

**The History of Street Gangs in Winnipeg from 1945 to 1997:  
A Qualitative Newspaper Analysis of Gang Activity**

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

In the School  
of  
*Criminology*

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

July 2000

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**0-612-61432-8**

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## **Abstract**

In the last decade, street gangs have emerged as a significant social problem in many Canadian urban centers. In Winnipeg, several street gangs have become a pivotal concern of the citizenry, the media, and the government. Despite this high level of concern, there has been little academic research to help explain or understand the street gang phenomenon. This thesis attempts to remedy this situation by examining the history of street gangs in Winnipeg, an urban centre that has experienced a dramatic increase in street gang activity since the late 1980s.

The history of street gang activity is traced through a qualitative analysis of gang-related articles found in the Winnipeg Free Press from 1945 to 1997, and some tentative explanations for the rise of these gangs are offered. Prior to 1985, Winnipeg had experienced some gang-like activity. Using Gordon and Foley's (1998) typology of gangs and groups this apparent street gang activity was primarily the activities of criminal groups and youth groups, as opposed to street gangs. With the exception of one street gang, the Dew Drop Gang which emerged in 1949 and disappeared in 1950, Winnipeg was devoid of street gangs prior to the late 1980s. However, beginning in the late 1980s and early 1990s street gangs emerged rapidly and have become a permanent fixture in the city. These street gangs are the Indian Posse, the Deuce, the Manitoba Warriors and the Native Syndicate.

The emergence of these street gangs is best explained by "urban underclass theory," developed by Wilson (1987; 1996). This theory has been used to explain the growth of street gangs in the United States by Hagedorn (1998), Klein (1995) and

**Moore (1991). Data obtained from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, the Indian Registry and the Census (1986, 1991, 1996) provide support for the notion that Aboriginal people in Canada, and in Winnipeg in particular, constitute an “underclass” and this accounts for the growth of street gangs in Winnipeg.**

*This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my cousin and good friend Jeffery Giles, who in December of 1997 was a victim of gang-related violence. He was a modern day hero who had a profound impact on those people in his life. Jeff, my man, you are loved and missed by many people.*

## **Acknowledgements**

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the efforts and contributions of many influential people in my life. First, I would like to thank my senior supervisor Dr. Robert Gordon. Dr. Gordon assisted with the selection of the topic for this thesis, and he was an invaluable source of encouragement during the difficult stages of data collection, data analysis and write-up. I would also like to extend my thanks to Dr. Gordon for his prompt critique of the thesis and his encouragement during the final stages of the thesis preparation. I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Raymond Corrado who always made himself available to discuss problems I was experiencing and who was an invaluable source of information for key concepts explored in this thesis. Thanks to Dr. Stephen Hart for agreeing to act as external examiner and for his questions and encouraging comments during the thesis defense. Aili Malm, Bryan Kinney and Karen Golding deserve special thanks for helping edit my thesis during the final stages and for tolerating my idiosyncrasies. Members of the Street Gang Unit in Winnipeg were a valuable source of information on street gangs, and these officers were always available to speak with me. Professors Paul and Pat Brantingham, Terry Whin-Yates and the staff at CPAL Inc. also contributed to this thesis through their words of encouragement and their assistance with the acquisition and insertion of the graphics contained in this thesis. Finally, my success as a Master's student and this thesis would not have been possible without the ever present support and love from my friends and family.

Thank you all.

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

During the last ten years, gangs have become a topic of considerable interest in Canada. Most of the recent concern has focused on the street gangs that have emerged in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The negative public reaction is evident in the call for harsher sentences for street gang members, and even for a few, a call for vigilantism. The city's street gangs have also become a focal point for both the local and the national media, as exemplified in print media headlines such as Gang warfare, police-style (Winnipeg Free Press, 08/20/95: B1), Kids with zilch to lose (Winnipeg Free Press, 06/30/96: A1) and The street gangs of Winnipeg (Globe and Mail, 05/18/96: D5).

From a preliminary analysis of gang related articles<sup>1</sup> it was discovered that a surge of such articles first began to appear in the Winnipeg Free Press at the beginning of 1993. According to Fasiolo and Leckie (1993), an increase in gang-related articles in newspapers is "primarily precipitated by a growing social concern" about street gangs (1993: 1).

Street gangs have also become a major policy concern. The Winnipeg Police Department, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Manitoba Ministry of Justice, and the municipal, provincial, and federal governments all have devoted new resources to gang activities. Winnipeg, a city of approximately 700,000 residents, has secured the label of the "street gang capital of Canada" despite its small urban population in comparison with other large urban centers in Canada (Winnipeg Free

Press, August 20, 1995, A1). Specifically, the municipal government and the police department responded to this label and to the proliferation of street gangs by initiating a 15 member specialized Street Gang Unit within the Winnipeg Police Department in the Summer of 1995, and a Street Gang Advisory Committee<sup>2</sup>. In addition, in July 1996 the specialized Street Gang Unit, the Winnipeg City Police Service and the RCMP cooperated in a joint forces operation called Project Disarm (Ramsay, 1997). This six month project was designed to “determine the extent of street gang activity in the city of Winnipeg” and in Manitoba generally (Ramsay, 1997: 6). In addition, a zero-tolerance policy was implemented to help suppress the street gangs of Winnipeg. This theme of suppression-based tactics to deal with gangs was further evident when the federal government introduced Bill C-95, National Anti-Gang Measures, on April 17, 1997. This legislation states that:

A person would be found guilty of an indictable offence if he or she participates in or substantially contributes to the activities of a criminal organization, knowing that any or all of the members of the organization engage in or have engaged in a series of indictable offences within the proceeding five years and if that person is a party to the commission of an indictable offence for the benefit of, at the direction of, or in association with the criminal organization (Department of Justice, 2000: [www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/1997/prgangbk.html](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/1997/prgangbk.html)).

This Criminal Code amendment stipulates that a gang member who is found guilty can be sentenced to up to 14 years imprisonment. This strong reaction is exemplified in other Bill C-95 sections that allow the police swifter access to the electronic

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<sup>1</sup> Giles, C. (1998). Winnipeg's Street Gangs 1982-1997: A Qualitative Newspaper Analysis. Unpublished paper.

<sup>2</sup> The Street Gang Advisory Committee has created two staff positions to deal with the street gang phenomenon: a Gang Prevention Coordinator and a Gang Prevention Coordinator Assistant. These two positions have been granted extensive funding from all three levels of government. At the present time the mandate of the coordinator is to develop proactive policies aimed at the recruitment base of the street gangs by observing, “anti-gang campaigns in cities like Los Angeles and New York and to adapt programs for use in Winnipeg” (Ramsay, 1997: 6).

surveillance of gang members, a reverse onus bail clause, clauses for delayed parole eligibility, an expanded 'Proceeds of Crime' clause, and increased sentences for gang-related offences, such as the use of explosives in the commission of an offence (Department of Justice, 2000: [www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/1997/prgangbk.html](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/news/nr/1997/prgangbk.html)). This law was applied first against Aboriginal street gangs in Winnipeg at the end of 1999 and a significant prosecution has been launched by the Manitoba Department of Justice against 35 members<sup>3</sup> of the Manitoba Warriors street gang in Winnipeg. This case, R. v. Pangman et al., was concluded in July 2000.

It is clear, therefore, that street gangs have become a primary concern of all three levels of government. The principal response to the street gang phenomenon in Winnipeg has been the adoption of suppression tactics, such as the creation of the Street Gang Unit in the Winnipeg Police Service and the implementation of Bill C-95. These initiatives are problematic because their effectiveness is in question. There has been little research evaluating comparable programs in the United States (Howell, 1998c; Spergel, 1995; Klein, 1995). Nevertheless, the available evaluations in the United States have demonstrated that suppression programs, in isolation from other social remedies, are ineffective or even counter-productive (Hagedorn, 1998; Howell, 1998c; Goldstein, 1993; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995). The limited Canadian research suggests that a suppression program should be implemented as a component of a broader array of anti-gang programming (Gordon and Foley, 1998). Suppression programs, which are the primary response to the gang phenomenon in Winnipeg, may have the latent effect of exacerbating the gang problem.

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<sup>3</sup> Originally, the case was registered against 35 members of the Warriors, but many of them have made

## **Gangs in Canada**

There is a paucity of research on street gangs and similar groups in Canada, especially when compared with the multitude of research studies that have been conducted in the United States. An examination of the bibliography of gang-related literature compiled by Dr. James C. Howell for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the United States, indicates thousands of scholarly publications addressing the issue of gangs in that country (Howell, 1998a: <http://www.ncjrs.org/bib98.htm>).

Robert M. Gordon demonstrates the “intellectual famine” that surrounds the street gang phenomenon in Canada by noting that, until the 1990s, “the number of scholarly publications could be counted on the fingers of one hand (see, Rogers 1945; Ley 1975; Joe and Robinson 1980)” (Gordon, 1996: 312). Even though the Canadian publications are increasing rapidly, the number of academic publications involving gangs can still be counted with the fingers of two hands (see Cook, 1999; Fasiolo and Leckie 1993; Girard 1992; Gordon 1993; Gordon, 1996; Gordon, 1997; Gordon and Foley, 1998; Herbert, et al., 1999; Mathews 1993; Young 1993). According to Gordon (1996), the paucity of research on street gangs in Canada has resulted in a dependence on the massive body of knowledge on gangs that exists in the United States. This dependency is problematic since the street gang phenomenon is “markedly different” in the two countries (Gordon, 1996: 312).

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plea negotiations, and thus reduced the total number of defendants.

According to Sergeant Al Cameron<sup>4</sup>, head of the Specialized Winnipeg Street Gang Unit, in 1998, street gangs in Winnipeg were approximately 75 percent adult (i.e., 18 years and older) and were composed predominately of one ethnic group: the Aboriginal peoples (Cameron, 1998: personal communication). Yet, beyond on this demographic information, little other information is available since Canadian gang research has focused on three other Canadian cities, Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto<sup>5</sup>. The only sources of information on Winnipeg street gangs are law enforcement documents, the Winnipeg Free Press, the Canadian Press Newswire, the RCMP Gazette and other print media (e.g., Maclean's).

Research from the United States has indicated that gangs are emerging and proliferating in that country. Furthermore, gangs are actively involved in crime, and specifically they are actively involved in crimes of violence. Moreover, they are disproportionately involved in crimes of all types (including crimes of violence), and this seems to be a result of the norm structure of street gangs which facilitates and supports criminal activity (Battin, et al., 1998; Esbensen et al., 1995; Huff, 1996; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry, et al., 1995). These are important findings in light of the emergent gang problem in Canada, generally, and Winnipeg, specifically.

This thesis will attempt to provide some answers to questions which are grounded in the lack of knowledge of Winnipeg street gangs. Through a socio-

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<sup>4</sup> Cameron, A. (1998). Personal Communication. Sergeant, Winnipeg Police Service: Div. #24 - Street Gang Unit.

<sup>5</sup> This is changing as academics and professionals have undertaken some preliminary research into the street gang problem in Winnipeg, Manitoba. For example there is a restricted study commissioned by the Manitoba Department of Justice entitled, Prison Gangs at Headingly Correctional Institution: The Headingly Gang Study (1999). It was commissioned after the infamous Headingly prison riot which occurred over the days of April 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, 1996. Additionally, Cook (1999) conducted an exploratory study on street gang members in Manitoba.

historical analysis of articles and stories in the Winnipeg Free Press, from 1945 to 1997, it is possible to determine whether Winnipeg has a history of street gang activity prior to the late 1980s, and it is possible to determine whether gang activity has occurred in a wave-like fashion as in Vancouver (Young, 1993), or whether it has remained a constant feature of Winnipeg's history. In addition, this thesis provides the first descriptive chronology of street gang activity in Winnipeg, and the public reactions to street gangs in Winnipeg. The thesis provides "history lessons" (Gordon and Foley, 1998) to those who are interested in the gang phenomenon in Winnipeg.

## **Gangs in America**

Data from the United States have shown that there are many pivotal and interrelated reasons to undertake gang-related research. There has been an explosion in the number of gangs in the United States, and these gangs are heavily involved in criminal activities, particularly crimes of violence. The norm and organizational structures of street gangs support and facilitate crime, especially violent crime, and when compared to both serious offending non-gang youth and other delinquents, street gang members commit disproportionately higher numbers of criminal offences.

Many American researchers have revealed that gangs have emerged and proliferated in unprecedented numbers since the early 1980s (see Curry and Decker, 1998; Decker and Van Winkle, 1998; Howell, 1997; 1998b; 1998c; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995; Yablonsky, 1997). According to data obtained in the 1996 National Youth Gang Survey (1999), conducted in that year, the extrapolated number of gangs in the United States totaled 30,818 with a membership exceeding 846,428 gang

members. Moreover, Klein (1995) asserts that street gangs are emerging in many cities in the United States<sup>6</sup> that traditionally have not had a documented gang problem. He notes that, in 1960, 58 cities in the United States had documented gang problems but, by 1992, the number of cities with a documented gang problem had increased to 766, an increase of 345 percent. He asserts that most gang cities have a homegrown<sup>7</sup> gang problem, and this rapid emergence cannot be explained by the migration thesis of gang development (Skolnick, Bluthenthal, and Correl, 1993). Moreover, many of the new gang cities of 1992 are not major urban centres, but those with populations of less than 100, 000 residents. These findings are supported by many other American gang researchers (Howell, 1997; 1998b; 1998c; Moore, 1991; Spergel, 1995; Yablonsky, 1997). However, gang member migration, which is a “relatively new phenomenon” that surfaced in the United States beginning in 1986, is widespread (Maxson, Woods and Klein, 1996: 26). Maxson, Woods and Klein (1996) emphasize that the primary motivating factor underlying gang member migration is a result of domestic changes, particularly family moves to different locations. Furthermore, migration accounts for a relatively small portion of the proliferation of street gangs in the United States (Maxson, 1998).

