximately 200 commuters to send a message of dominance to the East Van Saints (Vancouver Sun, 1988).
Nov	--	Firearm seized: 7mm rifle	--	Three Los Diablos members	(Ennis, 1992)
Dec	--	Shooting	One East Van Saint member and one Clark Park member	Los Diablos member	Los Diablos member shot an East Van Saint in the leg and then a Clark Park Gang member in the chest. Guillermo Antonio Rodriguez was sought by police and faced several firearms charges (Ennis, 1992).
1989					
Jan	--	Firearm seized: .357 magnum	--	Three Los Diablos members	(Ennis, 1992)
Jan	--	Firearm seized: .45 semi-automatic pistol	--	One Los Diablos member	(Ennis, 1992)
Jan	Van	Firearm seized: loaded .357 magnum handgun	--	Los Diablos	An East Van Saint member was threatened in their turf area of Kingsway and Victoria, resulting in police pulling over a car with three Los Diablos members and a loaded .357 magnum handgun (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	Van	Three drive-by shootings	--	--	These occurred within an hour, just before 2:00 a.m. (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	East Van	Shotgun fired	Gum Wah member	Los Diablos	The Los Diablos actively hunted the Gum Wah members. In this incident, two shotgun blasts were fired at a Gum Wah member in front of his home in the 6500 block of Sherbrooke Avenue (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	East Van	--	Steven Wong, leader of the Gum Wahs	Robby Kandola, Los Diablos member	Within 48 hours of the above shooting, the Los Diablos member attempted to murder the leader of the Gum Wahs in a quiet residential neighbourhood of East Vancouver, in an almost Hollywood-style of rammed cars and ambush tactics (Ennis, 1992).

Apr	--	House firebombed by five Molotov cocktails; vehicle torched	Los Diablos (Robby Kandola and a senior Los Diablos member)	--	Within 72 hours of the above attempted murder, Kandola's house was firebombed in the middle of the night and a senior Los Diablos member's vehicle was torched (Ennis, 1992).
Apr-July	Robson Street (Van)	Several incidents of large-scale violence, including a stabbing in June and drive-by shooting in July	Two los Diablos stabbed; Los Diablos were intended victims of drive-by	Los Diablos and other gangs	Of note was a double stabbing of two Los Diablos in the food court of Pacific Centre Mall (Ennis, 1992), and a drive-by shooting in July in the 1100 block of Robson Street (Ennis, 1992).
July	East Van	House shot at	Gum Wah member	--	On July 12, victim's home was shot with a .38 calibre firearm, and was shot again with a rifle on July 15 (Ennis, 1992).
July	Van	Two fights, one involving members chasing rival while armed with guns	--	Gum Wah and Los Diablos	On July 22, members of both gangs fought in Memorial Park; days after, Gum Wah members armed with guns chased Los Diablos member to a residence on foot (Ennis, 1992).
Aug	--	Firearms seized: three loaded sawed-off shotguns	--	--	(Ennis, 1992)
Sept	Van	Report of a gang fight; threats of using a sawed-off shotgun	--	Patooks, East Van Saints, Los Diablos	Police attended to Slocan Park for a report that a gang fight was going to occur between the Los Diablos and Viet Ching. Most of the youth fled prior to police arrival, but those checked by police were members of the Patooks and East Van Saints, who were seemingly there to back up the Viet Ching against the Los Diablos. The next day, three East Van Saints attacked a Los Diablos member at East 25th Avenue and Rupert Street. The Los Diablos member pulled out a sawed-off shotgun and threatened the East Van Saints members in order to escape (Ennis, 1992).

Sept	Gang fight; beating with golf clubs; vandalising and breaking into a house; possession of a shotgun	--	Los Diablos members	East Van Saints members	On September 24, a large gang fight occurred between Los Diablos and East Van Saints. The next day, East Van Saints members attacked a Los Diablos member with golf clubs at Windermere High School. That night, the East Van Saints attacked the home of a Los Diablos member in the 3800 block of Boundary Road. They attacked the home several times in the night by breaking windows, then physically entering the home and doing damage. Police arrested the Los Diablos member who resided in the home when they observed him inside with a shotgun (Ennis, 1992).
Sept	Van	Large gang fight	--	Los Diablos and East Van Saints	Gang fight occurred at Slocan Park (Ennis, 1992).
Dec	Van	Gang fight; shooting (two murders); beating with pipe	Red Eagles member; 41-year-old bystander; Tony Yeung (Lotus member)	Red Eagles and Lotus	At dusk on December 28, 1989, the Goldstone Bakery was full of college and high school students on break for the Christmas holiday. Just before the dinner hour, about six men, including Steven Wong, entered the restaurant. Three members of the Lotus Gang recognised them as Red Eagles. A fight broke out and a Lotus member, Tony Yeung, pulled out his semi-automatic pistol and started shooting (J. Fisher, personal communication, April 11, 2013). An innocent 41-year-old man was shot as well as one of the Red Eagles. Steven Wong used a pipe and severely beat the armed Tony Yeung, then called 911 and waited for police to arrive. Yeung died a few days later from his injuries. Although this was witnessed by literally

					hundreds of people, the police could never lay charges because they could not disprove Wong's claim that he acted in self-defence (Gould, 2015). Despite the usual unwillingness of the Asian community to assist police investigations, many witnesses came forward in this case (Jiwa & Watt, 1989).
1990					
Jan	--	Drive-by shooting	Lotus member	--	Five shots were fired in a drive-by shooting into the home of a Lotus member (Vancouver Sun, 1990b).
Jan	East Van	Stabbing	Gum Wah member	Lotus member	Shortly after the above drive-by shooting above, a Lotus member stabbed a Gum Wah member at David Thompson High School (Ennis, 1992).
Jan	--	Stabbing	East Van Saints member	Los Diablos member	Los Diablos member stabbed East Van Saints member during a fight (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	--	Drive-by shooting	Lotus member	--	A drive-by shooting occurred at a Lotus member's residence. These shootings were fairly regular and quite frightening for a community that had not seen this type of violence before (Ennis, 1992).
Mar	--	Beating	Los Diablos member	East Van Saints members	EVS members beat a LD member outside of his home (Ennis, 1992).
Mar	--	Two homes firebombed	Two East Van Saints members	--	Within hours of the above beating, two EVS members' homes were firebombed (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	Van	Firearm seized: Mac 10 machine gun pistol	The Russians	Lotus members, including Raymond Mateo	The CLEU intercepted Lotus members as they staked out the homes of the Russians gang ⁶⁶ on West Broadway. Police seized a Mac 10 machine gun pistol from a Lotus member (Ennis, 1992).

⁶⁶ Due to the breadth of this paper, the Russians had to be excluded from a comprehensive examination. They were a group of Russian immigrants who were very involved in the drug trade, known for ripping off drugs from Asian gangs, and were the subject of retaliatory violence.

Apr	Burnaby	Six firearms seized, including a loaded Mac 11 machine gun	--	--	VPD and the RCMP Emergency Response Team executed a search warrant in the 4300 block of William Street in Burnaby and seized. High-powered automatic guns were continually being seized on the streets of Vancouver (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	Van	Firearms seized:			(Ennis, 1992)
Apr	Van	Shooting	Red Eagles member Ngoc Tung Dang		Victim was shot in the 6800 block of Culloden Street as he sat in his car. His murder was suspected to be linked to his relationship with Russian gang member Sergei Filonov and their dangerous business of ripping off cocaine dealers (Hall et al., 1990).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Russian gang member Sergey Filonov	--	Victim was gunned down mid-afternoon at the popular Trev Deeley Motorcycles store on West Broadway. Two men surrendered within hours of the murder, claiming self-defence (Hall, 1990a). Police located their getaway truck within the 4300 block of William Street in Burnaby, near the home of Lotus member William Woo (Ennis, 1992).
May	Van	Attempted armed robbery; firearm seized (sawed-off shotgun)	--	Four Lotus members	The attempted armed robbery went afoul because police were in the area. The Lotus members were going to rob the Flamingo House Chinese Restaurant on Fraser Street at about 11:00 pm when police confronted them. One of the teens was armed with a sawed off-shotgun (Ennis, 1992).
June	--	Large gang fight	Los Diablos member	East Van Saints	EVS stabbed a LD member (Ennis, 1992).
June	Van	Firearm seized: 45 semi-automatic pistol	--	Lotus member	Firearm was hidden in the trunk of gang member's car (Ennis, 1992).

Aug	--	Several takeover-style armed robberies	Arby's, the Brinkhaus Jewellers, Cartier Jewellers, Swedish Jewellers, Burger King, and a corner store	Lotus members	These robberies all included the use of shotguns and/or handguns, and threats of and/or actual violence (Ennis, 1992).
Aug	Van	(Murder)	Dai Huen Jai member	--	Victim was found murdered in what police suspected was a gambling den in the 2800 block of Nanaimo Street (Ennis, 1992).
Nov	Van	Firearm seized (loaded 9mm handgun)	--	Dai Huen Jai member	Gang member was arrested with a loaded 9mm handgun tucked in the front of his pants during a traffic stop ((Ennis, 1992).
Dec	Van	Two shootings	Ken Wong and Gary Phan, Dai Huen Jai members	--	Ken Wong was ambushed by a man with a shotgun, and Gary Phan checked himself into Mount St. Joseph hospital suffering from a gunshot that he claimed was self-inflicted (Hall, 1990b).
Dec	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Kin Wai Lee, Lotus member	Richard Soulie (18)	Victim was found shot in the back of the head in a stolen car parked on South East Marine Drive in Burnaby. Soulie was charged (Ennis, 1992).
Dec	--	Kidnapping	Cynthia Kilburn	Several Lotus members (youths)	Several Lotus members were charged with kidnapping Cynthia Kilburn, the daughter of Vancouver business tycoon Jimmy Pattison (M. Young, 1990). Eight people faced charges, most of whom were youth and therefore could not be named.
1991					
Jan	Van	Hostage-taking	Herbert Fung, Dai Huen Jai member	Kit Wai Chan, Dai Huen Jai member	Chan and two other men went to the victim's house in the 2200 block of East 5th Street to collect a substantial debt. They kidnapped Fung and were extorting money for his return when VPD's Emergency Response Team arrested them. This type of violent

					and psychologically damaging crime committed against their own members reinforced the Dai Huen Jai's ruthlessness (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	Van	Armed robbery, high-speed chase and crash, firearm seized (semi-automatic handgun)	Brinkhaus Jewellers in the Hotel Vancouver	Four teenage males (two 16, one 18), all Lotus members	This robbery was high-profile because after robbing the jewellers, the gang members' stolen car sped through downtown Vancouver and finally crashed into a parked car near the Vancouver Aquarium (Ennis, 1992).
Feb	Van	Gang car chase (one dead)	Mac Tang (19), Lotus member	Viet Ching members	In what appeared to have been a chase between Lotus and Viet Ching members, a serious motor vehicle crash occurred, killing a Lotus member (Ennis, 1992).
Mar	Van	Violent robbery	Wah Kin Jewellers	Two 15-year-olds and a 13-year-old	The VPD Gang Crime Unit executed search warrants and arrested three teenagers after another high-profile and violent robbery at the Wah Kin Jewellers. These robberies were committed with the intent of maximising the amount of gold and silver taken, without much concern for the specific value of individual items (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	--	Drive-by shooting	Patook member	Lotus member*	A Lotus member was suspected of doing a drive-by shooting at the home of a Patook member. The violence level between the groups increased considerably with several shootings and firearms recovered. In fact, the Lotus gang was suspected of the shooting of an innocent bystander during a jewelry store robbery. The two robbers walked in and, without saying anything, shot the clerk in the chest (Ennis, 1992).
Nov	Van	Cocaine trafficking	--	Nigel Myatt, Conception Group	The Conception group is believed to have been involved in the drug

					business with corrupt VPD member Myatt, who was a decorated officer who was arrested and fired for trafficking cocaine. Myatt would seize the drugs and filter to the Conception group for redistribution (Jiwa, 1992).
1992					
Feb	Burnaby	Shooting	Dai Huen Jai member	--	Victim was shot in front of a house in a residential area (Ennis, 1992).
Mar	Burnaby	Murder	--	Sean Lee, Conception Group member*	A homicide occurred at the Royal Manor, and Lee was believed to be the suspect (Ennis, 1992).
Apr	--	Firearm seized: loaded .45 pistol	--	Conception Group members	Police seized firearm from a car driven by Conception Group members (Ennis, 1992).
June	Van	Shooting	Dai Huen Jai member	--	A group of men argued in the Bino's Family Restaurant in the 2200 block of Commercial Drive. Half of the group left and laid in wait for the other group (Dai Huen Jai) to leave, then ambushed them and shot at least one Dai Huen Jai in the leg. This occurred in front of several Vancouver by-law officers, yet this group had no concern for the presence of peace officers in uniform (Ennis, 1992).
Sept	Richmond	Shooting; firearm seized (loaded .22 pistol)	--	A Conception Group member	A dispute arose between a Conception member and a group of men in Richmond over their behaviour during a performance of the member's stripper girlfriend. The member returned to the party with a shotgun and proceeded to shoot at the house. A few weeks later, police arrested the same gang member for robbery and seized a firearm during a search of his house (Ennis, 1992).