The proliferation of gangs is an important issue when examined in conjunction with the increase in gang-related crime that has surfaced in the United States. Generally, most authors agree that gang-related crime has increased

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<sup>6</sup> These data were obtained from an ongoing National Gang Migration Study conducted by Malcolm Klein and Cheryl Maxson. Their survey covers respondents from 1,100 cities in the United States (Maxson, Woods and Klein, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> This means that street gangs emerged in a city independently from gangs in other locations, and did not migrate from other locations.

substantially (see Curry and Decker, 1998; Howell, 1994; 1997; 1998b; 1999; Jankowski, 1991; Klein, 1995; Moore, 1991; Spergel, 1995). Curry, Ball and Decker (1998) contend that during the two-year period from 1991 to 1993 gang-related crime has increased regardless of whether a “conservative” or a “reasonable” estimate is adopted (1998: 2-3). Curry and Decker (1998) contend that since the early 1980s the number of gangs, gang members and gang-related crimes have been increasing rapidly in the United States. Although there is some debate surrounding this issue<sup>8</sup> authors agree that gang-related crime (i.e. property crime, violent crime and drug-related crime) has been increasing (Howell, 1994; 1997; 1998b; 1999; Howell and Gleason, 1999; Huff, 1996; Klein, 1995; Maxson and Klein, 1995; Skolnick, 1995; Spergel, 1995).

When examining violent crimes specifically, the impact of gangs becomes even more apparent. According to Howell (1999), gang-related homicides have increased substantially and this is due, in part, to the increased availability of high caliber automatic firearms. In addition, the “drive-by” shooting has become a dominant means of status achievement within American street gangs (Sanders, 1995; Yablonsky, 1997). Thus, in the United States, the majority of gang homicides involve the use of a firearm, and this differs from the past. Moreover, Howell and Decker (1999) assert that gangs are actively engaged in the commission of violent crime and drug sales. They maintain that violent crime committed by gang members

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<sup>8</sup> The debate is primarily focused on the differing methods used to measure gang-related crime, not whether or not gang-related crime has actually increased. The question that is vigorously debated is “How much has gang-related crime increased?” For an interesting discussion of the definitional problem see Ball and Curry (1995), Bursik and Grasmick (1995), Curry, Ball and Fox (1998), Decker and Kempf-Leonard (1995), Maxson and Klein (1995), Winfree et al. (1998).

has steadily increased and has been “exacerbated by the ready availability of firearms, especially more lethal guns, coupled with the frequent use of automobiles in attacks on other gangs” (1999: 8). Block and Block (1995), in their analysis of gang-related crime data found that the four largest gangs in Chicago were responsible for the majority of gang related crime and that a firearm was “used in almost all gang-motivated homicides” (1995: 202). These examples suggest that gang-related crime has been increasing and is becoming more lethal. However, they do not confirm whether this is a result of the increase in gang members or an interaction between the increase in gang members and their evolving norm structures.

In general, contemporary gang researchers attribute the increase in violence to the evolving norm structure of American street gangs. Moore (1991) believes that Hispanic street gangs have become a “quasi-institution” in the barrios of East Los Angeles where the subculture of the gang is directed “towards an increase in deviance” where each new generation of gang members tries to “out do its predecessor” (1991: 45, 68). Additionally, she emphasizes that these barrio gangs have evolved and incorporated more “lethal violence and more extreme forms of ‘locura’ [craziness]” (1991: 78). She believes that “in sum, the gangs are no longer just at the rowdy end of the continuum of local adolescent groups-they are now really outside that continuum” (1991: 132). Jankowski (1991) attributes the evolving nature of gang violence to the “defiant individualism” that characterizes gang members in the United States (1991: 39). He believes that most gang violence is instrumental and that in the organizational structure of the gang “violence is the currency of life and becomes the economy of the gang” (1991: 139). Shelden, Tracy and Brown (1997)

suggest that gangs are organized around the use of violence and that in a gang, violence is accepted “as the normal and appropriate way to resolve major and minor disputes” (1997: 89). Yablonsky (1997) believes that gang members are “sociopathic<sup>9</sup>” and that this accounts for the seemingly senseless nature of their gang violence. Thornberry, and his colleagues propose that a gang operates to facilitate delinquency “for the transient gang members” and that the gang facilitates and enhances delinquency for “active gang members” (1995: 181). This contention has been supported by other researchers in many different settings in the United States (Battin, et al., 1998; Battin and Thornberry, 1998; Esbensen, et al., 1995; Huff, 1996; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry and Burch II, 1997).

It had been shown that gangs are emerging as a prominent social problem in the United States, that gangs actively participate in crime and violence, and that the norms and values of the street gangs revolve around crime and violence. However, an area that has been neglected to this point is whether gang members commit disproportionate amounts of crime as compared to other offending youth, and whether this is due to the structure of the gang or results from the association with delinquent peers. The answer to this question emerged from a series of comparison group studies and a series of longitudinal studies that have been conducted in different parts of the United States.

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<sup>9</sup> According to Yablonsky (1997), gang members have sociopathic personalities. This type of personality disorder is characterized by “a limited social conscience; egocentrism dominating most interactions, including the ‘instrumental manipulation’ of others for self-advantage; an inability to forego immediate pleasure for future goals; and a habit of pathological lying to achieve personal advantage” (1997: 105).

Huff (1996) compared a “stratified reputational sample<sup>10</sup>” of 50 gang members from Cleveland with 50 “at risk” youth in the same area (1996: 77). He found that gang members had a statistically significant higher mean number of arrests, and that the age of the first arrest for gang members was lower than the comparison group of “at risk” youth. In addition, gang members had higher rates of theft, auto theft, selling stolen goods, drug trafficking, and carrying weapons both in school and on the street, robbery and homicide. Furthermore, Huff (1996) analyzed the offending patterns of gangs as a collective to “at risk” youth as a collective and found that gangs committed much higher levels of property crime, violent crime and drug-related crime.

Esbensen and his colleagues (1995) examined a representative sample of youth in “high risk” neighborhoods, as part of the longitudinal Denver Youth Study. They found that when compared to non-offenders and non-gang offenders, gang members engaged in more street offences and more serious crimes. Battin and her colleagues examined the offending patterns of 808 students in a high crime area of Seattle as part of the longitudinal Seattle Social Development Project. These researchers found that gang members, when compared to youth with non-delinquent friends and youth with delinquent friends, scored the “highest on all measures of delinquency and substance use, with the exception of illicit drug use” (1998: 101).

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<sup>10</sup> According to Huff (1996), a stratified sample of gang members is “stratified in the sense that it intentionally included members of major gangs” and takes “into account both geography and gender,” and is reputational because it is based “on the reputations of those referred to the project by key informants” (Huff, 1996: 77-78). Huff asserts that this sample is not “perfectly representative” of gang members (1996: 77)

Thornberry and Burch II (1995) interviewed a representative sample of 1000 youth, as part of the longitudinal Rochester Youth Study. They found that 30 percent of the youth had joined a gang, but that these self-identified gang members had committed 65 percent of all self-reported delinquent acts and 86 percent of all self-reported serious crimes committed by the sample. Furthermore, Thornberry (1998) found that gang members (a delinquent peer group) had statistically significant higher mean self-reported violent delinquency indices than did all other youth with delinquent peers. This finding was consistent at eight different time intervals with the sample of youth. This led Thornberry to conclude that these types of findings “provide cause for great concern. Gang members are clearly major contributors to the level of serious and violent crime in American society especially while they are active gang members” (1998: 165).

### **The Issue of Defining a Street Gang**

The issue of defining a street gang is an extremely important since there is a lack of consensus. This section briefly examines the debate which surrounds the inconsistent nature of gang definitions. There is a definite necessity to establish a concise typology of gangs for this thesis. The definitional scheme created by Gordon and Foley (1998) is adopted in this thesis.

Since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, researchers have tackled the subject of defining a gang. This was first attempted by Thrasher (1927) with his study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago, and continues today. The debate has yet to be resolved because as Goldstein (1991) emphasizes:

Many definitions have been proposed during the last 80 years, and in a real sense all are correct. What constitutes a gang has varied with time and place, with political and economic conditions, with community tolerance and community conservatism, with level and nature of police and citizen concern, with cultural and subcultural traditions and mores, and with media-generated sensationalism or indifference to law-violating youth groups (1991: 3).

On the one hand, some gang researchers believe that some element of criminal involvement is a necessary component of any definition of a gang (Huff, 1993; Klein, 1971; 1995; Klein and Maxson, 1989; Oehme III, 1997; Spergel, 1995), while other researchers disagree (Ball and Curry, 1995; Bursik and Grasmick, 1995; Morash, 1983). Those who disagree with the inclusion of a criminal component in a gang definition, assert that this type of definition is tautological (Morash, 1983), and that crime is a correlate or outcome, not a property, of gang membership (Ball and Curry, 1995; Bursik and Grasmick, 1995). However, Klein and Maxson (1989) contend that “to think of modern street gangs independent of their criminal involvement is to ignore the very factor that makes them qualitatively different from other groups of young people” (1989: 204).

This ongoing debate which surrounds gang definitions has led some researchers to suggest that “a firm definition may not be helpful,” and that researchers should strive to keep their definitions pluralistic (Horowitz, 1990: 43). This is a tenuous position as the terms “‘gang’ and ‘group’ are used interchangeably” which leads to conceptual confusion, especially with the emergence of many different types of gangs (Klein and Maxson, 1989; 201).

For the purposes of this thesis, a concise operational definition of a street gang is warranted. This is necessary because, as Gordon and Foley (1998) point out:

*A failure to define the subject matter of a research project clearly and consistently will result in significant confusion during the research, producing inaccurate results. Valid and reliable comparative research, both within and between locations, becomes impossible and although*

there may be a proliferation of research projects the aggregate outcome may be next to useless (1998: 16).

The definitional scheme adopted in this thesis is the typology developed by Gordon and Foley (1998)<sup>11</sup>. The definitions of both a street gang and a wanna-be group are being used as the operational definitions of street gang activity in the media reports because it is unlikely that the Winnipeg Free Press would have differentiated between the two concepts, and they are interrelated groups. According to Gordon and Foley (1998), street gangs are:

Groups of young people and young adults who have banded together to form a *semi-structured* organization the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behavior or organized violence against rival street gangs. Street gangs can be distinguished from other groupings (except wannabe groups) by, (i) a self-perception of the group as a gang; (ii) a name that was selected by and is used by gang members; and, (iii) some kind of distinctive marks such as clothing or colors. The members will openly acknowledge gang membership because they want to be seen as gang members by other people but street gangs will tend to be *less visible but more structured, better organized, and more permanent than wannabe groups* (italics added, Gordon and Foley, 1998: 18).

Gordon and Foley define a wanna-be group as:

Young people who band together in a *loosely structured* group primarily to engage in *spontaneous* social activity and *exciting, impulsive*, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths. A wannabe group will be highly visible and its members will openly acknowledge their "gang" involvement because they want to be seen by others as gang members. This group will have a local gathering area and a name, selected and used by its members, which may be a modified version of the name of either a local or an American street gang. The group may use clothing, colors, or some other kind of identifying marks. The group's name, meeting ground, and colors may fluctuate (italics added, Gordon and Foley, 1998: 17-18).

In these definitions, Gordon and Foley (1998) assert that a street gang is very similar to a wannabe group, which necessitates the inclusion of the definition of that group. Furthermore, Gordon and Foley accept that these two "definitions are not perfect," that connections between the two types of groups occur and that overlap between the

groups exist (1998: 103). Thus, a wannabe group may evolve into a street gang or street gang members may initiate a wannabe group.