Oct	Van	Firearms seized (AR-15, several pistols) and stolen property recovered	--	Several Dai Huen Jai members	VPD executed several search warrants on Dai Huen Jai members and seized firearms and stolen property taken from robberies of Asian businesses (Ennis, 1992).
Oct	Surrey	Stabbing (murder)	Jesse Cadman (16)	Isaac Deas (18)	Victim was walking home with two friends when a gang of kids set upon him. Deas stabbed Jesse to death and he died at the corner of Fraser Highway and 152 Street. The victim's father was later elected to Parliament as the community turned to him in support of a-law-and-order agenda, particularly regarding young offenders (Grindlay, 2012).
Nov	Van	Stabbing (murder)	Darren Ford (21)	Darryl Kirby (21), North Van Locals member	Kirby stabbed the victim to death on Robson Street, then tried to kill Charles Escobar on the same evening. He later faced second-degree murder charges and attempted murder charges (The Province, November 19, 1992).
1993					
Jan	Richmond	Stabbing; beating with pistol	Adult male	--	Gang members stabbed, beat a father with a pistol in front of his wife and children during home invasion (Middleton, 1993b).
Jan	Burnaby	Stabbing	13-year-old male	Los Cholos; early 20s	Gang members stabbed youth behind an elementary school (McLellan, 1993).
Jan	Burnaby	Stabbing	20-year-old male	12-year-old boy; possibly Los Cholos	Offender stabbed, punched, and robbed victim. Offender was wearing purple (Simpson, 1993).
Jan	Mission	Shooting with a semi-automatic gun	17-year-old male	Three adult males	Approx. 30 youth were gathered in a rural area; three men arrived wearing masks and guns. One youth was shot, another had gun pointed to his head (Birmingham, 1993).
Feb	Richmond	Machete	Multiple senior	Youths	A group of young men came into Mathew

			secondary students		McNair Senior Secondary School, attacked several students with weapons (Hauka, 1993).
Feb	Van	Shooting	Nobody was hit	Adult male	Man fired a high-powered rifle at several people at Killarney Community Centre (Middleton, 1993).
Feb	Van	Stabbing	Two adult males	--	Two bouncers at Kits Pub were stabbed (Middleton, 1993).
Feb	Burnaby	Stabbing	Young male	Six Los Cholos members	Six gang members repeatedly stabbed young man at Metrotown Mall (Middleton, 1993a).
Apr	Delta	Gang fight; machetes	--	--	Gang fight in hallways of a high school between two rival groups armed with machetes (Hall, 1993).
May	Burnaby	Stabbing	21-year-old male and 53-year-old male	Multiple members of the Court Hoods gang	Gang members attacked 21-year-old in restaurant; 53-year-old good Samaritan intervened, they stabbed him too (Austin, 1993).
June	Van	Shooting with a semi-automatic pistol	15-year-old male	Phouvong Phomma-viset, 18	After-school fight at Gladstone High School; suspect leaned out of a car driving away and shot into the crowd of students with a semi-automatic pistol (Austin & Clark, 1993).
Sept	North Van	Stabbing	Two teenagers	--	Two teens were mistaken for being members of the Underground Posse gang and were stabbed several times by a gang of youths (Hogben, 1993).
Oct	Victoria	Stabbing	20-year-old male	17-year-old male gang member	Gang member slashed a 20-year-old outside of a nightclub; community described it as being gang-related (G. Young, 1993).
Oct	North Van	--	Young male	Group of males	A young man was set upon by a group of males armed with knives and lead pipes in a North Vancouver school (Morton, 1993).
Oct	Colwood	Seized: Molotov cocktails, pellet and paintball guns, bats,	--	--	Gang fight between the Skinheads and the Punks (McLintock, 1993b).

		clubs, sharpened hockey sticks, two three-foot swords			
Nov	Van	Car bombing	Aleksander (25) and his brother Eugeni (26) Alekseev, members of The Russians	--	Bomb was detonated under the Alekseev brothers' car, parked underneath the Broadway Earl's Restaurant. (They were not seriously harmed.) The bombing was likely in response to the East End Chapter of the Hells Angels clubhouse being shot up in October 1993 (Walker, 1993).
Nov	--	Beating with wooden sticks	Two adults	Group of youths	A gang of youths attacked two off-duty RCMP officers, beating them badly with wooden sticks (Vancouver Sun, 1993a).
Nov	Van	Car bombing	Aleksander Alekseev (25), member of The Russians	--	A second vehicle belonging to Aleksander was blown up as he approached it (Bellett, 1993).
Nov	Small town outside Victoria	Shooting	16-year-old male	Three youth	Police feared that the rival gangs were battling it out (McLintock, 1993a).
Dec	Van	70+ charges including robbery, assault with a weapon, and unlawful confinement	--	Vietnamese street gang	Police laid over 70 charges against seven members of a Vietnamese street gang (Vancouver Sun, 1993b).
Dec	Van	Stabbing	Sean McCann (16)	Gang of youths	Gang of youths stabbed Sean in an unprovoked attack outside a convenience store (Jiwa, 1993).
1994					
Jan	Van	Assault	Two adults	--	Gang assault on two plainclothes VPD Gang Crime Unit officers on Robson Street (Grindlay, 1994).
Feb	Van	Stabbing	Several youths	--	Several young dealers with ties to gangs and the drug trade were stabbed in the Downtown Eastside (Middleton, 1994c).

Feb	Surrey	Baseball bats, machetes, iron bars	Several youths	Several youths	Thirty youths beat on one another at the Impact Plaza Shopping Centre in Surrey (G. Clark, 1994c).
Feb	Van	Gun	Jimsher Dosanjh (29)	Two men	Victim, who was a hired hitman, was shot and killed by two men in the 4900 block of Fraser Street (Middleton, 1994b).
Mar	Van	Gun	Michael Shimizu (35) and Tomasz (18)	--	The two men were found shot and killed in the 5500 block of Joyce Street (Hall, 1994).
Apr	Van	AR-10 semi-automatic assault rifle	Ron Dosanjh	--	Victim was driving on Kingsway Street at 9:45 a.m. when a car pulled up alongside his and opened fire (Bell & Fayerman, 1994).
Apr	Van	High-powered rifle	Glen Olson	--	Victim was shot multiple times and died as he walked his friend's dog. Victim lived next to Bindy Johal; police believe the victim was mistaken for Johal (G. Clark, 1994a).
Apr	Van				Task force investigating the killings, which began Feb 25, when Jimmy Dosanjh died, now numbers more than 100. Police say it's their largest operation since the Clifford Olson murders in the 1980's (G. Clark, 1994b).
June	North Van	Stabbing	Jeff Williamson (16)	Several youths	Victim was stabbed and almost killed after he and five friends were attacked by 15 youths outside a cemetery (Mall, 1994).
Sep					An 18-month investigation named Project Yuen Hop ended yesterday with raids in Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto with more than 200 officers rounding up 41 suspects, among them alleged members of the infamous Dai Huen Jai or Big Circle Boys gang (Middleton, 1994a).
Nov	--	Assault	Three adults	Hells Angels (Guy Stanley)	Gang members assaulted three off-duty Calgary Police officers who were

				and Nico Manno)	in town for the Grey Cup (Middleton, 1995a).
1995					
Jan	Van	Gun	Robin Wong (36) and William Gendron	--	Wong was shot twice in the face outside of a Chinese Restaurant in the 4000 block of Cambie Street; he died. Gendron heard the shooting and ran to the parking lot to see what happened, and was shot twice in the chest but survived (Middleton, 1995b).
Jan	Van	Gun, molotov cocktails	Family	--	A family that had just moved into a residence on the 3000 block of East 21st Street woke to gunshots being fired into their house and three Molotov cocktails thrown through a window. Because the family had just arrived in Canada two weeks prior and came from a refugee camp in Malaysia, it was believed the violence was meant for the previous tenants (Anderson, 1995).
Jan, Feb, Mar	--	Shootings	Multiple adult males, one adult female	--	Police arrested several gang members involved in violent acts over a six-week period, including four men being shot during robbery attempts and putting a handgun into the face of a three-year-old. When the mother tried to protect her child, the gang member shot her (Bellett, 1995).
Apr	Port Coquitlam	Stabbing	Jody Larsen (19) and four other young men	17-year-old male	A group of males jumped two other young men; Larsen was stabbed multiple times and died of his wounds. Four other young men were stabbed and a 17-year-old man was arrested for the murder (Chapman, 1995a).
Apr	--	Guns	Multiple high school students	Five Back Alley Boys (youths)	Police arrested five gang members after their string of 38 armed robberies of other high school students. These gang members would point

					guns at their victims then take them to an Automatic Bank Teller Machine and rob them (G. Clark, 1995b).
June	East Van	Stabbing	15-year-old male		Gang members stabbed the victim in the hallway of Britannia High School (Vancouver Sun, 1995a).
Aug	Richmond	Shooting	Ranj Cheema (27)		Victim was shot several times as he left a karaoke bar in the 8200 block of Alexandra Street (Chapman, 1995b).
Aug	--	Assault	Adult male	Multiple gang members	Victim was beaten unconscious by a group of gang members.
Aug	Van	Stabbing	Village Posse member	--	Victim was stabbed in the Champlain Place Housing Projects in the 3300 block of 58th Street (Vancouver Sun, 1995b).
Nov	--	House shot at	Paul Cheema, an associate of the Dosanjh brothers	--	Victim's house was shot at five times (G. Clark, 1995a).
Nov	--	4 drive-by shootings	--	--	November had five drive-by shootings in three weeks, beginning right after a jury acquitted Bindy Johal, Peter Gill, Raj Benji, Michael Budai, Phil Kim, and Sun News Lal for first- and second-degree murder charges of the Dosanjh brothers (Lee, 1995).
Dec	Van	Drive-by shooting	21-year-old tourist from New Jersey	Manjit Buttar (21)	Victim was shot in Club NRG at 99 Powell Street (Hall, 1995).
Dec	Coquitlam	Drive-by shooting	Two adult males	--	Shooting at the Steel Monkey resulted in one man shot in the hand and another man shot in the abdomen (Hall, 1995).
Dec	New Westminster	Drive-by shooting	Adult male	--	Victim was shot in the leg at the Paradise Club (Hall, 1995).
Dec	Nanaimo	Stabbing	21-year-old male	--	Victim was stabbed to death in a karaoke bar (Jiwa, 1995).
Dec	Abbotsford	Assault with a weapon	--	Bindy Johal	Offender was arrested for assault causing bodily harm, assault with a weapon, and breach of a bail condition at the Mardi Gras Club (Canadian Press, 1995).