The typology developed by Gordon and Foley (1998), of groups commonly referred to as gangs was selected for several reasons. The first is that this scheme focuses on the different structural organization, demographic characteristics and motivations of members of each group. These dimensions allow for the differentiation of a street gang from other criminal groups. In contrast, other theorists, such as Klein (1971; 1995), Huff (1993), Taylor (1990) and Yablonsky (1997), provide definitions of a few varieties of gangs or focus on one type of gang - the youth gang. The second reason for using this typology is that Gordon and Foley focused specifically on “the prior development and testing of a typology of groups generally defined as gangs” (1998: 16). This is not a central concern of most of the past and contemporary gang-focused research. The bulk of American gang research in which a definition of a street gang is present, focuses on explaining the emergence, development or impact of the gang, not delineating the definition of a street gang (see Decker and Van Winkle, 1998; Huff, 1993; Klein 1971; 1995; Spergel, 1995). The third reason is that there is no “single acceptable definition of a gang” and that definitions “vary with time and place” (Goldstein 1991: 3). Gordon and Foley’s definitions are based on current Canadian research which makes them the most suitable for a thesis which focuses on Canadian gangs (e.g., the United States has a long-standing gang tradition which may be different from the Canadian experience). The last reason for the selection of these definitions is that the definition of a street

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<sup>11</sup> For a complete description of all the groups commonly referred to as gangs in the literature see

gang used by the Winnipeg Specialized Street Gang Unit is overly inclusive and inappropriate for this thesis. The Winnipeg Street Gang Unit defines a street gang as:

**Any group or association or other body consisting of five or more persons, whether formally or informally organized, having as one of its primary activities the commission of an indictable offense under the Criminal Code or any other Act of Parliament, for which the maximum punishment is imprisonment for five years or more, and any or all of the members of which engage in or have, within the preceding five years, engaged in the commission of a series of such offenses (Ramsay, 1997: 10-11).**

It is obvious from the preceding definition that any of the groups defined in the typology used by Gordon and Foley could be labeled a gang under this definition (see Appendix A).

The thesis is structured into four chapters that follow this introduction. Chapter II reviews the work of the main contributors to gang research, which come primarily from the United States. This review focuses on those authors who have developed or contributed to a theoretical understanding of the emergence and proliferation of street gangs. The review is presented in chronological order beginning with the work of Thrasher (1927) and ending with the contributions of Klein (1995), Decker and Van Winkle (1998), and Hagedorn (1998). In addition, this chapter presents a discussion of the "urban underclass" theory proposed by Wilson (1987; 1996), and its application to an understanding of gang emergence and proliferation. This chapter also discusses the Canadian contributions to gang research.

Chapter III presents a descriptive socio-historical analysis of street gang activity in Winnipeg from 1945 to 1997. This chronology of street gang activity describes the use of the term 'gang' prior to the most recent wave of gang activity

experienced in Winnipeg. This is similar to the work of Michael Young (1993), who traced the history of gangs in Vancouver from 1900 to 1985, and will allow comparative work to be done between Winnipeg and Vancouver. The method used to collect and analyze the gang-related articles obtained from the Winnipeg Free Press is set out in Appendix B. It was found that the term “gang” was used fairly sparingly in the newspaper, even though gang activity was being reported in the United States and other major urban centres in Canada (Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto). Prior to the proliferation of street gangs in Winnipeg during the late 1980s, one street gang did emerge: the “Dew Drop Gang”. The second section of the chapter describes the post-1985 wave of street gang activity in Winnipeg, as reported in the Winnipeg Free Press. This includes a description of the street gangs, their activities, and governmental responses to the proliferation of the gangs.

Chapter IV examines the ecological context of First Nations people in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Canada. The examination begins with a discussion of the characteristics and circumstances of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, and a discussion of the circumstances of Aboriginal people in Manitoba and the prairie region of Canada, an area renowned for some of the most marginalized Aboriginal people both on reserves (Armstrong, 1999) and in urban centres (La Prairie, 1994). American literature suggests that the most marginalized members of this group represent what has been labeled the “urban underclass” (Wilson, 1987; 1996), and is currently one of the foremost explanations for the emergence of street gangs in the United States (Klein, 1995). This analytical framework is applied to explain the emergence of

**Aboriginal street gangs in Manitoba. These gangs seem to be permanent fixtures in Winnipeg, and have yet to show any sign of disappearing.**

**In Chapter V, the results of the research are placed against the backcloth of the Canadian gang literature, and contributions this thesis makes to gang policy and gang programs are discussed. Finally, suggestions for future gang research are emphasized, as there is a paramount need for socio-historical and other types of gang research to continue in Canada.**

## **Chapter II: Explaining the Emergence and Proliferation of Street Gangs.**

The first part of this chapter reviews the main contributions to gang theory, focusing primarily on gang emergence and proliferation in different American contexts. This includes an examination of the contributions of past gang researchers (pre-1980s), such as Thrasher (1927) and Cohen (1955), and the subsequent developments by modern gang researchers (post-1980), such as Moore (1991), Vigil (1994), Klein (1995) and Hagedorn (1998). The second part of this chapter examines the work of gang researchers in Canada, highlighting the deficiencies in the Canadian knowledge base, and stressing the importance of addressing this problem to achieve an understanding of street gangs in a Canadian context.

### **The American Gang Literature**

The literature documenting the American gang experience began with the groundbreaking work of Frederick Thrasher (1927) and his study of 1,313 gangs in Chicago. According to Thrasher, gangs emerge in socially disorganized “interstitial areas” which he labeled “gangland”. These areas were characterized by:

**Disintegration of the family life, inefficiency of schools, formalism and externality of religion, corruption and indifference in local politics, low wages in occupational activities, unemployment, and lack of opportunity for wholesome recreation (Thrasher 1963: 33).**

These factors, coupled with the crowded nature and general physical deterioration of “gangland,” were the conditions necessary for the emergence of gangs.

Thrasher asserted that gangs began in an embryonic stage as “spontaneous play-groups” (1963: 23). In order to become a gang, these playgroups must elicit

“opposition and disapproval” from authorities, community residents or other established gangs (1963: 26). According to Thrasher, this process created a “diffuse” gang which is the first developmental stage of a gang. Thrasher maintained that all gangs “represent a spontaneous effort of boys to create a society for themselves” in a disorganized environment (1963: 32).

William Whyte, in Street Corner Society, countered the social disorganization thesis espoused by Thrasher (1927) and Shaw and McKay (1931). Whyte contended that “corner boy” gangs arise “out of habitual association of members over a long period of time” (1993: 255). Additionally, he contended that these gangs were products of childhood associations by children who reside in close proximity. He argued that the slum (Cornerville) from which these gangs emerge is organized around a set of norms that differ from the middle class (i.e., reciprocal obligations). The “corner gangs” were a reflection of these norms because they lacked the opportunities required to participate in the larger middle class society (Whyte, 1993).

Albert Cohen (1955) developed a subcultural theory of gang development. He emphasized that lower class socialization inadequately prepares youth for competition in the larger society which is dominated by middle class norms and values (i.e., ambition and individual responsibility). The inadequate socialization combined with low ascribed status produced adjustment problems for many lower class youth. These factors impaired their ability to achieve status in a society which is founded on the standards of the middle class (Cohen, 1964).

Cohen posited that the delinquent gang represented one of a few possible adaptations available to lower class youth who have experienced problems of status

achievement. Cohen asserted that the combination of an individual's "personality and situation" propelled them into a gang (1964: 109). According to Cohen, the delinquent gang uses the mechanism of "reaction-formation" to "repudiate" the "middle class standards" and the gang adopts "their very anti-thesis" (1964: 129). Through the process of reaction formation the gang establishes new status norms that incorporate the abilities which members possess. Additionally, Cohen asserted that the achieved status, acquired through reaction formation, necessitated a group structure. This is imperative because it is the gang or reference group which validates and accords status to the members (Cohen, 1964).

Walter Miller (1958) proposed a culture-conflict theory to explain the emergence of gangs. He asserted that gangs emerged from the lower class culture which has a "long-standing, distinctively patterned tradition with an integrity of its own" (1968: 136). According to Miller, the culture of the lower class espouses the norms of trouble, toughness, smartness, excitement, fate and autonomy. Miller maintained that the prevalence of male gangs is "directly related to the prevalence" of the single parent, female headed family in the lower class community (1968: 147).

Miller espoused that the delinquent gang:

Provides the first real opportunity to learn the essential aspects of the male role in the context of peers facing similar problems of sex-role identification (1968: 148).

In addition, the delinquent gang fulfills belonging needs and adult status needs of youth "through a maximization or an intensified manifestation" of the lower class culture (1968: 151). Miller concluded that the criminal behavior of gang members is a product of the intensified adherence to the lower class value system.

Herbert Bloch and Arthur Niederhoffer (1958) refuted the propositions that locate the cause of gang emergence in the lower class community or culture. Through cross-cultural comparisons these authors demonstrated that gangs existed in many different cultures and in different social classes. Bloch and Niederhoffer asserted that gangs are an adolescent phenomenon caused by the general "grouping process of adolescence" (1958: 10) which is characterized "as a phase of striving for adult status" (1958: 17). These authors stressed that the United States was characterized by a prolonged adolescent period in which adolescence is not a recognizable status. In the absence of puberty rites which confer an adult status, the gang provides a youth with symbolic indicators of adult status within the context of the gang. The gang provides:

The individual member ego support and courage. He gains a psychological sense of power and manhood which he does not possess at all when he is on his own (1958: 217).

In 1960, Cloward and Ohlin developed their theory of Delinquency and Opportunity. This theory expanded Merton's theory of Social Structure and Anomie (1938). According to Cloward and Ohlin:

Adolescents who form delinquent subcultures... have internalised an emphasis upon conventional goals. Faced with limitations on legitimate avenues of access to these goals...they experience intense frustrations; the exploration of nonconformist alternatives may be the result. (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960: 86).

However, Cloward and Ohlin assert that within the illegitimate opportunity structure in lower class areas there are "socially structured differentials in illegitimate opportunities" (1960: 148). In order for gangs to achieve success in the illegitimate world, its members must incorporate the deviant values, learn the appropriate criminal behaviors through tutelage from other criminals, and they must have the opportunity to access the illegitimate means in their community (Cloward, 1959).

Spergel (1964; 1966) proposed a theory of gang development which synthesized the theoretical underpinnings of Cloward and Ohlin (1960) and Miller (1958). In this theory, Spergel points to the impact of differing opportunity structures that materialize in different types of neighborhoods. However, he asserts that gang development was not simply the result of the opportunity structures that existed in the environments of gangs but that:

The delinquent subculture is the dominant system of beliefs, norms and values of delinquent groups. It may be regarded as a response to three major sociocultural conditions within a neighborhood context: the lower class culture, the youth culture, and the opportunity system (1964: 1).

From this perspective, Spergel identified three types of gangs that emerged in different communities. Spergel emphasized that violence and aggression were key features in all three gang types, but that violence materialized for different purposes (1964). The first type of gang, the "racket group" (located in Racketville), were gangs that had evolved from "juvenile play groups" (1966: 6). Spergel asserts that members of these groups had prior associations with each other long before they formed a gang. Racketville was characterized by high levels of illegitimate or "quasi-legitimate" opportunities (1966: 8) in which youth involved in a gang "aspired to be racketeers" (1964: 61). The second type of gang, the "conflict group," was found in the most deprived and depressed communities (Slumtown). Group violence was prevalent because in these depressed communities fighting, for youth, was one of the sole ways of "obtaining prestige and reputation" (1964: 61). These types of gangs tended to be fluid because most of the youth involved had families who "recently settled in the urban slum" (1966: 11). The last type of gang, "theft groups" (found in Haulberg), were not formed through childhood associations, but were loosely knit

groups who formed in order to obtain material goods which were unavailable through legitimate channels (Spergel, 1964: 1966). The environment in which these gangs rose is characterized by a “weakened sense of cohesion” with a prevalent outgrowth of “lower class tradition and structure” (1966: 8).

The majority of contemporary gang theorists (post-1980) have extended and modified earlier theories of gang emergence. Campbell (1991) examined the neglected area of female participation in gangs, using a life history approach with three female gang members. She asserted that American gangs and female members constitute a “counterculture” which is capitalistic and materialistic in nature. Campbell noted many common themes in the lives of members prior to and after becoming involved with a gang. She discovered that these women experienced severe emotional and geographic instability coupled with extreme poverty. In addition, the women were subjugated to a subservient position in the domestic sphere and experienced high levels of domestic violence (1991).

Within the “counterculture” setting of the gang other important themes emerged. Female gang members emphasized the importance of “toughness” and “craziness” in the establishment of a reputation or status (which served a defensive role in that no other female would want confront a female with a tough reputation). In addition, the women were attempting to escape from a sense of isolation in their lives through participation in a gang. Furthermore, the women were extremely territorial with respect to their male partners, and they accepted their auxiliary and subservient role to the male gang. She concludes by emphasizing that the gangs she

studied employ the group structure to achieve success through criminal endeavors (1991).

According to Spergel (1995), gangs develop in communities that are characteristically low-income and socially disorganized. He asserts that “the process of becoming a gang member occurs through the interaction of defective parenting as well as certain community forces” in low income areas (1995: 127). In addition, problems associated with school, which include the deteriorating school environment in most inner cities, contribute to individuals becoming involved with a gang. According to Spergel, the disorganization, deprivation and instability which characterize many ghetto communities compel youth to join a gang to fulfill their basic needs for personal safety, recreation, money, a substitute family, and status. Spergel contends that the “strong need for status” of gang members occurs because their environment is characterized by a chronic “lack of resources,” and a lack of alternative social outlets (1995: 109).

Ko-Lin Chin (1996) argues that Chinese street gangs emerged in New York because of problems (e.g., language barriers, poverty, family problems, etc.) experienced during the mass immigration of Chinese to the United States. A minority of Chinese immigrants join street gangs, which present viable financial gain opportunities (protection rackets and extortion) in the illegitimate order in Chinatowns. According to Chin (1996), these individuals “are predominantly underclass adolescents who enter gangs for material gain, protection, power, and excitement” (1996: 123). Unlike many other minority communities Chinatowns are highly organized. Chin asserts that Chinese street gangs are an integral part of the

organization of the “legitimate and illegitimate social order in Chinatowns” (1996: 19). He postulates that, generally, Chinese gangs are affiliated with a criminal business organization representative, called a tong. Furthermore, unlike most other gangs, Chinese gangs are actively created by tongs. These tongs assist Chinese gang members by teaching them the structure of the illegitimate market. They provide illegitimate financial opportunities to gang members, and they delineate a territory in which the gang can operate. In return, the Chinese street gangs reinforce the legitimacy of the adult tongs. In addition, the gang members act as “street soldiers” who maintain the legitimate and illegitimate interests of tongs (1996: 19). Chin concludes that, in Chinatowns, street gang members and adult organized criminals have mutually beneficial or symbiotic relationships. Interestingly, he cites Chinese tradition as a factor in youth gang maintenance and development, in that gang victimization, through extortion of the legitimate and illegitimate business community, is “normalized and institutionalized” (Chin, 1996: 98).

Many contemporary researchers have applied the “urban underclass” thesis of William Wilson (1987; 1996) to explain the emergence and proliferation of street gangs in the United States, and this theory deserves special attention here. Wilson (1987; 1996) posits that the United States is experiencing an unprecedented increase in a population he labels the urban underclass (especially inner-city African Americans). According to Wilson, since the 1960s, the United States has been experiencing a population explosion of low-income, inner city minorities which has coincided with changes in the employment base at the national level. Wilson demonstrates that Western economies have shifted “from goods-producing to service-

producing industries,” resulting in a “polarization of the labor market into a low-wage and high wage” dichotomy of employment opportunity (1987: 39). The majority of the urban underclass is ill prepared to compete for the high-wage, high-skill job opportunities. This shift in the employment sector also coincided with the “exodus of the middle- and working-class minority families” from the inner city (1987: 56) and this exodus removed the social buffering effects (i.e., exposure to conventional norms, access to job networks), provided by these families (Wilson, 1987: 56).

These processes resulted in the massive concentration of impoverished minority families in the inner city, which were also socially isolated from the dominant society. Wilson emphasizes that unemployment substantially reduces the “male marriageable pool index,” which is the proportion of men “who are in a position to support a family” (1987: 82). This is exacerbated by the finding that as unemployment becomes prevalent amongst inner city minorities, they:

Grow bitter and resentful in the face of their employment prospects and often manifest or express those feelings in their harsh, often dehumanizing, low-wage work settings. Their attitudes and actions, combined with erratic work histories in high-turnover jobs, create the widely shared perception that they are undesirable workers. This perception in turn becomes the basis for employers’ negative hiring decisions, which sharply increase when the economy is weak (Wilson, 1996: 144).

Furthermore, the extremely high levels of unemployment in inner city populations lead to unprecedented levels of familial and marital dissolution. Wilson asserts that for many inner city “women facing marital dissolution, the situation is significantly different...because they tend to have fewer resources and are far less likely to remarry” (1987: 77). This, combined with unprecedented levels of out of wedlock births in the inner city, has resulted in the prevailing female-headed family unit. Wilson (1996) puts it succinctly, when he states that:

In communities where the young people have little reason to believe that they have a promising future-including the prospects of stable employment and stable marriages-the absence of strong normative pressure to resolve out-of-wedlock pregnancies through marriage resulted in an explosion of single-parent families (1996: 107).

Furthermore, single inner city mothers, in addition to the exploitative employment that exists in the inner city, usually earn "substantially less than that of a male worker and are not likely to be supplemented with income from a second full-time employed member of the household" (1987: 27). Wilson asserts that these types of families tend to be the most disadvantaged, financially and educationally, as compared with other family types. The vast majority of these families are trapped in the inner city as they are not remotely prepared to compete in the high skill, service-producing industries in the United States (Wilson, 1987).

Hagedorn (1998) and Hagedorn and Macon (1995) in Milwaukee, and Klein (1995) and Moore (1991) in Los Angeles have embraced the concept of the urban underclass to explain the emergence and proliferation of street gangs in the United States. Moore (1991) contends that barrio gangs in the early 20th century arose as "friendship groups" in a clearly defined territory (1991: 30). According to Moore, the Chicano barrios of East Los Angeles have had a longstanding gang tradition. However, in the latter part of the century with the removal of legalized segregation, and the changing nature of the labor market:

Most Chicanos who were able to leave the community did so, leaving a residue of elderly and of poor and uneducated young people, and making room for a vast influx of immigrants eager to take advantage of any opening in the system. The combined effect of increased immigration and economic restructuring had implications not only for young adults, but also for children in East Los Angeles. By the 1980s, the population of East Los Angeles was overwhelmingly of Mexican origin, but the native born were not necessarily the most advantaged. Clearly some were still in school and at work, but the social structure had changed so that the young men and women who joined gangs had far less chance to find the kind of work that would encourage them to cut loose their adolescent ties (1991: 23).

Moore asserts that as a result of the changing structure of society and high levels of immigration, gangs, in marginalized barrios, have evolved into a “quasi-institutionalized agent of socialization” (1991: 30). Moore maintains that gang members remain tied to the gang into adulthood because job networks have degenerated, and low wage, exploitative labor remains the only employment option. In addition, gangs emerge and operate to structure the lives of many of the youth living in barrios. Due to the effect of the urban underclass, “street socialization,” which is manifested in the structure of the barrio gang, has replaced “legitimate institutions of socialization” that are absent or ineffective in the barrio of East Los Angeles (1991: 6). Moore (1991) contends that gang members tend to have the most distressed histories, and the gang fulfills the socialization needs of barrio youth, in the wake of the failure of the two other most important agents (the school and family) of socialization. It is Moore’s contention that these factors have produced gangs in the barrios that “are no longer just at the rowdy end of the continuum of local adolescent groups they are really outside the continuum” (1991: 132).

Klein (1995) asserts that the emergence of the urban underclass “is the foremost cause” of contemporary street gangs (1995: 194). He asserts that gangs emerge and proliferate as a result of a combination of factors, many of which are the direct result of the “urban underclass”. Klein asserts that the out-migration of the middle class in formerly segregated ghettos, the shift in the industrial modes of production (from a goods producing to a serviced based economy), segregation and the “failure of the educational system” have created a set of “onset variables” for gangs (1995: 196-199). The latent effects of these underclass variables have

produced a mass of disenfranchised youth in an area characterized by the “absence of community and informal controls” (1995: 199), and a lack of supportive employment. In addition, these marginalized areas (ghettos) are devoid of “acceptable alternative activities” (1995: 199), have a high crime rate and a concentration of marginalized minorities. According to Klein, these gang onset variables are the preconditions for the emergence of street gangs, and they interact with what Klein (1995) terms “proximal maintenance variables” (1995: 199). These maintenance variables are structures and institutions that are opposed to gangs, such as the police, the presence of other gangs, “shared perceptions of barriers to improvement” and gang intervention programs (1995: 199). Klein contends that these oppositional structures serve to increase cohesiveness, and thus, solidify the gang against common threats (Klein, 1995).

Klein argues that the psychological deficiencies of gang members, which generally result from the onset and maintenance variables, are satisfied within the structure of a street gang. These include status needs, a sense of identity, and a sense of belonging. Finally, Klein contends that the diffusion and dissemination (the media, music, television and film) of youth and gang culture has had a tremendous impact on the growth of gangs in the United States. The diffusion of gang culture provides a glamorized and romanticized version of gang life and provides roles and role models for gang members to emulate. It is the contention of Klein (1995) that these four complex and interrelated sets of variables provide the most adequate and realistic explanation for the unprecedented wave of gang proliferation in the United States.

**Hagedorn and Macoun (1995) and Hagedorn (1998) emphasize that the recent explosion in the growth of street gangs, in Milwaukee, is due to the emergent underclass problem. This is evidenced by the fact that youth no longer “mature out” as they once did in the past (1995: 134). The delayed “maturing out” is a result from the fact that, in Milwaukee, employment options for underclass youth “are more likely to be part-time, and low wage, more like their youthful jobs than the full-time unionized stable jobs of the past” (1995: 134). According to Hagedorn and Macoun, the marginalized position of underclass youth is exacerbated by the fact that most gang youth do not complete secondary school. These authors assert that in an era dominated by high skill service provision employment those youth who drop out of school cannot find “good jobs” because they require “a much higher level of education” (1995: 135). Finally, unlike minority groups in the past, African Americans have almost no political power to realize their interests and they have and continue to experience severe forms of racism and discrimination. Hagedorn (1998) posits that the gang operates to provide members with some minimal basic necessities, such as money and a social network, in an area (e.g., a neighborhood) characterized by hopelessness and degradation.**

**In 1988, Vigil developed a holistic theory of gang formation which analyzed the contemporary gang phenomenon at all levels of analysis. This perspective he labeled the “multiple marginality” theory of gang development. Vigil (1994) maintains that the majority of barrios were created in the early 20th Century. Mexican immigrants were segregated in the marginal interstitial areas (with low housing costs) close to the workplace because of widespread racism and low wage**

employment. As the immigration of Hispanics continued, these immigrants settled in the marginal areas because of their impoverishment and to avoid culture shock (by residing with people with a similar cultural heritage). Vigil asserts that some barrio residents were able to adapt to their marginal position, while others were unsuccessful. As the cycle of poverty and its related stressors (family violence, alcoholism, etc.) continued with each successive generation a smaller underclass (regular and peripheral gang members emerge from the most marginal families) emerged in the barrios in California. Additionally, the Mexican youth residing within a barrio lacked adequate employment opportunities which increased the amount of time spent pursuing alternate activities.

The marginalized ecological and socioeconomic position of many barrio residents influenced the sociocultural development amongst barrio residents. According to Vigil, a *cholo* subculture evolved among barrio youth in response to this marginalized position. This subculture continues to evolve in California barrios with each subsequent generation. The *cholo* subculture is an American by-product, which represents an adaptation of Mexican youth who experience problems associated with acculturation. Vigil maintains that the Hispanic street gang is the epitome of the *cholo* subculture and it is from this subculture that gangs emerged. Hispanic youth with large amounts of free time, familial stress, lack of parental control, problems in school, and problems with the criminal justice system, turn to the streets for socialization.

The marginalized barrio family is an inadequate socializing force due to extended working hours in exploitative employment for the parents and pervasive

domestic abuse (i.e., substance, physical and sexual). Barrio schools, another important socializing institution, are inadequate because of widespread prejudice, discrimination and a lack of cultural sensitivity. Contacts with law enforcement institutions are negatively perceived by barrio residents. Under these conditions, the Hispanic street gang emerges as the main socializing force in the lives of marginalized barrio youth.

Additionally, the multi-generational nature of Hispanic street gangs makes it likely that many family role models have been gang members (brothers, sisters, parents, uncles). These family role models add legitimacy to the street gang and offer a status to which youth aspire. Furthermore, the advent of age-graded *klikas* within gangs provides the potential gang member with pre-set roles to observe and gang norms to internalize.

Vigil illustrates the processes operating at the level of the individual, which leads to gang affiliation. A marginalized individual who lacks a sense of self-identity finds many roles and norms which will provide them with identity and status. Group processes, roles and norms that exist within a gang shape this individual identity. Thus, aggressive behavior becomes paramount to the establishment of a status because it is an important survival behavior in the barrios. Additionally, youth who lack a strong self-identity may be motivated to join a gang as a result of pressure (explicit or implicit) to conform to the behavior of their peer groups.

Other contemporary gang theorists have focused specifically on the level of the individual to account for the emergence of street gangs. Jankowski (1991) rejects the traditional notions of gang development proposed by most of the authors referred

to in this Chapter. He contends that inner city youth do not join gangs because of dysfunctional families, lack of education, or lack of job skills or that youth are socialized into a gang. Instead, Jankowski (1991) posits that inner city ghettos are dominated by a Hobbesian order, where “intense competition for the scarce resources” is rampant (1991: 22). In these inner city societies, “a defiant individualist character” arises among some individuals as a means of survival (1991: 23). According to Jankowski, a defiant individualist manifests several key traits, such as a sense of competitiveness, a sense of mistrust, self-reliance, social isolation, a survival instinct, a defiant air, and a Social Darwinist worldview (1991: 23-26). Jankowski maintains that defiant individualists join a gang through a rational cost/benefit analysis in which they calculate the value of gang membership along six motivational dimensions. He contends that the organizational structure of the gang “is able to take a disparate group of individuals who possess defiant individualist dispositions and incorporate them into a functional organization” (1991: 99).

Yablonsky (1997) proposes that the sociopathy or sociopathic personalities of some inner city youth are causal factors in the emergence of violent street gangs. He asserts that individuals with sociopathic personalities form violent gangs because they “have difficulty in functioning in normal, demanding groups” (1997: 195). The “near-group” structure of the violent gang incorporates “non-demanding roles” and “serves as a socially desirable adjustment pattern” that accords status to the “macho-syndrome behavior” of sociopathic members (1997: 192).