Dec	Nanaimo	Shootings, stabbings	Liem Phong Mai (21, gang member); five others injured	Cuong Chung (19) and other gang members	Two rival gangs fought at the Top Karaoke Club, resulting in three people being shot, two stabbed, and Mai being stabbed to death (Meissner, 1995). Chung was charged with the attempted murders but not the homicide.
Dec	Vancouver				15 Vancouver bars form the original Barwatch program (Kines, 1995).
1996					
Jan	--	Shooting	Bindy Johal*	--	In the early morning hours, there was a shooting at a residence believed to be associated to gangster Bindy Johal (Proctor, 1996).
Jan	--	Stabbing (murder)	20-year-old male	17-year-old	Victim was stabbed to death in a gang fight (Vancouver Sun, 1996).
Jan	Van	Shooting	Two men	--	Victims were shot multiple times in the Hinton Chinese Restaurant at 850 Renfrew Street (Kines & Fong, 1996).
Feb	--	Kidnapping, sexual assault	16-year-old female	Big Circle Boys members	Gang members kidnapped and sexually assaulted a teenage girl (Middleton, 1996a).
Feb	Van	Handgun waived in nightclub	--	Paul Cheema and James Edwards	Police arrested Cheema and Edwards after Edwards waived a handgun in downtown Vancouver's Madison Nightclub (The Province, 1996).
Mar	--	Carjacking, shooting, stabbing	Woman, man, and child	--	A carjacking went awry when a woman was shot in the face and a man was stabbed (Jiwa, 1996); in a separate incident, a 12-year-old was set on fire during a robbery after he refused to give up his jacket (Vancouver Sun, 1996b).
Mar					A special RCMP unit is formed after a woman was shot in the face and a man stabbed during a botched car-jacking (Jiwa, 1996).
Apr	East Van	Stabbing (murders)	Three males	--	Three people were killed at Tulip Karaoke and Disco (Middleton, 1996b), bringing the total

					number up to 10 people being killed and 13 people being injured in karaoke bars since 1991 (Crawley, 1996).
Apr	--	Stabbing	One victim	--	Three days after the above stabbings, another person was stabbed at a karaoke bar (Times-Colonist, 1996).
Apr	--	Bombing	Multiple gang members	--	A week after the above stabbing, a bomb set by gang members went off in another karaoke bar, injuring multiple gang members (Kines, 1996).
May	Van	Arson	Blue Sky Bar	--	The bar, which was a known gang member hangout, was the subject of arson (Ivens, 1996).
June	--	Murder	17-year-old male	Three young females (two were 14), Latino Assassins	The victim was murdered by three girls while he was having sex with one of them, as part of a gang initiation (Middleton, 1996c).
Sept	Abbotsford	Murders	Five people	--	A mass grave was discovered with five bodies killed execution-style (Hall, 1996b).
Oct	--	Kidnapping	Randy Chan, Lotus	Bindy Johal	In December, Bindy Johal was arrested and charged with the kidnapping of Chan for an incident that occurred in October (Hall, 1996a).
1997					
Jan	South Van	Shooting (murder)	31-year-old male	--	Victim was shot and killed at a south Vancouver community centre (S. Bell, 1997).
Jan	Langley	Drive-by shooting	Two youths	--	Victims were shot standing outside of their school following a dispute at a local pool hall (Simpson, 1997).
Feb	--	Several violent offences	--	Bindy Johal, his sister Jundeep Gill, Balraj Duhre, Sandip Duhre, and Paul Duhre	(Hunter, 1997)
Mar	North Van	Shooting (murder)	Persian Pride gang member	--	Victim was shot five times in the head while watching the movie Donny Brasco in a North Vancouver theatre (Middleton, 1997c).

Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	Adult male, links to Hells Angels	--	Victim was found shot three times in the head (Middleton, 1997a).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Adult male	Two males	Victim was in a downtown eastside bar named Pony's at 313 Carrall Street, and was approached by two men who shot him in the face, killing him instantly (Moore, 1997).
June	West Van	Shooting (murder)	Ernie Ozolins, Hells Angel, and his girlfriend	--	The victim, a high-ranking Hells Angels member, and his girlfriend were found murdered in his luxury home (Middleton, 1997b).
June	Van	Shootings (murder), gang fight	18-year-old male (died), another man	Two rival gangs	Two men shot when two rival gangs met in Vancouver's Stanley Park to continue a fight that had started earlier at a busy Vancouver nightclub (Ogilvie, 1997).
Oct	Van	Shooting	Gurinder Khun Khun, known associate of Bindy Johal	--	Victim was shot several times as he exited his car in the 1100 block of East 62nd Street (Morton & Pemberton, 1997).
Nov	--	Murder	5-month-old baby	Gang member (male)	Offender killed his gang-boss's five-month-old baby. He did so in order to be put in prison and avoid a contract to kill him (S. Bell, 1997).
Nov	Victoria	Beating, drowning (murder)	Reena Virk (14)	Youths, self-claimed Crips	Eight youths, some as young as 14, and 7 of whom were female, were arrested and faced charges ranging from assault to murder (Chung, 1997).
1998					
Jan	--	Beating	Adult male	Four members of the Regulators	The Regulators, a puppet club of the Hells Angels, was the subject of police attention after four members beat a man nearly to death outside their fortified clubhouse, despite the victim's claim that he was actually run over by a bus (The Province, 1998).
Mar	East Van	Drive-by shooting	--	--	Drive-by shooting occurred at a house after

					the occupants returned from a night out at the Mars Nightclub, where they had been involved in a large fight (Kines, 1998a).
Apr	Van	Shooting (murder)	Male (29)	--	Victim was bound and shot in the head, and dumped in the 2100 block of Upland Drive (Keating, 1998).
Apr	--	Drive-by shooting	Peter Gill, associate of Bindy Johal	--	Drive-by shooting occurred at Peter Gill's home, which was likely related to his relationship with Bindy Johal and his acquittal on the murder charges of the Dosanjh brothers (Keating, 1998).
June	East Van	Shooting (murder)	Jimmy Nguyen (18)	--	Victim was shot and killed outside of his home at East 43rd Street and Semlin. He was killed as he exited his flashy yellow Lotus car (Jiwa, 1998c).
June					Attorney General Ujjal Dosanjh announced a blue-ribbon team will spend the next three months looking at coordinated Law Enforcement Unit and other systems for fighting gangs (McLintock, 1998)
July	Van	Shooting (murder)	Vinuse News Mac-Kenzie	--	Victim was shot in the head and killed in the 400 block of East 28th Avenue. He was the brother of Sun News Lal, who was acquitted of the first degree murder of the Dosanjh brothers (Kines, 1998b).
Oct	--	Kidnapping and murder	A couple	Gangs	a couple was kidnapped and murdered by gangs (Skelton, 1998b).
Oct	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Vikash Chand (26)	--	Victim was shot execution-style (McCune, 1998).
Oct	Van	Shooting	Peter Gill	--	Victim was chased down his street in the 1300 block of East 61st Street while a gunman fired 18 shots at him (Skelton, 1998a).
Oct					The Co-ordinated Law Enforcement Unit has been disbanded and B.C

					must start over in its losing battle against organized crime. The decision was based on a report on the CLEU conducted by a blue-ribbon panel headed by former deputy attorney-general Stephen Owen (Hauka, 1998).
Nov	Duncan	Car bomb	--	--	A car bomb went off in the small town of Duncan, BC, in an attempt to kill police. Witness Surinder Sandhu provided a written statement to police accusing gang members of the attack (Jiwa, 1998a).
Dec	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Roman Mann (21), friend of Bindy Johal	--	Police found the victim's body, who was an apparent victim of a targeted gang shooting (Jiwa, 1998a).
Dec	Van	Shooting and stabbing (murders)	Two young men	--	Victims were shot and stabbed as they left a Vietnamese restaurant on Kingsway and Glen Drive (Vancouver Sun, 1998).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murder)	Young Vietnamese male	--	Victim was found shot and killed in the trunk of a car in the 1300 block of East 8th Street (Papple, 1998).
Dec	Van	Beating (murder)	Vietnamese gang member	--	Victim was found beaten to death in his apartment (Papple, 1998).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murder)	Bindy Johal	--	Victim was on the dance floor of the Palladium nightclub, surrounded by over 300 partygoers, when a gunman came up from behind and shot the back of his head (Skelton, 1998c). Despite so many witnesses, the general consensus among law enforcement was that the quality of witnesses and video evidence were not enough to charge anyone with the murder (Skelton, 1998c).
1999					
Jan	Van	Stabbing (murder)	Pardip Grewal (21)	--	Victim was stabbed outside of Madison's

					Nightclub (Skelton, 1999).
Jan	Van	Shooting, gang fight (murder)	28-year-old male	--	Victim was shot in the head and died in a gang fight outside of Madison's Nightclub (Skelton, 1999).
Feb	Van	Shootout	--	Asian and Hispanic gang members	Gang members engaged in a shootout at 5:30 pm at the busy transport hub of the Broadway SkyTrain Station. With no regard for the proximity to numerous evening commuters, these gangs exchanged gunfire until the police arrived (Vancouver Sun, 1999).
Mar					A 24-hour national hotline has been set up to put the brakes on outlaw biker gangs (The Province, 1999a).
Mar					Beverley Busson was named chief of the Organized Crime Agency. The OCA will replace the Co-Ordinated Law Enforcement Unit, which had been infiltrated by the organized-crime members (Austin, 1999).
Apr	Van	Shooting	--	Adult male	Shooting occurred at a Vietnamese café in the 1200 block of Kingsway when a man came into the restaurant and shot at a group of men playing cards (Grindlay, 1999).
June	Richmond	Gun battle	--	--	Two cars engaged in a running gun battle in Richmond in the fairly populated area of Bridgeport and Number Three Road (The Province, 1999b).
June					Canadian and U.S law enforcement officials banded together for a 30 day border blitz that resulted in 39 arrests for smuggling and the seizure of \$2.5 million US in drugs, weapons and cash (Heakes, 1999).
Aug					Mounties appoint 29-year veteran of the force, Giuliano Zacardelli, to head the fight against

					organized crime (Dawson, 1999b). This is the first time the RCMP have dedicated an officer to that this level to one specific task (Dawson, 1999a).
Sept	Van	Murder	Bao Quoc Phan, Vietnamese gangster	--	Victim was found murdered in the trunk of his car at Union and Campbell Street, just outside of the Vancouver Downtown Eastside (Kines, 1999).
Oct	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Sing Cooc (23), member of the Kids Can Kill (KCK) gang	--	Victim was shot to death in a gang incident in a tea house. He was awaiting charges for attempted murder (Papple, 1999).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murders)	Hamed Hamidi (26), Majid Mason (22)	--	Hamidi was shot multiple times as he filled his car with gasoline on West Georgia Street (Papple & Vallis, 1999), which also killed Majid Mason (D. Moore, 2002).
2000					
Feb	Van	Shooting (murder)	Tuan Le (17, died), 19-year old, 15-year-old	--	Le was shot and killed as he sat in his car outside the Fraserview Hall. His passenger (19) in the car was also shot and survived, and a 15-year-old girl took a bullet to the foot (Nanaimo Daily News, 2000b).
Feb	Coquitlam	Beating (murder)	Richard Jung (16)	--	Victim was beaten unconscious at a karaoke club in Coquitlam and died in the hospital shortly thereafter. The police charged a 15-year-old boy with second-degree murder (Alberni Valley Times, 2000).
Feb	Van	Shooting (murder)	Vu Ank Kha (26)	--	Victim was shot and killed in a hail of over 20 bullets as he left a Vancouver nightclub (Nanaimo Daily News, 2000a).
Mar	Van	Armed foot chase	22-year-old Vietnamese gang member	Two armed gunmen	Victim was chased down the street in the 1500 block of East 64th Street by two armed gunmen (Middleton, 2000).

Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	23-year-old Vietnamese man	--	Victim was found shot four times in his car in the 8000 block of Borden Street (Vancouver Sun, 2000c).
Apr	Surrey	Drive-by shooting	15-year-old Vietnamese boy	--	Victim was walking down the street in Surrey with three female friends when a car raced up and fired several shots into the boy, critically wounding him (Zacharias, 2000).
May	Van	Shooting (murders)	Two adult Vietnamese males	--	A VPD officer on routine patrol observed a male slumped over in his car, and after investigating, found another murdered Vietnamese man in his early forties (The Province, 2000).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Michael Brar (22), bodyguard of Ranjit Cheema	Rival Indo-Canadian gang members	The victim (bodyguard of Ranjit Cheema) was shot and killed in the parking lot of a luxurious wedding venue after a dispute with rival Indo-Canadian gang members (Bolan & Kines, 2000). The premier of the province was in attendance at the wedding when the murder occurred (Bolan, 2000).
June	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	20-year-old male	--	Victim was shot execution-style (Vancouver Sun, 2000b).
June	Van	Stabbing (murder)	Akhil Oberoi (17)	--	Victim was stabbed on the grounds of Moberly Elementary School (Vancouver Sun, 2000b).
June	Van	Shooting (shotgun)	Several youths	Gang member	VPD officers were on scene at the Thunderbird Community Centre in one of the few housing projects that exist in Vancouver when a gang member shot several youths with a shotgun. Police heard the shots and ran towards the gunman, then took him into custody (Keating, 2000).
July					A special joint task force launched by Richmond school board officials and the RCMP against a youth gang has taken a big bite out of crime and

					violence in Richmond high schools (M. Howell, 2000b).
July	Richmond	Shooting	Group of men	Two men	Two men waited for a group of men to leave a karaoke bar before firing several shots at them. No one was hit (M. Howell, 2000a).
July	Van	Gun fight, firearms seized (four handguns)			A brazen gun fight erupted on Powell Street when a group of males shot at one another. Vancouver Police Dog Squad officers tracked the suspects and arrested four Vietnamese males, recovering four handguns (Vancouver Sun, 2000a).
July	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Brothers Gurinder Johal (22) and Bobby Johal (24)		Victims were shot as they left a fitness centre in Coquitlam. Gurinder died instantly and Bobby survived his gunshot to the leg (Culbert, 2000).
Sept	Surrey	Shooting	Adult male	--	Victim looked out his blinds and six shots were fired at him (Papple, 2000).
Sept	Van	Shooting	Vietnamese boy (16)	--	Victim was shot several times as he parked his BMW in the 1700 block of East 35th Street (Papple, 2000).
Sept	Van	Murder	Gurpreet Sohi	Hardip Uppal	Uppal murdered rival Indo-Canadian gang member Sohi in retaliation for a shooting that occurred the previous week when Rajinder Soomel (26) and Pramjit Gill (20) were shot in the 1200 E 59th avenue in Vancouver (Bolan, 2000).
Oct					Attorney General Andrew Petter said he's been pushing the federal government to change the Criminal Code to make it an offence to recruit young people into gangs (Grindlay, 2000).
Nov	Surrey	Shooting (murders)	Vietnamese female (17) and Vietnamese male (19)	Two gunmen	Two gunmen entered the Leo Cheo Restaurant and shot the two victims dead (Lovric, 2000).

Nov/ Dec	Van	Shooting	Vietna- mese male	--	The victim was shot outside the Tokyo Lounge but survived his injuries (Fong, 2000).
2001					
Jan	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Khalil Alkhalil (19)	Michael Naud	Victim was shot and murdered by Naud, who also sustained gunshot wounds during the encounter. The incident was believed to be gang-related and tied to the drug trade (Kines & Bolan, 2001).
Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	Donald Roming (Nomad Hells Angel)	John Rodgers*	Victim was shot outside of the Bar None nightclub in what began as a simple bar fight (Wilson & Middleton, 2001).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	John Rodgers	Gunman	The victim (Rodgers) and the passenger in his car were shot several times by a gunman at a gas station on Oak Street. Despite the bulletproof vest that Rodgers was wearing at the time, he died from his injuries. Rodgers was the suspect in the above murder of Donald Roming (Wilson, 2001).
May	Richmond	Shooting	Adult female (husband was associated with Asian gangs)	--	Victim, an eight-and-a-half-month pregnant woman sitting in her car at a red traffic light, was fired upon and shot three times (K. Fraser, 2001).
July	Richmond	Shooting	21-year-old male	Four men	Victim was shot in the Prodio Karaoke Bar (The Province, 2001a).
July	Delta	Firearms seized (loaded handguns and an assault rifle)	--	Four men	--Police arrest four men with loaded handguns and an assault rifle (Bolan, 2001a).
July	Delta	Shooting	--	--	Delta Police responded to a shooting at Gunderson Park during a children's baseball game. Seven people exchanged gunfire from two cars (Bolan, 2001a).
July	Delta	Drive-by shooting	Known gang member's home	--	Delta Police investigated a drive-by shooting at a known gang member's home (Bolan, 2001a).

Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	--	--	A group of young men dropped a bullet-riddled body off at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital. (Sandler, 2001).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	Bal Buttar, his associate Gary Rai	--	VPD responded to a double shooting on Victoria Drive at a hair salon, where they found Buttar shot and Rai shot dead. (BC Coroners Service, n.d.).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	Van Dang (27)	--	Victim was shot dead as he sat in his car at Kingsway and East 19th Street (The Province, 2001c).
Aug	Abbotsford	Shooting, home invasion	Adult male	--	Victim was shot several times during a home invasion (Vancouver Sun, 2001).
Aug	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Tyler Hawryluck (20)	--	Victim was shot at the corner of Willard Avenue and Thorn (The Province, 2001c).
Aug					Responding to complaints from the public, a special plainclothes RCMP task force initiated in the summer is seeing diminishing complaints about gang activity in the clubs (Alberni Valley Times, 2001b).
Sep					The North District's criminal intelligence section now has two officers investigating crime rings. Until last October, the district did not have a unit to deal solely with organized crime (Alberni Valley Times, 2001a).
Oct	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Kaw Jawanda (24) and his friend	--	Victim (Jawanda) was shot dead while his friend was shot and survived after a confrontation at a night club (Bolan, 2001b).
Oct	Delta	Shooting (murder)	Rick Bhatti	--	Victim, a teacher with multiple gang associations, was shot and killed when a car pulled up alongside his and fired several shots (Bolan, 2001c).

Oct					The RCMP North District has formed a task force targeting Asian gangs and bikers to 'address the increase in drug trafficking' (Daily News, 2001).
Nov	Richmond	Shooting (murders)	Gurpreet Butter (25) and Sukhjinder Sahota (27)	--	Victims were found bound, shot, and disposed of on Dyke Road (Fong, 2001).
Nov					Victoria Police create special unit with 10 officers for dealing with youth violence (Daily Townsman, 2001).
Dec	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Kelley Buttar (22)	--	Victim was shot and killed during a wedding reception at a banquet hall. An RCMP Christmas party was being held in the same banquet hall, and many of the off-duty officers tended to other people who were shot (Bermingham, 2001).
2002					
Jan	Richmond	Murder	Phouvong Phomma-viset (26)	--	Victim's burnt body was found near Number 8 Road and River Road. He had been kidnapped in the middle of the night from his home in East Vancouver two weeks prior, where shots had been fired (Proctor, 2002a).
Jan					Richmond RCMP wants to form a team of investigators from various Lower Mainland forces to probe the five gang-related murders in the city in the last four months (Bolan, 2002a).
Feb	--	Murder	Ryan Kam (23)	Two adult males	Two men were charged for murdering the victim, who had a long history of being involved in gangs and firearms incidents (The Province, 2002).
Mar	Van	Shooting	Two adult males	Three Asian gunmen	Three Asian gunmen shot two men, who survived, at Club Davon in the 800 block of Denman Street (Vancouver Sun, 2002a).

Mar	New Westminster	Murder	Jaskaran Chima (25)	--	Victim was found murdered in a burning car underneath the Alex Fraser Bridge (Vancouver Sun, 2002b).
Mar					The Esquimalt and Victoria police departments have joined forces to create an anti-gang unit dealing with youth crime and violence (J. Bell, 2002).
Apr					Police detachments from the Lower Mainland to the Fraser Valley are considering forming a task force to investigate more than 50 murders linked to gang activities (Fong, 2002).
Apr	--	Murder	Gary Sidhu	--	The gang slaying of the victim was the fiftieth Indo-Canadian gang murder since the 1994 slaying of the Dosanjh brother (Austin & Middleton, 2002).
Apr	Surrey	Murder	Richard Lof (innocent bystander)	Indo-Canadian male	One of three Indo-Canadian males being ejected from Delanie's Exotic Show Pub fired a handgun into the doorway as a protest to their ejection. Lof was struck and died in the bar despite the efforts of off-duty firefighters to save him (Middleton & Proctor, 2002). Jagrup Singh (26) would later be charged with second-degree murder (Bolan & Morton, 2002).
Apr	Van	Shooting	Two young Indo-Canadian males (21 and 19)	--	Victims were shot at 8:00 p.m. in the 900 block of East 54th Street (Bolan, 2002b).
June					Special task force formed as study discovers Chilliwack is number two in B.C for grow ops (Morry, 2002).
June	Van	Drive-by shooting	Young man	--	Victim was shot multiple times in the 700 block of East 62nd Street and survived the attack (Bolan, 2002d).
June	Van	Shooting (murder)	Robert Kandola	--	Victim was shot and killed as he exited a

			(31), high-profile gang figure		taxicab in downtown Vancouver (Alberni Valley Times, 2002).
June	Van	Shooting (murder)	Michael Ly (22) and another male	--	Victims were shot at Metrotown. One died of his wounds (Burnaby Now, 2002). This brazen midday attack was another example of the ferociousness and complete lack of regard that these thugs have for other people not engaged in their immature conflict (Sandler, 2002).
Aug	Surrey	Shooting	--	Rival gang members	Shooting occurred in a pizza parlour between rival gang members (Myers, 2002).
Aug	Surrey	Shooting	Four people	--	Victims were shot outside of Pancho and Lefty's Nightclub (MacLellan 2002).
Oct	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Kamaljit Sangha (26)	--	Victim was found shot and killed near Marine Drive and Nelson. The local RCMP advised the public that he was a person of interest in the homicide of Michael Ly, killed in June (Burnaby Now, 2002).
Nov	Port Moody	Murder (burning)	Abenaas Jaswal	--	Victim, a Simon Fraser University student, was set on fire and his body was found in Belcarra Park (Culbert, 2002).
Nov	New Westminster	Shooting (murder)	Davinder Gharu (21)	--	Victim was shot in a targeted homicide (Proctor, 2002b).
Nov	Mission	Murder	Heera Bahia (24), known gang member	--	Victim's body was found by police; he had gone missing in August (Middleton, 2002).
Nov	Langley	Shooting (murder)	Dung Quoc Tran (18), a Vietnamese gang member	--	Victim was found bound and shot in a ditch in a rural part of Langley (O'Brian, 2002a).
Nov	Burnaby	Murders	Adult male and female	--	Victims were found in the trunk of a car. Police had the vehicle towed, thinking it was simply an abandoned car. When the vehicle's registered owner was discovered to be a missing person, the police returned to the tow yard and discovered his

					body and the body of a woman inside. The murder had the earmarks of a gang homicide (O'Brian, 2002b).
Dec	Surrey	Shooting	Five Indo-Canadian males	--	Victims were shot outside a pub named the Hook and Ladder. All survived, albeit one was critically wounded with debilitating injuries (The Province, 2001c).
Dec					A joint Lower Mainland police task force looking into Indo-Canadian gang violence was quietly put together this fall and is operating out of the RCMP's major crime office in Surrey (Bolan, 2002c).
2003					
Jan	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Christian Kwee (17)	Adult male	Police in Coquitlam responded to a large fight in a karaoke bar and found that a man had fired a gun several times into the crowd, resulting in the victim being shot and killed (Devitt, 2003).
Feb	--	Kidnapping, unlawful possession of firearms, and aggravated assault	--	Mike and Peter Adiwai (known gang members)	The nature of this investigation resulted in the media being alerted to the presence of the Integrated Indo-Canadian Gang Task Force This was a non-traditional approach by the police in that they specifically named their team after the ethnic group they were targeting (Wickett, 2003).
May	Richmond	Beating (murder)	Raymond Chan (31), Lotus member	--	Victim was found dead, his body badly beaten, behind the Richmond courthouse. His younger brother had been kidnapped by Bindy Johal, who was facing trial when he was killed (Keating, 2003).
Aug	Saanich	Murder	Bobby Johal	--	Victim was found in a prestigious neighbourhood on Cordova Bay Road (Nanaimo Daily News, 2003).