There have also been a few gang researchers who posit the protective nature of the gang within a hostile environment as a key to an understanding of gang

development (Decker and Van Winkle, 1998; Shelden, Tracy and Brown, 1997). Shelden, Tracy and Brown (1997) acknowledge the extremely detrimental impact of economic restructuring on the growth of gangs, as members of underclass communities are relegated to the “secondary labor market, which consists of unstable jobs with low wages, and with little or no career opportunities” (1997: 60). However, they assert that in these environments youth are exposed to extremely high levels of direct and indirect violence. In essence, these authors assert that many gang-involved youth have become desensitized to violence and may even suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Shelden, Tracy and Brown (1997) assert that violence is such a persistent reality in all spheres of life in American ghettos that many youth join gangs for a sense of protection. Additionally, youth who have had extended exposure to violence use it to resolve conflict in their lives and this is nurtured in the gang and status is accorded to the individual member for acts of violence. Thus, they view gang members as both “victims and victimizers” (1997: 88).

In a similar vein, Decker and Van Winkle (1998) emphasize the critical role of the “threat of violence” in the origin of gangs (1998: 20). These authors acknowledge that “structural forces,” such as the underclass variables create the context in which the role of threat operates, but that the materialization of threat, especially the threat of violence, creates street gangs (1998: 21). The first way that threat operates to prompt the appearance of gangs is that “groups form for protection against outside groups” (1998: 21). The second role is that threat produces a proliferation of gangs because the real or perceived threat of violence from outside sources increases the cohesiveness of the gang. Thirdly, as gangs proliferate in numbers they become a

threat to the larger community and society. This effectively isolates them “from legitimate social institutions such as school and the labor market” (1998: 23). According to Decker and Van Winkle (1998), the centrality of threat becomes important because it creates, exacerbates, and perpetuates the marginalized position of gang members, at least in their research site: St. Louis, Missouri.

This Chapter has highlighted the extensive theoretical developments of American gang researchers since the earlier part of the twentieth century. An in-depth understanding of street gangs is apparent in many different American contexts, and this knowledge continues to expand in the United States, as many gang-focused studies are being conducted with extensive funding from federal organizations, such as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

## **The Canadian Gang Literature**

For the most part, the research that has been completed in Canada is either exploratory in nature, or has little to do with achieving an understanding of the causal factors involved in the emergence and proliferation of gangs in Canada.

One of the first Canadian gang studies was conducted by Joe and Robinson (1980), who examined the factors underlying the emergence of Asian gangs in Vancouver. These authors used a multi-faceted approach with a sample of 13 Asian gang members. According to Joe and Robinson, the emergence of Chinese gangs in Vancouver, during the mid-1970s, was the result of three interrelated factors. The first was that the newly arrived Chinese immigrant families were in some way dysfunctional in Canadian society. Joe and Robinson assert that youth in these

families were neglected because their parents, as a result of their immigrant status, were forced to work multiple jobs and long hours to provide the necessities for their families. Thus, the “traditionally close Chinese family unit did not exist” (1980: 342). The second factor was the “absence of kinship groups” (e.g., relatives, etc.) who monitored and helped define behavioral norms for the Asian youth (1980: 342). The last underlying factor that accounted for the emergence of Asian gangs was the notion that Chinese immigrant youth experienced blocked legitimate opportunities available to the status quo. Joe and Robinson assert that this results, for the most part, from school failure (e.g., problems with English). According to Joe and Robinson (1980), the notion of blocked opportunities in conjunction with the other factors explains why Asian youth gangs tends to be organized around lucrative crimes of profit (such as racketeering and theft).

Following the study by Joe and Robinson (1980), Canadian interest in gangs subsided, until the early 1990s when a series of preliminary studies rekindled the interest. In 1993, Fasiolo and Leckie studied the depiction of gangs in the print media, through a quantitative content analysis of Canadian newsprint. The authors examined 120 gang related newspaper articles published between July 1, 1992 and October 31, 1992. According to Fasiolo and Leckie, the media characterizes gangs “as being a modern phenomenon, widespread and a threat to society” (1993: 22). In addition, these authors found that the media tends to amalgamate all the different types of gangs into one common threat, that the social causes of gang emergence are neglected, that the media polarizes gangs into “an ‘us’ and ‘them’ mentality”, and that there were regional differences in the number of articles reported in the print media

(1993: 25). Fasiolo and Leckie tap into Stanley Cohen's (1980) notion of a moral panic by concluding that the depictions of gangs in the media tend to reinforce a "lack of understanding" that "breeds fear" (1993: 25).

Young (1993) studied the portrayal of gangs in the media in Vancouver, through a qualitative newspaper analysis. The purpose of this study was to trace the history of gang activity in Vancouver, and to accomplish this objective he analyzed all gang-related articles in The Province newspaper from 1900 to 1985. Young found that, since 1900, there have been three distinct waves of gang activity. According to Young (1993), the first wave of gang activity (1924 to 1931) was dominated by reports of "corner lounge gangs" (1993: 37), while the second wave of gang activity (1944 to 1959) was dominated by "zoot suit and hoodlum gangs" (1993: 41). The third wave of gang activity (1959 to 1975) was represented by "park gangs and fascist gangs" (1993: 62). Furthermore, by using the number of gang-related articles as an indicator of actual gang activity, Young (1993) tried to account for the emergence of youth gangs in the three distinct waves. He found a small direct relationship between gang activity and inward migration and a negative association between gang activity and unemployment.

Mathews' (1993) work took a different approach than the media based analysis of gang activity. He conducted an exploratory study with 12 youth gang members in Toronto, and focused his study on "the perceptions and experiences of youth" gang members (1993: 10). Mathews' work included interviews with the parents of reputed gang members, victims of gang-related crime, police officers, school officials and social workers, and correction officials (1993: 10-11). He found

wide variations in the types of gangs and, from his data, he derived a typology that encompassed eight types of gangs. In addition, Mathews developed a “descriptive and explanatory” seven stage “gang/group involvement cycle” that gang members progress through to become involved and committed to a gang (1993: 78). Mathews concludes that

Responding to youth gangs/groups and youth violence should not be a process of simply focusing on the youth themselves but must include thoughtful reflection on the institutions and the professionals who serve them. There is much in our institutions and professional practices that support and encourage youth violence (1993: 93).

Beginning in 1993, Gordon deviated from the preliminary and exploratory research which characterizes most gang research in Canada. He engaged in a series of studies<sup>12</sup> on the gang experience in Vancouver (Gordon, 1993; 1996; 1997; 2000; Gordon and Foley 1998). Gordon and Foley (1998) interviewed 128 known gang members to develop a concise definitional and classification scheme of gangs, to develop a profile of Vancouver gang members, and to provide some preliminary insights into the causes of gangs (especially street gangs and wannabe groups) in Vancouver. Gordon asserts that when investigating the causes of gang emergence:

There is no single and simple answer to the frequently posed question, “why do individuals become involved with gangs?” This, in part, is because the question itself is not terribly useful. It makes more sense to ask why people become involved with criminal business organizations, or with street gangs, or with wanna-be groups. The answers differ (Gordon, 2000: 49).

According to Gordon and Foley, in Vancouver, street gangs emerged as a result of three inter-related variables. These are, in order of importance: peer group attraction, dysfunctional family backgrounds, and the financial rewards of gang membership (1998: 49-54). Additionally some street gangs emerge as “mutual

protection societies” (Gordon, 1997: 45). However, Gordon and Foley found that dysfunctional family backgrounds and peer group attraction (in order of importance) were key explanatory variables for youth involved in wannabe groups. According to Gordon (2000) and Gordon and Foley (1998), the emergence of criminal business organizations is much more easily explained. As the majority of these individuals were recent immigrants to Canada with language difficulties, members of criminal business organizations joined “in order to overcome their economic marginality and achieve the economic status valued by the larger Canadian society” (Gordon, 2000: 50). The work of Gordon and Foley (1998) is the first contemporary Canadian gang study which is not exploratory in nature. However, it is apparent, through a review of the American literature, that much more theoretical development is necessary to explain street gangs in their Canadian context.

The focus of gang research has begun to shift from Vancouver to Winnipeg, as Aboriginal gangs have become the object of attention. Cook (1999) examined the Aboriginal gang phenomenon in rural and urban Manitoba. She interviewed eight rural and six urban youth involved with gangs, police officers, correctional officials and social resource officials. Cook examined the differing ways in which these social actors defined a street gang, the profile of Aboriginal street gang members, and gang recruitment patterns. Furthermore, she examined the links between street gangs and organized crime, prison, youth detention centres, and community resources. From her analysis, Cook asserts that:

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<sup>12</sup> This work has culminated in the most extensive Canadian study on gangs. It is entitled Criminal Business Organizations, Street Gangs and Related Groups in Vancouver: The Report of the Greater Vancouver Gang Study (1998).

Aboriginal youth become involved in gang as a result of social disorganization, poverty, lack of education and racism. Indeed, the youth that participated in this project experienced all four of these indicators and attributed this to their involvement with the gang. The one factor present in all cases was the complete lack of male parental involvement in the lives of these youth (1999: 10).

The trend of exploratory research on gangs in Canada continued with a study by Hebert and her colleagues (1999) in Montreal. These researchers interviewed 31 gang involved youth and 15 officials from organizations involved with gangs. Apart from some demographic information about the gang members, these authors found that the majority of the gang members were “from newly arrived immigrant communities” (1999: 11), and the youth had familial problems, problems in the school environment, and low self-esteem. Hebert and her colleagues contend that youth in Montreal join gangs because of a “deep-felt need to belong, to identify and to be protected” (1999: 16).

It is apparent that Canadian research on gangs, which may be “markedly different” than gangs in the United States, is deficient at best. For the most part Canadian gang research, save a few notable exceptions, is exploratory and descriptive with little analytical basis. Additionally, few of these endeavors have addressed the causal factors involved in gang emergence and proliferation. Even the non-exploratory study conducted by Gordon (1998) lacked a systematic explanation for the emergence of gangs in Vancouver. It must be noted that this was not the purpose of the first phase of Gordon’s project and the second phase of this project is examining this issue.

The Canadian situation stands in stark contrast to the United States. Explanatory research on gangs, in different historical époques, in the United States

has been undertaken since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It has been documented that, in the United States, gangs emerge for several reasons in different locations, and researchers have developed complex and intricate theoretical models to explain the emergence and proliferation of street gangs, gang behavior, gang organization, and initiatives to suppress, prevent and control gang problems. The most prominent of these is the “urban underclass” theory proposed by Wilson (1987; 1996), adapted by Hagedorn (1998), Klein (1995), and Moore (1991) to explain street gangs.

It may be argued that the lack of Canadian research on gangs is due to the fact that gangs have only recently become a significant social problem in Canada. However, this cannot explain the lack of research in Canadian urban centres currently experiencing serious street gang problems, such as Winnipeg. To effectively address the gang problem in Manitoba, it is necessary to have an understanding of the causes of gangs in their specific environmental contexts and this is the primary contribution of this thesis.

## **Chapter III: Street Gangs in Winnipeg: 1945 to 1997.**

### **Introduction**

One goal of this thesis is to provide a chronological analysis of the history of street gang activity in Winnipeg, and to determine whether the most recent surge of gang activity is a new phenomenon or whether gangs emerged in a wave-like fashion, as is the case in Vancouver (Young, 1993). Prior to the late 1980s, and unlike Vancouver, Winnipeg had virtually no street gang activity. However, after World War II, Winnipeg had many gang-like groups that engaged in a host of criminal activities. Following the definitional scheme provided by Gordon and Foley (1998) the vast majority of groups referred to as gangs during this period were criminal groups, but not street gangs. The term “gang” was often used by the media to describe the activities of youth. This occurred because the Winnipeg Free Press used the blanketing “gang” label to describe the “gang-like” activities of groups of youth. As Klein (1971) has pointed out, this is a common practice amongst members of the news media.

This chapter is divided into four parts, three of which are based on media accounts<sup>13</sup>. The first part briefly describes the gang-like activities criminal groups and youth groups in Winnipeg up to 1985. The second part of the chapter describes the rise of the “Dew Drop Gang” in 1949 and its demise in the early part of 1950.

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<sup>13</sup> The Winnipeg Free Press articles that were included in this section are listed in Appendix C: The List of Newspaper Articles From the Winnipeg Free Press Used in the Qualitative Newspaper Analysis.

The third section provides a chronological description of Winnipeg's recent surge of street gang activity from 1985 to 1997. The last part of the chapter is based upon information provided by members of the Winnipeg Police Service, and describes the current street gang situation in the city.

### **The History of Winnipeg Street Gangs: 1945 – 1985.**

In 1945, an estimate derived from "Henderson's city directory" calculated the population of Greater Winnipeg at 343, 698 residents, which, for the time period made the city a large urban centre (1)<sup>14</sup>. Prior to 1945, Winnipeg was anything but ethnically homogenous. In the earlier part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Winnipeg was the destination for a heterogeneous group of immigrants. According to Dafoe (1998):

Jews from Central and Eastern Europe crowded into the North End areas beyond the rail yards. Extensive groups of Scandinavians, Icelanders and Central and Eastern Europeans also began to put down roots and there was a large contingent from the British Isles in the new western suburbs. The French speaking population of St. Boniface and St. Vital absorbed newcomers from Quebec, Belgium and France. (1998: 103).

The Jewish immigrants from Russia and the Ukraine occupied the now infamous core area of Winnipeg. During the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the CPR rail yards divided Winnipeg into two parts and the people on the 'other side of the tracks' (the north end) were mainly Russian and Ukrainian immigrants who were widely excluded and discriminated against by the dominant British born population. Thus:

It was difficult to find work for the new arrivals, and in the early years of the century some of the very worst and most depressing examples of poverty and urban blight were to be found in Winnipeg where poor immigrants were crowded into crumbling buildings, several families often sharing a few decaying rooms (Dafoe, 1998: 107).

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<sup>14</sup> This number reflects the referencing system used in this Chapter to show which newspaper articles are being used as the sources of information. Each number corresponds to the articles listed in Appendix C.

The discrimination against other ethnic groups by the British born population served to solidify many different ethnic communities (Dafoe, 1998). Those of primarily Russian and Ukrainian descent occupied the lower strata in the core area. Under such conditions it might be expected that members of these groups, especially youth, would form street gangs and other criminally oriented groups (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Klein, 1971; Spergel, 1964; 1966; Thrasher, 1963; Whyte, 1993), but there is no evidence that street gangs appeared in great numbers.

A substantial amount of gang-like activity, and reports of “gangs” appeared in the pages of the Winnipeg Free Press, after 1945. Upon closer examination these references were to criminal groups rather than street gangs. For example, in 1947, many different types of criminal groups were described as “gangs”. During the first two weeks of January the police released their statistics on crime in Winnipeg. Of particular interest is the claim that during a “war against the underworld” in 1946, the police disabled 34 “organized gangs,” and arrested 85 members of these groups of which a third of those arrested were under 23 years of age (2). The membership of these groups consisted primarily of adults and the crimes mentioned were, generally, high-end property crimes.

In April 1947, the Winnipeg Free Press also reported a spree of adult criminal group activity. In one case an armed “gang of 3 yeggs<sup>15</sup>” accosted a caretaker of Perth’s Dryers and Cleaners and his wife (3). The men tied up the caretaker and his wife, and within ten minutes had escaped with \$3,000 in cash. The police believed that this group had been active for approximately two months (3). In another high

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<sup>15</sup> This term refers to a gang of professional safe-crackers.

profile incident, "a daring gang of jewel thieves," in fact a criminal group, broke into Boyce's jewellery store and stole \$2,705 in property (4). In this case, the safe in the store had not been forced open which left the impression that this was an inside job (4).

The media depiction of adult criminal groups as "gangs" was reflected in other stories. In May 1947, four men, "believed to be a local gang" robbed a branch of the Bank of Toronto on Sherbrook Street at 11:30 am (7). Before committing the bank robbery, two members of the group robbed a taxi driver at gunpoint and stole his cab. They then proceeded to tie him to a tree. During the robbery, three disguised men entered the bank, while one acted as the lookout. The leader of the group proceeded to leap over the service counter with a "long revolver" and "herded" the nine staff members and three customers into the vault (5). An undisclosed sum of money was stolen. However, the Bankers' Association posted a reward of up to \$5,000 for information leading to the capture of this group (5-9).

In August 1947, a "bandit gang" was the focus of an "intensive police hunt" (10). This crew stole a black Ford coach from Russell, Manitoba, and used it to rob a hotel proprietor during the day, just after he had made a withdrawal from the Royal Bank. The four (or more) armed robbers "slugged and robbed" the proprietor of \$25,409 (11). The police and RCMP responded by organizing a province wide search for the "robber gang" which included roadblocks. In addition, a reward of \$1,000 was posted by the General Accident, Fire and Life Insurance Corporation for information leading to the recovery of the stolen money (10-11).

Another example of a criminal group that was referred to as a "gang" took the

form of an extremely profitable bank robbery. In this incident “a safecracking gang” stole “approximately 50 individually owned safety deposit boxes” from a Royal Bank branch on Selkirk Avenue and Main Street (12). According to police evidence, these “first class professionals” entered through a storm window in the restroom of the bank and “used an electric drill to smash a three-by three foot hole into the brick wall of the vault” (12). It took the combined efforts of the city police and the RCMP as well as two months of effort to capture the “gang of safecrackers” who turned out to be four young men (13-14). After the arrest of four young men involved in the heist it was acknowledged that they had taken over \$185,000 in cash and bonds from the safety deposit boxes (12-14).

Not all criminal group activity was of a sophisticated nature. Many juveniles were involved in this type of activity and were labeled as “gangs” by the Winnipeg Free Press. However, upon a closer examination these “gangs” also matched the definition of Gordon and Foley’s (1998) “criminal group”. For example, a “juvenile gang of four boys” were arrested when they attempted to sell stolen items to a pawnbroker (15). In an unrelated occurrence, the Winnipeg Free Press reported that another criminal group of three juveniles and one adult was arrested for a string of four break and enters that totaled \$1,000 in stolen merchandise (16).

In another incident, twelve juveniles from the west-end, “members of two gangs,” were arrested for a series of break-ins along Portage, Ellice, Broadway and Sargent avenues. According to the report, for a period of one month these gangs were breaking into cars and businesses and stealing cigarettes, gum, candy and cash (17-18). In another report, a “gang of youths was responsible for an epidemic” of thefts

from automobiles (19). Police arrested five juveniles for the thefts of an estimated \$565 worth of merchandise, after one of the “gang members” was caught in a high speed chase with police in a stolen car (19).

These accounts were typical of those appearing in the Winnipeg Free Press, from 1945 to 1985 and it is clear that the Winnipeg Free Press used the umbrella term “gang” to describe a host of group activities. These groups were not street gangs per se, but more appropriately termed “criminal groups”. Unlike a street gang, these criminal groups lacked a collective name, they were small in size, they had no clear territorial boundaries, were not visible in the community and engaged, primarily, in profitable property crimes for limited periods of time.

Other groups of youth were described as “gangs” by the Winnipeg Free Press. These were primarily “youth groups,” who were often labeled in the media as “mobs of youth” and “rumble groups”. As indicated in the articles these groups were not organized around the commission of lucrative property crime, but were structured around violent crimes (assaults, “rumbles”), and the vandalism of property.

For example, following the end World War II the “morality squad” of the Winnipeg Police Department began to fine pool hall proprietors for allowing “pool gangs”--groups of youth aged 14-16--to hang out and gamble at their establishments (20). According to one alderman, “it is members of these pool gangs of today, who fill our Headingly jail tomorrow” (20). Another example occurred on Halloween night in 1946, when the Winnipeg Free Press used the label “hallowe’en gang” to describe the vandalism committed by a mob of 1,000 youth. This group was responsible for “hundreds of dollars of damage,” in the Fort Rouge and River Heights

districts of Winnipeg (21). The mob cut trolley cables, caused extensive damage to private residences and hit a woman in the head with a rock (21).

This type of youth group activity was prevalent throughout the 1945-1985 period. In another notable example, police were asked to “crack down on youthful gangs of hooligans and their teen-aged girl companions who ha [d] terrorized north Winnipeg residents” (22). The Winnipeg Free Press alleged that these groups of youth “roam [ed] the street in mobs of 15 or 20” (22). The report claimed that these “young hooligans, ranging from 12 to 18 years” were drinking liquor in public, “molesting girls alone on the street,” and assaulting some of the residents in the area (22-24).

Groups of youth were also involved in fights during the period. In October 1955, a “gang” of a “number of boys” at a dance assaulted a police officer after he had intervened in a fight (25). Fourteen youths were arrested for taking part in this assault (25-26). These types of “gangs” were also actively involved in neighborhood rumbles. In one occurrence, in April 1958, three carloads of St. Boniface youth went into the Elmwood area and assaulted a youth (27). This took place because of a threatened assault that had occurred a week earlier. Twelve members of the “St. Boniface gang” were convicted for “loosening” the Elmwood youth’s teeth (28). On October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1964 the Winnipeg Free Press reported that a “gang war” had been averted. During this neighborhood rumble, “a gang of St. Vital juveniles, armed with knives, leather belts and crowbars were intercepted” by police in Windsor Park shopping centre “as they were speeding to revenge themselves on a St. Boniface gang” (29). The report specified that thirty-six youth from St. Vital had arrived to

fight fourteen youth from St. Boniface over a dispute that had taken place a week previously in St. Vital (29-31).

Thus it is apparent that youth groups were a stable feature of Winnipeg between 1945 and 1985. These groups were not street gangs. They possessed none of the defining features of a street gang developed by Gordon and Foley (1998). Instead they were “small clusters of young people who hang out together in public places” (Gordon and Foley, 1998: 17). These groups were gang-like, but they were short-term, transitory and event specific. Additionally, although these groups had names the names were given to them by the media and matched the district of the city or neighborhood where they were apparently active. Significantly, these groups disappeared from the media spotlight almost as quickly as they appeared.

### **A Street Gang in Winnipeg? The Case of the Dew Drop Gang.**

There was one case in which a street gang emerged in Winnipeg prior to the late 1980s. This street gang possessed many of the defining characteristics of a street gang delineated by Gordon and Foley (1998). This short-lived gang was named the Dew Drop gang which was first noticed near the end of 1949. By April 1950 it had disappeared. This represents an anomaly in the history of Winnipeg prior to the late 1980s, as can be seen from the preceding discussion.

Near the end of 1949 the media began to focus its attention on a series of fights and disturbances around teen canteens and community clubs, during scheduled dances. The Dew Drops received an abundance of media attention after a number of the members of the gang were arrested for using weapons during these assaults. The

attention began when “an original member” of the Dew Drop gang, with some compatriots, went to an Arlington Street clubhouse in an attempt to provoke a fight with patrons. This member was arrested for carrying a concealed “spring knife” (32). In another incident on December 30<sup>th</sup>, 1949 fifteen Dew Drop members were involved in a fight with patrons of the Sir John Franklin community club. Surprisingly, the injuries suffered by the participants were minimal, and “limited to the odd black eye and cut” (35).

The violent underpinnings of the gang soon escalated. In one incident, the Dew Drop gang had “been molesting patrons at community club dances,” and the gang’s suspected leader Edward Koroll, and two other Dew Drop members, were arrested for brandishing “a short-barreled nickel-plated” revolver. Koroll flaunted the revolver and threatened to kill a man and his companions on Higgins Avenue (in the Downtown core) because the gang members did not like “the block of their hats” (33). Koroll, and the two other Dew Drop members, were charged for another incident in which Koroll kicked the dog of a north end resident. When the dog’s owner intervened Koroll drew the .32 Belgian revolver and threatened to kill him (33-34).

At that time, the Dew Drop gang numbered “50 to 60 strong” and had “been in the habit of trying to break up dances and community clubs all over the city” (33). The suspected headquarters of the Dew Drop gang, and the source of the gang’s name, was the Dew Drop Inn, located on Parr Street, but some members of the gang had relocated to a pool hall on Selkirk Street. They tended to carry “spring knives,

brass knuckles and the “odd wrench” as weapons (33). The Dew Drops had their own style of dress, and Dew Drop gang members were easily identified by:

Their ‘Chicago block’ gray hats. The particular style of hat block consists of a roll in the crown about a third of the way from the top and one or two ridges in the felt at the very top. The crown slopes from a high peak to a low back (35).

By the middle of January 1950, the Dew Drop gang had swollen to 100 members, and the gang was wandering the city “from club to club deliberately picking fights,” where they outnumbered their victims and assaulted youth at canteens (35). These constant “battles” and threats of violence led to the closing of a canteen (35). The Dew Drop gang was implicated in acts of vandalism against community clubs, and they rolled intoxicated men for money, as they returned home from drinking establishments (35).

In response to these gang-related attacks, the police began to patrol canteens and community clubs heavily. The police were issued instructions from Charles MacIver, the police chief, to “be on the alert” for Dew Drop members, and “to search them for concealed weapons such as spring knives, blackjacks or any other offensive weapons” (36). Soon after this order, police began to arrest many senior members of the Dew Drop gang. Nevertheless, the Dew Drops began to expand their activities by engaging in robberies. In one incident, five suspected Dew Drops were arrested for vandalizing the Cecil hotel on Balmoral Street, grabbing the desk clerk, and stealing \$38 (36).

In another case, a Dew Drop member was denied entry into a bowling alley, and engaged in a scuffle with the manger, a former weightlifter (37). That same evening police responded to a complaint involving Dew Drop members at a theatre

on Logan, because they were “swearing and annoying patrons” (37). A series of “brawls” at cafes, rinks and dance studios continued, generally in the north end, where Dew Drop members were arrested for carrying “knuckle-dusters” (38-41). These violent incidents led to the announcement by the Winnipeg School Board that in order to obtain a permit required to hold a dance, organizations were obligated to hire an off-duty police officer (42).

By April 1950, the media interest in the Dew Drop gang had disappeared. This street gang was short lived but it is appropriate to classify this “gang,” as a street gang. It matches the core characteristics of a street gang prescribed by Gordon and Foley (1998). The gang had a specified territory, and it had a membership base that was substantial. Moreover, the Dew Drop gang was semi-organized with acknowledged leaders, and a distinctive mode of dress (e.g., the Chicago block hats). Their activities revolved around some property-based crimes and organized violence aimed at other people.

### **The History of Winnipeg Street Gangs: 1985 to 1997.**

By 1985, the Winnipeg Free Press was reporting that four “youth gangs” had appeared in Winnipeg: the Rattlers, the Maidens, the Native Warriors and the Rockers. The Main Street Rattlers were the focus of a series of newspaper reports (2-4), and, in one case, members of this gang were accused of intimidating students and teachers at three high schools, in Elmwood, Transcona and the West End of

Winnipeg. This gang also attacked a student with knives which resulted in his hospitalization (4).