Aug	Van	Shooting (murders)	Ten people, including Mahmoud Alkalil (19)	--	A pivotal moment occurred in the Vancouver bar scene when bullets started to fly in the Loft Six Nightclub. ⁶⁷ A fight between rival gang members ended with three people being shot dead and seven people injured (Hogben & Hall, 2003). This shooting was a catastrophe on many levels; not only was a bar with 200 patrons turned into a mass casualty crime scene, but the impact of this shooting arguably continues today. One of the men killed was Mahmoud Alkali, whose gang-entrenched family continues to fight a war to avenge his death.
Oct	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Jean Lahn (24), well-known gangster	Anton Brad Hooites-Meursing	Victim was shot dead in a parking lot (Vancouver Sun, 2003).
Nov					A new team of 20 RCMP officers will begin an intense effort to destroy the business of growing pot in homes owned by gang members (Jiwa, 2003).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murder)	Vietnamese male (26)	--	Victim was shot and killed as he sat in a restaurant in the 1400 block of Kingsway (Spencer, 2003). The shooting appeared to be targeted and gang-related.
Dec	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Shiv Dayal (20)	--	Victim was shot and killed, and the Richmond RCMP stopped his friends as they were trying in vain to get him to the hospital (Hansen, 2003). The shooting was gang-related.
2004					
Jan	Van	Shooting (murder)	Rachel Davis (23), adult male, four others	Multiple gang members	Rachel Davis came out of the Purple Onion Nightclub and saw a group of young men, gang members, engaged in a pushing match.

⁶⁷ Not a member of Barwatch.

					When one man was knocked to the ground and was being beaten senseless by five other men, Davis courageously put herself in harm's way to protect this stranger. A gun was produced and several shots fired, killing one of the men and Rachel Davis. Four additional people were shot and injured (O'Brian, 2004b).
Feb	Van	Shooting (murder)	Christopher Howey (23)		Victim was shot to death on Boundary Road (Austin, 2004a).
Feb	Richmond	Shooting	Lawrence Chow (22)	--	Victim was shot in the driver's seat of his car, parked outside a karaoke bar (Austin, 2004a).
Feb	Van	Shooting (gun battle)	--	--	An open gun battle occurred outside a Vietnamese restaurant on East 8th Avenue (Sin, 2004c).
Feb	Van	Shooting	Young male gangster	--	Victim accidentally shot himself in the foot while threatening club-goers at the Caprice Nightclub on Granville Street (Birmingham, 2004).
Feb					The Province's Organized Crime Agency is to be moved to the RCMP, giving millions of extra dollars to use in the fight against organized crime (Lavoie, 2004).
Feb					Vancouver police form a "firearms interdiction team" to target chronic gun-users and get weapons off the streets (Austin, 2004b)
Mar	Van	Shootings (two incidents two weeks apart)	--	Rival gang members	Two rival gangs fired over 15 shots at each other outside of the Atlantis Nightclub in the 1300 block of Seymour Street. One man was shot in the leg. Two weeks later, seven shots were fired outside of the same club (O'Brian, 2004a).
Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	Paul Dosanjh (27)	--	Victim, who had survived being shot in the head at the Loft Six shooting, was murdered in the

					Gourmet Castle Restaurant in the 2200 block of East Hastings at 5:00 a.m. when gunmen shot him several times (Skelton, 2004).
Mar	Van	Shooting	Bar patron	Adult male	A man fired a gun and hit a patron outside of the Au Bar (The Province, 2004).
Mar	--	Threat to kill	--	Billy Tran, Vietnamese gang member	Tran threatened to kill a member of the Vancouver Police Gang Crime Unit (M. Howell, 2004a).
Mar					The Canadian Bankers Association and police forces in the Lower Mainland are considering forming an integrated squad to tackle bank robbery (M. Howell, 2004b).
Apr	Van	Murder	Harjeet Ghoman	--	Victim was murdered in front of his girlfriend in the PNE parking lot in the early morning hours. This was a targeted gang murder (Read, 2004).
Apr					Richmond RCMP's newly formed Richmond Asian Advisory Committee, which was formed to foster a more open relationship with the local Asian community (Horner, 2004).
May	Van	Shots fired	--	--	VPD responded to a report of shots fired (M. Roberts, 2004).
May	Van	Shooting	Two people	--	The victims were shot outside of Club Voda (Woodward, 2004).
May	Surrey	Shooting	Adult male	--	Victim was shot outside a McDonald's (Woodward, 2004).
May					Police announce Wednesday the formation of a Vancouver Task Force on Indo-Canadian gang violence in light of the latest two murders (Bolan & Ai, 2004).
July	Kelowna	Shooting (murder)	Michael Naud (23)	--	Victim was shot and killed in Kelowna as he exited his car. In January 2001, Naud was acquitted of the second-degree murder of Khalil

					Alkhalil (19). Khalil was the brother of Mahmoud Alkhalil, who was murdered in the Loft Six shooting. Naud's father had been shot five times in April 2003 as he exited his family home, and survived (Kamloops Daily News, 2004).
July	--	Shooting	Hardeep Bassi (19)	--	Victim was shot in his vehicle then crashed into a telephone pole at a service station; he was an apparent victim of a targeted gang shooting (Ai, 2004).
July	--	Shooting	Two adult males (one dead)	--	Five shots were fired at the crowd waiting to go inside the Aqua Club, resulting in one man dead and another shot in the leg (Sin, 2004b).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	Yimaz Kuruoglu (33)	--	Victim was found shot dead in a targeted gang hit in the 5800 block of Tyne Street (M. Howell, 2004c).
Aug	Saanich	Shooting	Singh Nutt (24)	--	Victim was shot as he got out of his car. Nutt was on bail awaiting charges from a stabbing, and was closely linked to Indo-Canadian gangs (Young, Bell, & Watts, 2004.).
Sept	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Amandeep Bath (27)	--	Victim was found shot dead beside a Mercedes-Benz convertible in Surrey. Within hours, police had another Indo-Canadian in custody for the murder (Lee, 2004).
Oct					A new integrated task force to tackle indo-canadian gang violence and investigate dozens of unsolved murders will be formed. A regional Indo-Canadian Gang Violence Task Force was in operation from late 2002-2004, when it was disbanded after investigative leads dried up (Bolan, 2004).
Nov	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Aklesh Chaudary (19, died), and a 24-	--	Victims were shot in the parking lot of Newton Athletic Park, and survived (Zytaruk, 2004).

			year old adult male		
Nov	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Two people shot, one dead	--	(Henry, 2004)
Nov	Delta	Shooting	Indo-Canadian male	--	Victim was shot in a Keg Steakhouse restaurant (Sin, 2004c).
Dec					In December 2004, the British Columbia Integrated Gang Task Force was formed with a mandate to target gang violence throughout the province and support local police in their efforts to reduce gang violence. The Task Force was provided with 60 officers from various police departments in BC (The News, 2004).
2005					
Jan	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Jatinder Natt and Sukhjinder Sohal (brothers)	--	Surrey RCMP pulled over a suspicious vehicle and found the driver to be suffering from gunshot wounds and his brother, the passenger, already dead. Both victims died in this targeted gang hit (Vancouver Sun, 2005b).
Feb	Delta	Shooting (murder)	Harpreet Khurme (34)	--	Victim was found shot on Annacis Island (Bolan, 2005).
Feb	Richmond	Shooting (murder)	Mark Thrower, gang associations	--	Victim was found shot execution-style in his Richmond apartment. He was involved in the drug trade and had associations with both Indo-Canadian and Asian gang members (Bolan, 2005).
Apr	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Sukhwinder Jawanda	--	Police responded to shots fired call on Brander Road and found the victim shot several times in his truck. He was rushed to hospital but died of his injuries within hours (Leslie, 2005).
May	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Andy Rai (23)	--	Victim was shot multiple times (Bolan, 2005).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Dean Elshamy	--	Sandip Duhre was in a vehicle with the victim, Dean Elshamy, at 72nd Street and Scott Road when gunmen arrived and

					shot several times into the car. While the intended target was likely Duhre, Elshamy died. (Bolan, 2005).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Michael Wong, known Asian gang member	--	Victim was shot to death as he got into his SUV in Chinatown (Bolan, 2005)
Aug	Van	Gang fight; beating (murder)	Lawrence Lim	Rival gang members	A fight broke out between rival gang members in a karaoke bar. Several of the young men armed themselves with weapons of opportunity such a pool cues and balls. The victim was beaten to death in what was believed to be motivated by rival Asian gang tensions (M. Thomas, 2005).
Aug	Abbotsford	Shooting (murders)	Hartinder Gill and his girlfriend Lexi Madsen	--	Abbotsford Police responded to several calls of a shooting in the University of the Fraser Valley parking lot just before 10:00 p.m. Upon arrival, police found the victims shot and killed (Bolan, 2005).
Sept	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Hardev Sidhu (27)	--	Victim was found shot to death because of his involvement in gangs (Bolan, 2005).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murder)	Lee Matasi (no gang affiliation)	Dennis White (28)	Victim was an aspiring artist with no gang affiliations. He was murdered as he exited the Red Room nightclub. Dennis White (28) fired a handgun in the air as Mattasi was leaving the club with some friends, and Mattasi admonished White for his stupidity and recklessness. In an act of pure cowardice, White shot and killed the unarmed Mattasi. Some might argue this murder is not gang-related, however White's actions reflect someone displaying a gangster-like lifestyle (Salinas & Skelton, 2005).

Dec	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Young Indo-Canadian male	--	Victim was found shot dead (Vancouver Sun, 2005a).
2006					
Jan	New Westminster	Stabbing (murder)	Bobby Atwal	--	Victim was found stabbed to death under the Queensborough Bridge. Though police believed he was not linked to Indo-Canadian gangs, the circumstances of his death suggested that he may have fallen victim to their violent means of settling disputes (Prince George Citizen, 2006).
Jan	Surrey	Murder	Robby Dhanjal (25)	--	(The Leader, 2006).
Jan	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Gurpreet Dhaliwal	--	Victim was shot to death in his driveway (Ramsey, 2006b).
Feb	--	Shooting	Mark Bowe (40)	--	In a clear drug-gang-turf beef in the middle of the day, the victim was shot in the head after suggesting that a 17-year-old rival drug dealer find a new place to deal (Bolan, 2006a).
Feb	--	Shooting (murder)	Mendoza	Jimmy Benoit	In another drug-gang-territory dispute, the victim was shot in the head (Baker, 2008).
Apr	Van	Shooting (murder)	Six people shot, one died	--	VPD responded to a shooting at a Chinese Noodle House in the 3100 block of Main Street. Upon arrival, police found six people shot, one of them deceased, in an apparent gang shooting (Daily News, 2006)
Apr	Van	Kidnapping	Graham McMynn (23)	Asian gangsters	After a thorough and exhausting investigation, over 200 police officers executed search warrant raids in 14 locations and located the victim, who was alive but dehydrated and malnourished. This brazen kidnapping of a young man who was not associated to gangs drugs caused significant fear amongst the community,

					and police were elated to have rescued him (Mulgrew et al., 2006).
May	Burnaby	Murder	Matt Rheame (39), Hells Angel associate	--	Victim was found murdered in his Burnaby home. He had been in the community less than a year after serving his sentence for manslaughter—he murdered Hershhal Segal outside of the Oasis Hotel in 1999 (Bolan, 2006a).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Tommy Chan, Lotus gang member	--	Victim was shot on the dance floor of Richard’s on Richards and died from his injuries within the month (Bolan, 2006b).
July	Van	Murders	Two adult males	--	One man was found on the grounds of David Thompson Secondary School, and the other man was found dumped at Fraser River at Kent Street (Ramsey, 2006a).
Dec	--	Firearms offences	--	Five men	Police arrested five men for firearms offences after discovering that the Royal Sportsman had illegally distributed over 2,000 guns in Western Canada. As part of “Hollywood North,” this business was licensed to import guns as movie props and had in turn sold them illegally to known gangsters, resulting in at least one homicide (Bolan, 2006c).
2007					
Jan	Richmond	Running gun battle, shooting	Niki Tajali (26), Vahid Mahanian (30), Sahand Askari (22)	Several men	Several men met at Dover Park, and when the meeting digressed, a running gun battle occurred with automatic rifles. This happened in a city park in the middle of the day. Over 150 rounds were shot, hitting three people, all of whom survived (Bolan, 2007b).
Jan	--	Shooting (murder)	Kirk Holifield (35)	--	Victim was a father, hockey player, and good citizen who was mistakenly shot and killed as he left the arena because the truck he

					drove was similar to the one driven by the brother of one of the men attacked in the Dover Park incident (Bolan, 2007b). He was a completely innocent victim of gang violence.
Feb	Van	Shootings (four over a four-day period), murder	(A) Miguel Rodrigues (33, died), (b) two men in their 20s, (c) adult male.	--	Four shootings occurred over a four-day period, which indicated another gang war, or at least a return to hostilities. (a) The victim was shot to death as he drove his BMW at 33rd Street and Arbutus, in Vancouver's wealthy west side. (b) The victims were shot in the 600 block of Smithe Street in Vancouver's Granville Entertainment Area, when they were leaving an after-hours bar. (c) The victim was shot and killed in his car at the Kitsilano Beach parking lot
Feb	--	Shooting (murder)	Timothy Jones (28)	Gunmen	Victim was shot and killed in what is believed to have been a case of mistaken identity for his UN gang neighbour, Duane Meyer. Witnesses observed Jones go to the aid of two women whose car appeared to have broken down car in front of his house, and the gunman moved in and shot Jones several times in the head (Bolan, 2013d).
Mar	Whistler	Shooting (murder)	Michael Boutros	Shane Richard	Boutros and Richard got into a scuffle outside a nightclub. Within earshot of an RCMP K9 officer, Richard pulled out a gun and shot and killed Boutros (Mitchell, 2009).
May	Van	Stabbing (murder)	Four youth males (Chris Poeung [13] died)	14-year-old male	Victim was murdered in a premeditated gang fight at Terminal and Main. Four young people were stabbed, one of whom dying of his stab wounds. A youth was charged with second-degree murder and the

					community was left shocked at the senselessness of the violence committed by mere children (Nguyen, 2007).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murders)	Two people died, six wounded	Two masked gunmen	Police responded to a shooting at the Fortune Happiness Chinese Restaurant at 600 East Broadway, where two people were killed and six people were wounded. Two masked gunman came in shooting at 4:30 a.m. (Vancouver Sun, 2007).
Sept	Van	Shooting	Gurmit Dhak (a well-known gangster) and his girlfriend	Two masked gunmen	Victims were eating in the popular Quattro Restaurant when two masked gunman entered and shot them (Hall, 2007). Both survived. Dhak was a well-known gangster who had been convicted of manslaughter in 1999. Further concerning, and emphasising the differences in BC's gang landscape relative to other cities, was that the mayor of Vancouver at the time had lunch or dinner several times a week at this restaurant.
Sept	Van	Shooting (murder)	Jason Louie (34)	--	Victim was found shot and killed in his Infiniti, which was parked beside Vancouver Technical High School at 5:30 p.m. (Hall, 2007).
Oct	Surrey	Shooting (murders)	Ryan Bartolomeo (19), Michael Lal (26), Corey Lal (21), Edward Narong (22), Edward Schellenberg (55), and Christopher Mohan (22)	Jamie Bacon, Cody Haevischer, Mathew Johnston, and Dennis Karbovanec, all Red Scorpions	In suite number 1505 of the Balmoral Tower Highrise, Jamie Bacon, Cody Haevischer, Mathew Johnston, and Dennis Karbovanec shot four men, all involved in the drug trade and gangs, execution-style. Two completely innocent people were killed as well: Edward Schellenberg (55), a repairman working in the suite, and Christopher Mohan (22), a neighbour who came into the hall to investigate after hearing

					the gunshots (K. Fraser, 2015). The murders were related to the drug activities of the Red Scorpions that all the killers were involved in. The investigation was challenging, but police received a break on when Karbovanec plead guilty to three counts of second-degree murder and agreed to testify against his co-accused (CBC News, 2009b).
Oct	Van	Shooting (murder)	Hiep Vinh Do (51)	Gunman	A gunman entered a Vietnamese restaurant in the 4800 block of Victoria Drive and shot and killed the victim (Brethour, 2007).
Nov	West Side of Van	Shooting (murder)	Raymond Huang (45), a Dai Lo in the Big Circle Boys	--	Victim was gunned down in front of his five million dollar mansion (Baron, 2007). This murder taking place in such a wealthy part of Vancouver raised concerns about public safety.
Nov	West Side of Van	Shooting (murders)	Ronal Raj (31) and Ali Abhari (25)	--	The victims were stopped at a red light at Granville Street and 70th Avenue when two SUVs pulled alongside their car, boxed them in, then in a hail of automatic gunfire, murdered both of them on a major thoroughfare in and out of the city. This was even more brazen given that two VPD officers were on the same road, a block away, doing a traffic stop with their emergency overhead lights activated. This demonstrated a total disregard for the police and wanton disregard for the law (Baron, 2007).
Nov	Vancouver				Within 24 hours, the Vancouver Police announced that despite their existing Gang Crime Unit, Firearms Interdiction Team, and commitment to officers in the Integrated Gang Task Force, they were creating

					their own Violence Suppression Team (Bolan, 2007a)
Dec	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Jonathan McMillan	--	Victim died after being involved in a gunfight with another gang (Saltman, 2007).
Dec	Van	Shooting (murder)	James Cheung (45)	--	Victim was found shot dead in the 3300 block of Napier Street (Carrigg, 2007).
2008					
Jan	Van	Shooting (murders)	Richardo Scarpino and his bodyguard Gilles LePage	Two gunmen	Scarpino and his fiancé and bodyguard were driving to Gotham Steakhouse (Bolan, 2008d). As Scarpino parked outside of the restaurant, two gunmen emerged from the shadows and shot wildly into their luxury SUV. Scarpino and his bodyguard died instantly (Proctor, 1996; O'Connor, 2008). Another suspect exited the restaurant with a pistol. As the police officers raised their assault rifles, he dropped the handgun (Grindlay, 2008). Several politicians, tycoons, philanthropists, and even a Hollywood movie star were enjoying their dinner when this occurred (Spencer, 2008).
Feb	Van	Shooting	Pritpal Virk (19), well-known in the drug and gang world	--	Victim was shot as he left a party in the 400 block of East 54th Street (Kurucz, 2008).
Feb	North Van	Shooting (murder)	Darren Liao (32)	--	Victim was shot and killed in the parking lot in a targeted hit as he left the recreation centre where he played floor hockey (M. Thomas, 2008).
Mar	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Joe Tran (23)	--	Victim was parking his Mercedes SUV when he was shot several times in a targeted killing (The Leader, 2008).
Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	Kyle Wong	--	Victim was shot with an automatic rifle in the carport of his townhouse

					in the 8600 block of Aqua Drive in Champlain Heights (Hume, 2008).
Mar	Van	Shooting (murder)	Fred Walcott	--	Victim died on the steps of a stranger's house where he sought help after being shot multiple times. This was the third homicide in five days for Metro Vancouver Police (Ivens, 2008).
Mar	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Hark Hans (28)	--	Victim was sitting in the parking lot of the Surrey Eagle Quest Golf Course when he was killed (Bellett, 2008).
May	Van	Shooting (murder)	Two men (Denis Jablonsky, 30, died)	--	VPD responded to a fight call at the Cecil Strip Club on Granville Street and found two men who had been shot in the bar, one of whom was deceased from gunshot wounds (Hansen, 2008).
May	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Duane Meyer (41), United Nations member	--	Victim was shot and killed in a targeted shooting (Bolan, 2008f).
May	--	Shooting (murder)	Jonathan Barber (23)	Corey Vallee	Victim was shot and killed as he was driving Jamie Bacon's vehicle. The victim was a car stereo specialist, and was returning the car when Vallee shot and killed him, mistaking him for Bacon (CBC News, 2009a). At the time of this shooting, the contract on Jamie Bacon's head by rival UN gang member Clay Rouche was \$300,000 (The Globe and Mail, 2013).
May	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Bhupinder Benning (27)	--	Victim was shot and killed in a targeted gang shooting as he exited a friend's home and was walking toward his car (Ramsey, 2008).
July	West End of Van	Shooting	21-year-old male	--	In the very populated and trendy West End of Vancouver, the victim was shot at Davie Street and Thurlow Street in a gang fight while people ran for cover (Cross & Sinoski, 2008).