As a result of these events, the gang created an aura of fear amongst both students and teachers (4) and a series of truce meetings were organized at the Freight House Community Centre “because escalating tension threaten [ed] to turn into violence” (3). During these meetings these gangs had agreed to leave “their knives at home” (3). It was emphasized that during these parleys the gangs were negotiating a truce and establishing their respective territorial boundaries.

The Main Street Rattlers had a distinctive mode of dress. Members adorned their jean jackets with “Main Street Rattlers” etched in felt pen on the backs. These street youth joined gangs because “if anything typifies life for these inner city youth its boredom” (4). The Main Street Rattlers continued to attract attention for assaulting a police officer, harassing students, having minor “punch-ups” with other gangs, and vandalizing property. A commentator was quoted as suggesting that the highly publicized gang meetings were amplifying the gang problem by encouraging other marginalized youth to form gangs to receive more attention (4). Almost immediately after these incidents “loitering gangs” of youth were reported to be terrorizing and assaulting students at a local secondary school (5). It is noteworthy that these gangs vanished from the media reports very quickly.

Approximately one year later, Asian gangs entered the media spotlight. These gangs engaged in more serious types of violent crimes than that engaged in by other gangs in the 1980s. They focused on extortion, armed robbery and other minor assaults, and their efforts were directed at the local Asian community. It was

suggested that the success of these gangs was related to the Asian culture where members of these communities “fear police because of the language and cultural barrier and because they emigrated from countries where law enforcement authorities often brutalize innocent citizens” (6). In addition, the success of these gangs was tied to the notion that criminal “gangs” have a longstanding historical tradition within the closed Asian communities and that there is often a fear of retaliation (6). However, it was difficult to assess whether these gangs were street gangs or criminal business organizations (i.e. the Triads). Furthermore, the media emphasized that there was widespread concern that these gangs were attempting to establish themselves in Winnipeg (6).

Reports suggested that Vietnamese gangs in Winnipeg were especially violent and that they were using juveniles to carry out extortion attempts (9-10), but it is important to note that the vast majority of these articles were published at a time when both Vancouver and Toronto were experiencing problems with Asian street gangs and criminal business organizations (7-8). This connection was a focal point of the media which implied that Asian gangs were not well organized in Winnipeg and needed assistance from the established gangs in “big cities like Toronto and Vancouver” (11). The Asian community responded to this by asserting that “reports of Oriental youth gangs terrorizing students and members of the community are greatly exaggerated” (12).

In January 1989, gangs emerged on the Aboriginal reserves north of Winnipeg. According to reserve residents, gang violence on one reserve (Moose Lake) made it “resemble a big city ghetto more than a community in northern

Manitoba" (13). Reserve officials identified two gangs - "the Desporados and the Potato Gang" - with a membership base mainly of adults, who were involved in intimidation and violence on the reserve. These gangs were involved in "bootlegging and drug dealing" and carried "rocks, sticks, chains and knives" as weapons (13). These gangs were particularly violent. In one instance, a teenager was attacked by approximately 20 gang members who "cut his face and neck," and a gang member was implicated in the killing of an elder living on the reserve (13). According to local reserve officials, gang violence was commonplace and coupled with high levels of unemployment, substance abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. The officials held that these problems emerged soon after the relocation of their Aboriginal community during the construction of the 1962 Manitoba Hydro project at Grand Rapids (13). On another Manitoba reserve - Easterville - boredom, lack of adequate housing, and unemployment were reported as the elements involved in the emergence of a Metis gang and a Status Indian gang. These rival "gangs" fought each other, vandalized property and "extort [ed] liquor money from residents" living on the reserve (14). However, as was the case with the other "gangs" at this time, the reserve "gangs" swiftly faded from the media spotlight.

Near the end of the 1980s, Asian gangs re-emerged as the focus of increased media attention. This attention was directed at a Vietnamese gang, called the "Halloween Gang" (17-18). According to the Chinatown community in Winnipeg, members of this gang were responsible for the 1988 murder of one Charlene Orsulak, a teenage prostitute. In addition, one report stipulated that two members of this gang were convicted of the torture and slaying of a businessman who was found (in

February 1988) “bound to some furniture in his office with six bullets in his head and twelve cuts on his face and neck” (17). Moreover, this “gang” was supposedly responsible for a series of break and enters and extortions in Winnipeg’s Chinatown during the 1980s. However, the police were at an impasse with this gang because of the community’s fear of retaliation and their “deep-rooted mistrust of authority” (18).

Again, the Winnipeg Free Press tried to extrapolate the problem of Asian gangs from other major urban centres to Winnipeg (15-16) and it was suggested that these Asian gangs were migrating to Winnipeg as a result of the “crackdowns” in Vancouver and Toronto (16). The focus on Asian gangs continued well into 1992 when, in another series of gang-related attacks, Asian restaurant owners were reported to be the victims of extortions and threats of vandalism, for failing to meet the demands of Asian gangs (19-22). It is worth noting that these reports occurred in tandem with the 14<sup>th</sup> International Asian Organized Crime Conference held in Calgary (which ended in July, 18, 1992) (21). Some members of the Asian community accused the conference of promoting “racism” and negative “stereotyping” of the Asian community (22).

One of the last significant incidents that was reported during the early 1990s was the arrest of Noel Gofredo, in March 1993. He was the suspected leader and recruiter for a gang based in the Maples area and was arrested for uttering threats to school officials (23-24). Gofredo claimed that his gang comprised “200 members city-wide” (23). Moreover, this gang wore bandannas with “either a rising sun” or a “black and white pattern” and members of the gang had threatened to seek reprisals against the school officials who had Gofredo arrested (23). This gang was allegedly

perpetrating a protection racket in the Seven Oakes School Division and was “actively” recruiting new members from shopping malls (24).

It was during 1993 that Winnipeg began to see evidence of serious and more permanent street gang activity. In April 1993, a series of reports on “youth gangs” were published (25-28). In one instance, the principal of Sisler High School was assaulted by a group of suspected gang members. The principal stated that the assault occurred as he intervened when six “gang members” were assaulting a student. A suspected gang member hit the principal with a metal bar in the chest and challenged him to fight. After this incident, the principal resorted to keeping baseball bats in the school to protect himself and others involved with the school (26-27). In another gang-related episode, a 22-year-old youth was beaten by “a gang of four youths” with a baseball bat, when he entered a convenience store while the four gang members were perpetrating another assault (28). Furthermore, a “gang of youths” beat a 15-year-old youth, with his skateboard. These successive events, purportedly involving “gangs,” prompted two meetings on youth gangs at the Seven Oakes School Division, which attracted nearly 800 people (28).

In May 1993, street gangs became a topic of public concern after police intervened in a “rumble,” comprised of 300 youths, at Unicity Mall. The confrontation was initiated by a group of skateboarders (referred to in the media as a gang called the “Skaters”) and the street gang, the Indian Posse. The aborted rumble occurred in response to a serious assault on a skateboarder perpetrated by members of the Indian Posse but the circumstances surrounding the assault were not clearly articulated (29-30). One commentator asserted that the diffused fight occurred in

response to “an incident in which a skateboarder was clubbed with a beer bottle at a bush party” (29). Other street gang members were observing the proceedings, including individuals from the West End Boys Brotherhood, and the Overlords. The police arrested some of the individuals present for possession of LSD, a .45 caliber replica pellet gun, baseball bats and knives (29-30). In response to this encounter, police personnel within the Youth Division of the Winnipeg Police Department set up a computer to track and identify street gangs and, soon after, the police reported that there were approximately 18 street gangs operating in the city. It was suggested that street gangs were responsible for an increase in “break-ins, stolen cars and drug incidents” (30).

During the early 1990s, there was also a series of unusually violent gang-related attacks that occurred in Winnipeg. In one incident, a 26 year old man was attacked, in the early morning hours, by 20 suspected gang members outside a Downtown convenience store which was reputed to be their hang-out. The man was hit with a beer bottle, beaten and stabbed twice in the back with a knife. The gang members also threatened to slit his throat (31). At the end of August 1993, the police arrested two men involved in a drive-by shooting against Overlord street gang members. Apparently, the two men were vigilantes rather than rival gang members, and they fired shotguns into two north end Overlord homes, after being harassed by Overlord gang members (32).

In September 1993, Winnipeg witnessed its first gang-related murder (33-42). An Aboriginal youth stabbed his victim, Chris Robichaud, to death, close to Grant Park shopping mall. Robichaud refused to give the youth his package of cigarettes

after being threatened and he and his friends responded by chasing the two Aboriginal youth through Grant Park mall. Once Robichaud caught them, one of the youths fatally stabbed him with a knife. The perpetrator's friends warned that this event could escalate the "violence among youths and youth gangs" (37) while other Aboriginal youths cited racism and the need for protection as the prime factors behind the escalating youth violence and the emergence of street gangs (37, 40-42). In response to this incident Rosemary Vodrey, the Justice Minister of Manitoba, called an emergency violence summit (to be held in December 1993) to address the seemingly serious youth violence problem in Winnipeg. This summit included police officers, education officials and members of community groups (33).

Regardless, the surge of gang-related violence continued. In one incident, "a gang of fifty armed youth pelted rocks" at the home of two Silver Heights Secondary School students, and hit one of the students in the head with a rake (43). This prompted the administration at Silver Heights to increase security measures at the school, which included police visits (43). The escalation of violence continued when 30 gang members at the Forks (a Downtown shopping and entertainment district) surrounded two skateboarders. One of the skateboarders was thrown into a water fountain and beaten by the gang while the other was "beaten and repeatedly kicked in the face" (44). This incident occurred because the two youths were trespassing in the gang's territory (44).

In December 1993, the emergency Summit on Youth Violence and Crime was held at Vincent Massey Collegiate. The meeting reviewed violence reduction programs that had been adopted for use with refugees, as well as other crime

reduction programs that had been used in other parts of the province (45-46). Many of the participants argued that the media's extensive coverage and glorification of gangs and their activities was partly responsible for the increase in gangs and gang-related crime (46). Approximately one week after the Summit, gang members fired four shots into the home of a youth who had attempted to date the ex-girlfriend of one of the gang members (47).

In February 1994, there was the first sequence of drive-by shootings perpetrated by the two largest street gangs in Winnipeg at this time: the Overlords and the Indian Posse (48). In the first incident, a member of the Overlords went to an Indian Posse residence and fired a shotgun through the kitchen window. The two Indian Posse members retaliated by going to an Overlord residence on Alexander Avenue, and shot at the house from their car with a .22 caliber rifle (52). A shootout began as Overlord members emerged from the house and returned the gunfire. Intriguingly, the mother of one of the Indian Posse members, who was driving the car, was wounded during the melee. The retaliation continued later that evening as many more Indian Posse members returned to the same Overlord residence and fired "a minimum of six bullets" through the front window of the house (48, 52). It was estimated that at this time, the Overlords, whose territory included the Downtown and Portage Place areas, had a total of 300 members, while the Indian Posse, whose territory included the Downtown core area, had a total of 60 members (48).

By the Spring 1994, it was evident that the increases in crime rates in Winnipeg were being associated with the rise of street gangs. Police were quoted as saying that the doubling of auto-thefts was a result of street gang activity and of the

recruitment process of gangs: prospective members were granted membership once they had committed a crime like auto theft (49). The Winnipeg Free Press implied that the increase in auto-thefts also occurred in conjunction with an increased number of armed robberies of “gas bars and convenience stores,” where the gang-involved perpetrators were using the stolen automobiles as getaway vehicles (50-51).

In April 1994, and in response to this increase in gang activity and the associated media attention, the police announced the creation of a specialized Street Gang Unit. The mandate of the Unit was three fold. The first function was surveillance, which meant that the unit was required to gather intelligence on the street gangs in Winnipeg because there was very little information on these gangs (e.g., their numbers, their activities, and their structures). The second function was gang suppression and the third function was the development of initiatives that were more community based (i.e. working with the communities and the gang members) to lessen gang rivalries and the violence which stemmed from these rivalries (53). The provincial government also became involved through the establishment of the provincially funded “Street Peace and Gang Youth Line”. This crisis line (945-GANG) was created “to give youths a chance to turn in gang members who pressure them” (54).

Once the unit was established, there were multiple arrests and weapons seizures, which included the confiscation of handguns. In one seizure, near an Overlord residence, police found “bats, knives, a sawed-off shotgun and a loaded .357-calibre revolver” (55). In this instance, members of the Indian Posse and the East Side Crips, known rivals of the Overlords, had cached the weapons in an attempt

“to bait the Overlords outside and then overwhelm them with their numbers and arsenal” (55). Additionally, the Street Gang Unit documented an increase in adult involvement with street gangs. This change in the composition of the street gangs was attributed to the potential profits derived from lucrative property crime and drug trafficking (55).