July	Van	Group fight, shooting (murder)	25-year-old male	--	Police attended a Vietnamese restaurant in the 2400 block of Nanaimo Street when a fight broke about between 20 people. A 25-year-old man was shot dead as other patrons fled the area (Cross & Sinoski, 2008).
July	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Dustin Webster (25)	--	Victim was shot and killed on a rural farm property that housed a large marijuana grow operation (Vancouver Sun, 2008).
July	Van	Shooting (murder)	Hung Bui	--	Victim was shot several times in the head, in his car (Cross, 2008). Nine years previously, he and his friends were in a car that was attacked by rival gang members, and one of his friends was killed. Bui also had a first-degree murder charge stayed against him and was shot the previous year at the Fortune Happiness shooting (Cross, 2008).
July and Aug	Mexico	Murders	Elliott Castaneda (30) and Mike Gordon (33)	--	Victims were realtors who were believed to have conducted several property sales for members of the UN Gang, and specifically its leader, Clay Rouche (Bolan, 2008e).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	James O'Toole	--	Victim, a young man from a wealthy family with a private school education, was murdered at East 1st Avenue and Commercial Drive as he got into a taxi. This was a clear targeted shooting with automatic rifle gunfire captured on the taxi's in car video system (Bolan, 2008b).
Oct	Van	Shooting (murder)	Rakesh Naidu (close friend of James O'Toole, above)	--	Victim was shot over 20 times at Oakridge Shopping Mall around 2:00 pm with lots of people around (Bolan, 2008c).
Oct	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Jimmy Lee (33), linked	--	Victim was shot and killed in Surrey (Bolan, 2008a).

			to the Red Scorpions		
Oct	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Todd Krantz (28), Independent Soldiers member	--	Victim was found shot and killed at the World Extreme Fighting Gym (Bolan, 2008a).
Oct	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Jimmy Le (26), Red Scorpion	--	Victim was found shot and killed in his driver's seat (Bolan, 2008a).
Month & Year of Violence	City where Violence Occurred	Type of Violence/ Weapon(s) Used	Name, Gang Association, & Age of Victim	Name, Gang Association, & Age of Offender(s)	Description
Oct	Langley	Shooting	Jody York, Independent Soldier	--	Victim had his million dollar Langley home shot at (Bolan, 2008).
2009					
Jan	Surrey	Shooting	Andrew Cilliers (26)	--	Victim was shot in a targeted gang shooting (Bolan, 2009c).
Jan	Van	Stabbing (murder)	Tyson Edwards (21)	Nolan Swallow, Patrick Plowman, and Sebastian Miazga, all members of the Dark Cloud gang	The victim, a university student, was stabbed to death outside Richard's on Richards Nightclub. He had gone to the club after a night of studying to pick up his girlfriend (Bolan, 2009c).
Feb	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Brianne Kinnear (21), girlfriend of Jesse Marginson	--	Victim was shot and killed (Rankin, 2009).
Feb	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Raphael Baldini (21)	--	Victim was found dead outside his SUV (Keating et al., 2009).
Feb	Langley	Shooting (murder)	Kevin LeClair (26), Red Scorpion	Connor D'Monte and Cory Vallee (UN gang members)	Victim was killed in a busy mall parking lot at 4:00 p.m. Other shoppers had to run for cover as the gang members opened up on his truck with high-powered rifles, killing him instantly (Weisgarber, 2009).
Feb	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Nikki Aley (23), wife of UN gang member Koshan Aley	--	Victim was shot and killed as she drove her husband's car with their four-year-old son inside. After she died, the car was still in motion and veered off the road, then hit a tree, with her toddler

					screaming in terror (Brunoro et al., 2009).
Mar	Delta	Shooting (murder)	Sukhwinder Dhaliwal (32)	--	Victim was shot and killed gangland-style in Ladner. He was on bail for drug and firearms charges (Bolan, 2009d). This was the twentieth shooting in only a few weeks, with nine being fatal (<i>BC News</i> , 2009b).
Mar	Abbotsford	Shooting (murders)	Sean Murphy (21) and Ryan Richards (19), both Red Scorpions	--	Victims were shot and killed within 24 hours of each other for their links to their gang's drug trade (Wintonyk, 2009b).
May	--	Shooting (murder)	Christopher Witmee	Gunman	Victim was standing beside a known gang member at the men's communal toilets in the Legacy Show Lounge when a gunman entered the bathroom and began to shoot (Wintonyk, 2009a).
June	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Billy Rai (36), Red Scorpion Associate		Victim was found shot and killed in a targeted shooting (Bolan, 2009a).
Aug	Abbotsford	Murders	Bobby Digorgio (24, Red Scorpion) and his girlfriend Jessica Illes (21)	--	Victims were found in a burnt car in a blueberry field (Bolan, 2009a).
Sept	Van	Shooting (murder)	Rajinder Soomel	Gunmen	Gunmen waited for Independent Soldier Randy Naicker to return to his halfway house on Cambie Street. Rajinder Soomel resembled Naicker and was the innocent victim of a gang shooting when the gunmen mistook him for Naicker, shooting him dead on the street outside of the halfway house (Quan, 2009).
Dec	Mexico/ United States	Importation of marijuana	--	Clay Rouche, United Nations gang leader	A large blow against the UN gang occurred when law enforcement officers in Mexico refused Rouche entry. They put him on the first plane

					leaving, which happened to be landing in the United States. When he got off the plane in Dallas, the Drug Enforcement Agency arrested and charged him with the importation of marijuana. He was sentenced to 30 years in a federal prison (Bolan, 2013b).
2010					
Jan	--	Various offences	--	Six Hells Angels members and several associates	Several Hells Angels were found guilty of various offences as a result of Project E-Pandora, in which a police agent was offered one million dollars to work with the police in their investigation of the East End chapter of the Hells Angels (Bolan, 2013c).
Feb	Van	Shooting	Cliff Thamma-vongsa (22)	--	Victim was shot in his car as he stopped in the 1500 block of East Tenth Street (Mickleburgh, 2010).
Mar	--	Shooting (murder)	Huzaifa Kiani (17)	--	Victim was shot and killed in the passenger seat of his friend's car when they were attacked. (Diakiw, 2010).
May	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Chhminder Gill (32), links to gangs and drugs	Gunman	Victim was shot and killed in the garage of his home in the prestigious Morgan Creek area by a gunman who fired several shots then fled in a vehicle (Hopes, 2010).
June	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Milad Saffari (27), longtime gangster	--	Victim was shot and killed when he left a gym. He was on parole for his involvement in the murder of a grow-op caretaker years before, and had been the target of a shooting in 2006 (Blais, 2010).
July	Burnaby	Shooting (murder)	Harchie Onas (31)		Victim was visiting his parents' home and was shot several times as he opened the front door (Bolan, 2010c).
July	Abbotsford	Shooting (murder)	Mandy Johnson (22),	--	Victim was shot dead as she stood beside her boyfriend in a rural area

			girlfriend of long-time gangster Gator Browne		of Abbotsford. Some believe that the boyfriend pulled her in front of himself to protect him from the bullets (Bolan, 2012a).
Aug	Van	Shooting (murder)	Jules Stanton (41), Hells Angel	--	Victim was shot and killed as he left his house near Vancouver City Hall at 6:15 a.m. (Bolan, 2010).
Oct	Van	Shooting (murder)	Gurmit Dhak	--	Victim was shot in the parking lot of the Metrotown Mall (Bolan, 2012d), which resulted in many “tit for tat” murders over the next few years. This would also spark the conflict between the Dhak-Duhre group (who had some alliances with the UN gang) against the Red Scorpions, Independent Soldiers, and Hells Angels. “This murder changed the gang landscape in BC,” said Chief Superintendent Dan Malo of the Combined Forces Special Enforcement Unit (Bolan, 2012d).
Oct	Van	Firearms seized: two loaded assault rifles and a pistol	--	Mike Shirazi, Christopher Iser, Billy Tran, Jason McBride, Jodh Manj, Anton Ali-Moffat, and Thanh Nguyen	Police arrested multiple males who were meeting in Kensington Park and seized multiple firearms from a hidden compartment in a car (Bolan, 2012b).
Oct	--	Firearm seized: loaded handgun	--	Chris Reddy and Derek Stephens	Firearm seized from a hidden compartment (McCluskie, 2011).
Oct	Richmond	Shooting	Philip Ley, Dhak associate	--	Victim was shot and survived his injuries (Bolan, 2013e).
Oct					The Gang Crime Summit brought together a large group of people to share information and work together to assist in intervention, prevention, and risk management regarding gangs in the community (The Prince George Free Press, 2010).

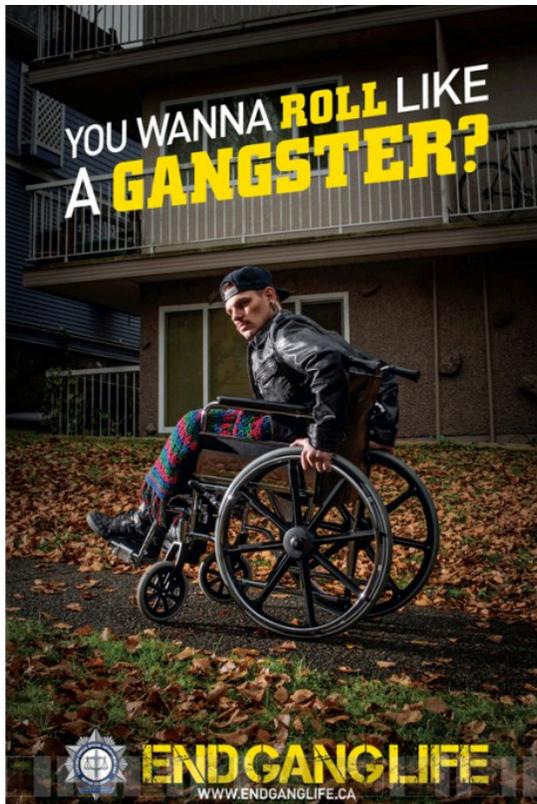
Nov	--	Shooting	Nelson Guerrero (33)	--	Victim was driving his three-year-old son home when he was shot several times in the car, while the child was in his car seat. This was a targeted shooting. The victim had a criminal history in both Canada and the United States for money laundering (Wintonyk, 2010).
2011					
Feb	Van	Shooting (murder)	Milad Nournia (26), well-known gang member	Gunman	Victim was shot and killed as he exited a Subway restaurant downtown. He failed to access the loaded pistol he had down the front of pants to defend himself when the gunman appeared (Smirnova, 2011).
June	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Balwinder Uppal	--	Police attended to a report of shots fired in a home and found the victim, who was an apparent victim of a gang homicide (Bolan, 2011b).
June	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Chris Reddy (24), close associate of gang member Jesse Margison	--	Victim was shot to death at 3:40 p.m. (CTV News, 2011). At the time of his death, he had been charged with possession of a loaded firearm that CFSEU located in a hidden compartment in a car on October 29, 2010. Gang member Jesse Margison was present when the victim was shot but ran away when the victim was hit.
July	Coquitlam	Shooting (murder)	Christopher Krake (24), close associate of Jesse Margison	--	Victim was found shot and killed on a trail (McFee, 2011).
July	Cypress Ski Mountain	Shooting (murder)	Vahid Mahanian (35)	--	Victim was found shot and killed. He was seriously injured from being shot in the Dover Park shootout and went through over 15 surgeries, only to die in further gang violence (Hall, 2011).

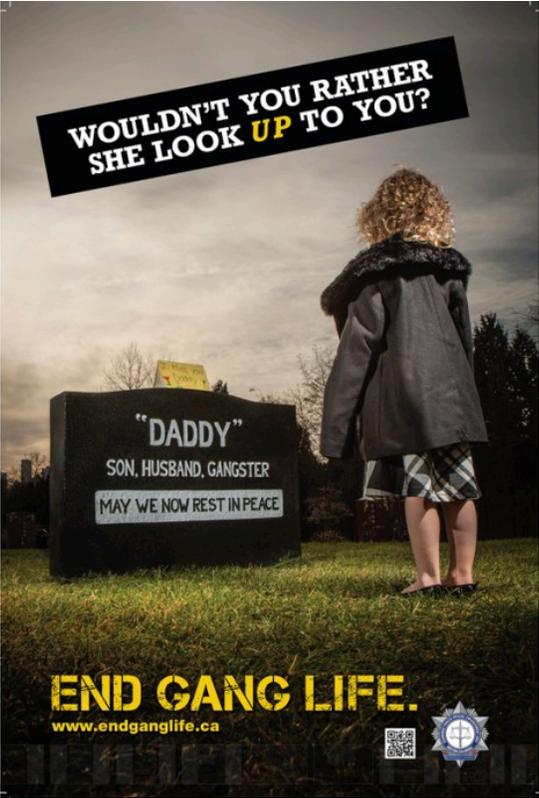
July	Van	Shooting (murder)	Harpreet Sandhu (21)	--	Victim was shot and killed in the Champlain Heights neighbourhood. (O'Connor, 2011).
Aug	Kelowna	Shooting (murder)	Jonathan Bacon (30), Red Scorpion (died); Larry Amero, Hells Angel; and Leah Hadden Watts	Jason McBride, Jujhar Khun-Khun, and Michael Jones	In retaliation for the murder of Gurmit Dhak, the Dhak-Duhre and UN gangs staged a brazen daylight shooting in the resort town of Kelowna by opening fire on a vehicle filled with various gang members. When the shooting ended, one of the three infamous Bacon brothers was dead, and within a short period of time, those responsible were either incarcerated or murdered. Red Scorpion Jonathan Bacon (30) was killed, and in the car with him were Hells Angel Larry Amero, who was shot in the hand; Independent Soldier James Riach, who was not harmed; and Leah Hadden Watts, who was shot and became a quadriplegic (Bolan & Law, 2012).
Aug	Surrey	Shooting	Man, close associate of Dhak brothers	--	Within 24 hours of the above shooting in Kelowna, a man was shot outside the Mirage Nightclub (CBC News, 2011). Despite early media reports that the man was not related to the events in Kelowna, he was a close associate of the Dhak brothers. This retaliation for the murder of Bacon and the attempt on a Hells Angels' life would come fast and consistently.
Sept	Surrey	Shooting	Jujhar Khun-Khun	--	Victim was shot multiple times as he picked up Sukh Dhak from his girlfriend's place in Surrey, and survived (Bolan, 2011a).
Oct	Cypress Mountain	Shooting (murder)	William Woo, Duhre associate	--	Victim was found shot and killed (Bolan, 2011a).

Oct	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Stephen Leone (died), a 15-year-old boy and notorious gangster Manny Hairan were shot	--	Victims were shot in a car. One died (Bolan, 2011a).
Nov	Van	Shooting (murder)	Axel Curtis (29), UN gang member	--	Victim was shot and killed as he walked his dog by Vancouver City Hall (Bolan, 2011a).
Dec	--	Shooting (murder)	Jenny Vu (38)	--	Victim was shot and killed in her SUV as her three-year-old sat in the back seat (Mui, 2011). She was not known to police, and it was believed her husband may have been the intended target.
2012					
Jan	--	Failed car bombing	Thomas Gisby	--	2012 began with multiple attacks on the Dhak-Duhre group in the span of a week. Victim had an attempt on his life when his trailer was packed with explosives that failed to ignite (Bolan, 2012e).
Jan	Sinaloa, Mexico	Shooting (murders)	Sal Sahbaz (37), a high-level UN gang member and right-hand man to Barzan Tilli-Cholli and Clay Rouche		Victim was shot and killed (same day as above murder of Gisby; Bolan, 2012e).
Jan	Van	Shooting (murder)	Sandip Duhre	Rabih Alkalil and Dean Wiwchar	Victim was killed in the Sheraton Wall Centre Hotel restaurant (Bolan, 2013e).
Jan	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Sean Beaver, Dhak-Durhe group	--	Victim was shot and killed (Bolan, 2012e).
Apr	--	Shooting (murder)	Justine Po (36), Asian gang member	--	Victim, who had been involved in the murder of Lotus gang boss Raymond Chan, was shot and killed. He was the second person involved in Chan's death to be

					murdered. Victim had pleaded guilty to being an accessory after the fact, and had served his jail time (A. Campbell, 2012).
Apr	Puerto Vallarta	Shooting (murder)	Tomas Gisby (47)	--	Victim was shot and killed. This crippled the supply of cocaine to the Dhak-Durhe group (Bolan, 2012e).
May	--	Shooting (murder)	Ranjit Cheema (43), long-time gangster	--	Victim was shot and killed outside his home within three months of being released from a California prison (Pole & Clancy, 2012).
May	Port Moody	Shooting (murder)	Bin Toor (35), Dhak-Durhe group associate	--	Victim was shot and killed (Bolan, 2012e).
June	Port Moody	Shooting (murder)	Randy Naicker, founder of the Independent Soldiers	--	Victim was shot and killed after leaving a Starbucks (Bulman, 2012).
Sept	Surrey	Shooting (murder)	Jagdeep Johal (37)	--	Victim was shot and killed in a targeted shooting (Bolan, 2012c).
Sept	Port Moody	Shooting (murder)	Joseph Markel (32)	--	Victim was shot and killed (Deutsch, 2012).
Nov	Burnaby	Shooting (murders)	Thomas Mantel and Suk Dhak	--	Victims were shot and killed as they exited the Executive Inn Hotel (Chow, 2012).

Appendix B: End Gang Life Decals





Appendix C: Informed Consent Form
The Structure, Demographics, and Dynamics of Gangs in BC:
Exposition and Implications

Principle Investigator: Keiron McConnell (Candidate for a Doctorate in Policing, Security and Community Safety)

Dear participant,

I wanted to ask if you would participate in a short interview with me regarding the gang situation in BC. The focus of my research is on the characteristics and behaviour of gangs in BC in comparison to those formed elsewhere.

I am a serving member of the Vancouver Police and am currently assigned to the VPD Gang Crime Unit. I am completing my studies at London Metropolitan University (LMU) in the United Kingdom. Dr. Nicholas Ridley, senior lecturer for the Department of Applied Social Sciences at LMU can confirm my credentials and affiliation as a student at LMU. He can be reached at email [email address] or [telephone number].

I would like you to participate in an in-depth interview, either face-to-face or over the telephone, at a place and time convenient to you. With your consent, the interview will be tape recorded for transcriptions and analysis by me. The interview will last approximately one hour. I will invite your open-ended responses to several questions about your knowledge and your perceptions of the gang situation in BC. I may contact you a second time with follow-up questions or with questions of clarification. You may, at your choosing, review the transcript of your interview.

There are no physical risks to participation in this study. Although the topics covered during our interview are within your areas of professional or personal expertise, you may face psychological risks by discussing various past situations that you have had to deal with. These risks could be the result of difficult situations that you recall during our discussion. Furthermore, while I will keep your identity and information confidential, because of the close-knit community of policing, there is a minimal risk that informed observers might surmise your identity or involvement from my publications. This could have negative peer or professional consequences.

Throughout the study, your information will remain anonymous, all identifying material will be kept separate from your data, and will be kept in a locked safe in my office, with data stored on a password protected computer accessible only

to myself. All data and identifying data will be kept for two years after completion of the study (i.e., data collection) and will then be destroyed.

If you will agree to be interviewed I would like to meet and record (with your permission) your recollection of the gang situation. I do not foresee the interviews lasting longer than sixty minutes.

Information will be recorded in hand-written format or by audio recording device. Your comments will be in confidence and you will be assigned a pseudonym. The findings will be generalized around key themes to further protect the identity of the research participant.

Audio recordings will not be disclosed publicly and all notes will be kept in a secure place for two years within a VPD secure facility. All notes, recordings, and any other data will then be destroyed.

I may use your comments in my thesis and may share this report with others in the community. In the future this work may be published and/or form part of a book.

This study is unlikely to provide direct benefit to you. The benefits will be mainly to society as the proposed project will advance research in an understudied area while producing knowledge that is highly relevant to the community and policing.

If you wish to participate in the research, I further want to ensure that you are doing so with no pressure from me or others, that you understand that participation does not result in favour, that you can decide not to participate, and that at any time in the interview you chose to not continue in the interview that you may end the interview. In addition, participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time and without prejudice. If you decide to withdraw before the interview is conducted, the interview will be cancelled. If you withdraw during the interview, the interview will stop and the recording will be destroyed. If you decide to withdraw after the interview, but before the final study report is written, you may contact me to do so. All your data will then be destroyed unless you specify otherwise. You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

If you have any questions about the study itself please feel free to contact the researcher at [email address] or [telephone number].

Chief Constable Chu of the Vancouver Police Department has approved this research project and is supportive of the researcher. In addition, this research project

has been approved and vetted by the London Metropolitan University Research Ethics Review Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is conducted, you may contact:

Professor Klaus Fischer at [email address]

Thank you.

Keiron McConnell

Consent Form

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Print Name of Participant _____

Signature of Participant _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Statement by the researcher/person taking consent:

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant, and to the best of my ability made sure that the participant understands the consent.

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this ICF will be provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the
consent _____

Signature of Researcher /person taking the
consent _____

Date _____

Day/month/year

Pseudonym assigned _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

1. When you hear the word *gangs*, what does that mean to you?
2. When you hear the phrase *gangs in BC*, is it different?
3. What has been your experience with gangs?
4. What do you believe are the factors in play that influence people in BC to join gangs? How is that different from other places?
5. What do you think of our efforts as a community to prevent gangs?
6. What do you think of our efforts as a community to intervene in gangs?
7. What do you think of our efforts as a community to suppress gangs?
8. What do you think attracts people to gangs in BC?
9. Do you believe *gangs* is an accurate word to describe the phenomenon of gangs in BC? What term might you use?
10. Do you think gang ejection programs like Barwatch and Restaurant Watch are effective at reducing gangs and gang violence?
11. In dealing with gangs in BC, what do you believe should be the top five priorities?

Appendix E: Interview Themes

- 1) Absence of family, role models, and/or proper disciplines
- 2) Abuse, fear, and lack of security
- 3) Appeal (mostly as perceived by gangs)
- 4) Business models of gang membership, activity, and affinity
- 5) Counter measures and initiatives
- 6) Feelings of powerlessness
- 7) Following in the footsteps of others
- 8) Gang relationships
- 9) Influence of migrating gang members
- 10) Lack of acceptable rites of passage into adulthood
- 11) Lack of free time, legitimate activities
- 12) Low self-esteem
- 13) Portrayal and stereotypes of gang members
- 14) Role of criminal justice system in deterrence, contribution, and perception
 - Evolution in criminal justice system response
- 15) Role of economics (gain, opportunity, absence of)
- 16) School failure and delinquency
- 17) Social discrimination or rejection
- 18) Thought process
- 19) Understanding of gang membership
 - Evolution of gang membership
 - Because we can
 - Best or only option available
 - Cost–benefit analysis
 - Maximizing benefits
- 20) Violence
 - Actual violence
 - Perceptions of violence
 - Source of violence

Appendix F: Officer's Expert Opinion Court Document

An LAPD officer, who has not been named to protect his privacy, shared this personal document that he wrote as part of his expert opinion for a court trial:

My training and experience dates back before I became a Police Officer for the City of Los Angeles. I was born and raised in the inner City of East Los Angeles, a predominantly Hispanic community, infested with Hispanic gangs and gang members. I specifically grew up in Lincoln Heights a Reporting District the Hollenbeck Police Station, which contains a vast amount of early history of gang activity, and some of the oldest respected gangs.

Throughout my childhood I learned that basic fundamentals of my Mexican heritage collaborated with gang culture. I learned at an early age the rules that were set upon by the gangs that controlled my neighbourhood. These rules included but not limited to curfews, dress code, graffiti, snitching, respect to elders, knowing the gang holidays and rival gang holidays (hood days) and most importantly becoming a prospect of the respected gang you lived in.

Throughout my teenage years is when I became highly aware and educated on gang cultures and trends. I had friends from elementary school that were now in middle school that became gang members, they would talk freely about the crimes they would commit, the initiation (jumped ins) they placed upon newly appointed gang members, and the discipline some gang members would receive from the bigger homies (veteran gang members) for disobeying the rules.

In high school is when I learned about the control the gangs had amongst the community. From the ages of 15-18, I was considered a possible prospect for the gang, where I grew up in. It was then that I saw how the veteran gang members would try to lure the youngsters with money, clothing, women, sex, drugs, and most importantly respect and control. When a group of friends and I denied and refused to become members of the neighbourhood we were marked with being disrespectful and being dishonourable. The veteran gang members then ordered us to be disciplined by young gang members.

Our punishment for refusing was automatic checks courting (physical discipline). From that any time the gang members would run into us or have some kind of contact with us they would pocket check us, and rob us. It even came to the point that they pulled out a sawed off shotgun and physically put in between my eyes and threatened me by stating, "if you tell the cops we will kill you and your family". They instilled a great fear into my friends and I that we refused to come out of our homes; they had complete control over us. It came to a point that the street gang found two of my friends that were marked with being disciplined at a Jack in the Box drive thru. The gang began to shoot at my friends and killed one of them (Frankie Ibarra), all because they refused to become part of the gang.