In the Fall of 1994, the media reported that robberies reached an all-time high in Winnipeg, and that this was partly a result of street gang activity (56). According to the head of the Winnipeg Street Gang Unit<sup>16</sup>, many of the robberies that occurred were the result of street gang initiations, particularly those perpetrated by the Indian Posse street gang. As a result of an increase in gang-related armed robberies of convenience stores and gas stations, police began an initiative devoted to staking out potential robbery targets in an attempt to catch the perpetrators during the commission of the offence (57). Moreover, following a police crackdown on prostitution on Main Street, it was established that young prostitutes, especially child prostitutes were being controlled through prostitution rings operated by the Indian Posse gang and the Overlord gang (58).

In September 1994, the Winnipeg Free Press ran a series entitled Bad Boys (63-76), and Richard Wolfe, one of the five reputed leaders of the Indian Posse was interviewed. By this time, the Indian Posse was considered the most powerful gang in Winnipeg (comprising approximately 132 active members). During this interview, Wolfe explained the origins of the Indian Posse which, he asserted, arose in response to the racism that these youths experienced (63-68). This is expressed in a poem and

a gang philosophy statement (see Figure 1 in Appendix D) (66). Wolfe and four friends formalized the Indian Posse in 1989, in the basement of his north end home. In addition, Wolfe outlined the structure and some of the operating rules within the Indian Posse. For example, he maintained that there was no pimping of women under the age of 17 years, and that 30 percent of the profits derived from any criminal activity must be given to the gang. Wolfe bragged that the Posse had a bank account containing over \$35,000, which was used to pay gang expenses, such as clubhouse rent and legal fees (67).

During this time, the Street Gang Unit, which had five active members, had documented 300 active gang members in four main street gangs. These were the Overlords, the Indian Posse, East Side Crips and the West End Boys Brotherhood. The Street Gang Unit stated that there were also another 23 "gangs," but that these gangs were more appropriately classified as wannabe groups. The 23 gangs included such groups as the Los Votos Chicanos and the Transcona Guardian Angles (64). Additionally, the Street Gang Unit reported that members of the four major gangs were actively stealing firearms in break and enters to sell, to use against rival gangs, and for use in armed robberies. Furthermore, by the end of September 1994, adults accounted for half of the total membership of street gangs in Winnipeg (63). The media concluded the Bad Boys series with a focus on the utility of boot camps to deter gang activity (69-75).

Near the end of October 1994 it appeared that the Overlords were disintegrating. In contrast, the influence of the Indian Posse was expanding because

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<sup>16</sup> Cameron, A. (1998). Personal Communication. Sergeant, Winnipeg Police Service: Div. #24 -

they were recruiting within the federal institution, Stony Mountain prison, and the provincial institution, Headingly prison, as a result of the extensive arrests of street gang members. The Indian Posse was labeled the “dominant force” within Stony Mountain (78). This is not a terribly surprising turn of events when the latent effect of mass incarceration of street gang members is considered. This produced a concentration of street gang members within a closed prison setting in which they could dominate the environment with relative ease.

At the beginning of January 1995, street gangs were seen as once again responsible for a rising number of violent convenience store and gas station robberies. These types of robberies provided quick and easy cash to gang members that could be used to buy alcohol or illicit drugs for parties (79). Near the end of January 1995, a youth was killed in a gang-related murder at a party on Winnipeg Avenue. According to witnesses, the youth was hit on the head with a beer bottle, beaten and stabbed in the neck outside of the house by an undisclosed number of gang members (80). This kind of violence continued to be a defining feature of Winnipeg’s street gangs when approximately two months later an Overlord member stabbed a police officer twice in the chest. Fortunately, the police officer was wearing his bulletproof vest at the time (81). This attack compelled the police to put all personnel on a safety alert, especially after they learned that, following the attempted murder of the police officer, the Overlord street gang had “pledged to kill a city police officer” (81).

By the beginning of April 1995, firearms had become a defining feature of street gangs with three gang-related drive-by shootings in one week. In one of the

shootings, a thirteen-year-old boy was shot with a shotgun on Pacific Avenue (Deuce-formerly the Overlords-territory) by two youths, while he was in his living room with ten other people (82). As a result of the shooting the boy “had seven pellets in his scalp, shoulder and chest” (82). During the second shooting a fourteen-year-old East Kildonan youth was “injured after someone fired a shotgun through the front window of his house” (82). In the third incident, a sixteen-year-old youth was injured when someone “fired a shotgun through the window” of his vehicle while parked “near the Merchants Hotel” (82). However, it was not clear whether the last two shootings were at all gang-related. The notorious Richard Wolfe reappeared, after he was charged with the shooting of a pizza delivery driver (83) and another gang-related shooting death occurred when eight members of the Overlords/Deuce were passing a sawed-off shotgun around in the basement of a Tyndall Park home. The shotgun, which had been used in two violent robberies of convenience stores, accidentally discharged “blowing a hole through” the head of Justin MacKenzie, “killing him instantly” (84).

Early that Summer, in June 1995, and in “acknowledgement of the seriousness of the local gang problem and the changing face of youth gangs” the Street Gang Unit was reorganized with “a greater emphasis” placed “on enforcement” (85). At this time, the gang unit adopted a zero tolerance policy, arresting gang members for “a broken tail-light, a health bylaw” or any other minor infraction (86). This reorganization transformed the five-member unit into a permanent fifteen-member unit, to deal primarily with the adult members of street gangs (85). These tactics resulted in numerous arrests and the seizure of many firearms that had been illegally

modified for the commission of criminal offenses (111). The Street Gang Unit began to coordinate with the Winnipeg School Division to impede the recruiting of young children (i.e. those under 12 years of age) into gangs. It was proposed that street gangs were using these children, for the most part, as “drug couriers because they have immunity from the law” (87).

Shortly after the restructuring of the Street Gang Unit, Winnipeg experienced its first fatal gang-related drive-by shooting. In July 1995, a 13-year-old-Joseph “Beeper” Spence, was mistaken for an Indian Posse member and was shot in the back and killed outside a north-end daycare center by eight members of the Deuce street gang (formerly known as the Overlords). The killing was a product of a supposed turf war between the Posse and the Deuce gang (88-95). The Deuce members stopped out front of the day-care in a van, “asked Spence if he belonged to the Indian Posse” and opened fire (88). Similar to the Overlords, the Deuce were based “around the Freight House Community Centre just south of the Salter Bridge on Isabel Street,” while most of the Indian Posse members were located just north of Deuce territory around the Lord Selkirk housing projects. As an indication of the severity of this crime, and the public outrage which ensued, the Crown attempted to transfer the 15-year-old Deuce member to adult court (96).

Later that Fall, two more Deuce members were charged with first-degree murder and in December of 1995 a 17-year-old female Deuce member was charged with first-degree murder in the Spence killing (97-99). One week after the Spence murder, the Indian Posse retaliated by shooting Eugene Greene, a suspected member of the Deuce gang, near the Rossbrook House drop-in centre (100-105). Greene was

splattered with “shotgun pellets to the shoulder and head,” fired by Indian Posse members “wearing ski masks” (100). These two major events led to appeals for the closure of the Rossbrook House, which acted as a twenty-four hour drop-in centre for city core youth (102). These drive-by shootings represent a significant turning point in the evolution of Winnipeg’s street gangs. Prior to these incidents, drive-by shootings were rare.

After these incidents and the national attention they received, the national media began to label Winnipeg “the gang capital of Canada” (106). However, the head of the Street Gang Unit, retorted that street gangs in Winnipeg were “still in their infancy,” even though the unit had 600 documented gang members, 200 of which were considered “hard core participants” (106). Additionally, a new street gang appeared in Winnipeg. This adult street gang, which became the focus of much media and enforcement attention, was called the Manitoba Warriors (107).

Sporadic violent gang activity became a feature in Winnipeg, as the Indian Posse appeared on the scene in another shooting. The episode occurred, in October 1995, after a bar manager refused a group of Indian Posse members entry into Zaxx nightclub because they were under 18 years of age. Later that evening Indian Posse members returned to Zaxx and one member shot Chris McGill, the manager, with a handgun in the leg which “fractured his left thigh bone above the knee” (108). The threat of violence also dominated the attention of the police and the media. On October 19<sup>th</sup>, 1995 police surrounded Andre Mynarski Junior High School to prevent a drive-by shooting. This event occurred because a member of the Chicano Boyz had

assaulted a Deuce member, and Deuce members threatened a retaliatory drive-by at the school, which failed to materialize (109).

Beginning in January 1996, and to assist with the growing number of gang-related arrests, the Manitoba Department of Justice:

Assigned specific lawyers who will handle all the gang cases being prosecuted to develop an expertise in dealing with them (110).

The three dominant street gangs in Winnipeg, which comprised the bulk of the documented gang members, were the Indian Posse, the Deuce and the Manitoba Warriors. By May 1996, according to the estimates of the Street Gang Unit, there were approximately 730 active street gang members, 75 percent of whom were Aboriginal and 75 percent adults (114). The long list of assaults, firearm seizures and drive-by shootings perpetrated by gang members, continued to increase steadily. In gruesome examples of the violence, visitors from the United States were robbed and beaten by gang members, a woman had her house burned down by gang members, and street gangs stole and sold \$200,000 worth of cigarettes (114, 132, 134).

In April 1996 members of both the Manitoba Warriors and the Indian Posse were found to be the individuals who incited the worst prison riot in Manitoba's history, at the Headingly provincial institution. On this occasion, guards were subdued and beaten, and inmates (especially sexual offenders) were tortured and beaten. For example, one inmate had his fingers sliced off. The end result of this riot was approximately \$3,500,000 of damage to the institution (112-122). Ten days later, as a result of the riot, chronic overcrowding, and problems with street gang members, 50 guards at the Winnipeg Remand Centre, and 20 staff members at the Manitoba

Youth Centre protested by “refusing to perform their regular duties” at the prisons (112).

At this time, Winnipeg’s street gangs were heavily involved in drug trafficking, prostitution, weapon distribution, drive-bys and other lucrative property crimes. Additionally, the police claimed that Winnipeg street gangs were expanding their influence by recruiting in Regina and Saskatoon (114, 161). It was also during this time that Richard Wolfe, the leader of the Indian Posse, was sentenced to 19 years in prison for shooting a pizza delivery driver (114, 129).

In late May of 1996, the Manitoba Warriors were involved in an armed standoff with the RCMP, while aiding dissidents on the Waterhen reserve, located 500 km north of Winnipeg. The standoff began when the reserve’s dissident leader, Gordon Catcheway, tried to remove Chief Harvey Nepinak and his followers. It was suggested that the Manitoba Warriors were aiding the Waterhen rebels in obtaining “sole possession of the reserve” (114, 123). The RCMP were attempting to thwart the overthrow and prevent the Manitoba Warriors from removing a suspected “arsenal of weapons” they had cached on the reserve. The police believed that the Warriors were trying to expand their influence in communities outside of Winnipeg, and it seems that the Warriors were becoming involved in First Nations politics (123-127).

In the aftermath of the Waterhen standoff, rebels were relocated to the Lord Selkirk housing projects, the heart of Indian Posse territory. This was problematic, as the Manitoba Warriors and the Indian Posse were rivals and it was not long before violence broke out. On July 1, 1996 a street gang member (most likely an Indian

Posse member<sup>17</sup>) shot at three youths from the Waterhen reserve (124-127). These youths were part of the seventeen families, supported by the Manitoba Warriors in the standoff in Waterhen. It was evident that serious violence was likely to erupt because the shooting followed "several incidents of threats and intimidation" against the relocated families (126). The deep-rooted rivalry was cited as the motive for the attacks against the dissident families. The continuous threats and attacks against these families prompted their departure from Winnipeg and their relocation to smaller cities such as Portage La Prairie (127).

At the end of June 1996, the Winnipeg Free Press ran a series entitled Ganging Up (128-131). It was evident that the media attention on specific gangs was important to the respective street gangs because one of the gang members interviewed for this series kept newspaper clippings of his gang's exploits (128). This became such a problem for the police that they decided not to divulge gang names to the media when discussing gang crimes and they implored the media to avoid printing gang names (129). In addition, it was discovered that gang members were commandeering abandoned houses for their personal use. As a result of these developments and the degradation of the area attributed to street gangs, citizens of the city core area began lobbying the government to establish a citizen patrol at a cost of \$800,000 (130-131).

It became evident that street gangs were becoming sophisticated in their endeavors. In an unusual gang related attack, suspected gang members burned down a woman's north end house. The woman claimed that two weeks earlier, gang

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<sup>17</sup> No gang name was given, as this was not disclosed by the police.

members had broken into her home and assaulted her son while looking for her niece and cousin, who were prostitutes working for the gang. Apparently, the two prostitutes owed the gang protection money and had failed to pay (132-133). In another incident, in July 1996, the Street Gang Unit seized \$200,000 worth of cigarettes and cash. Seven gang members were arrested for the associated break-in to Imperial Tobacco and for fencing the stolen cigarettes (134).

In the early hours of July 21, 1996, three gang members fatally shot Eric Vargas and critically wounded his girlfriend Quyen-vu Raceleus, while they were sitting in their parked car (135-142). This shooting was extremely disturbing because these two victims had no association with street gangs. According to the police, the three gang members were armed and on their way to engage in a gang altercation, "over an undisclosed incident" (138). The altercation failed to materialize, and the three members, probably members of the East Side Crips whose territory is located in the Elmwood area, saw Vargas and Raceleus parked in their car in the parking lot of Charmers Community Club, located in Elmwood. They decided to rob the couple, but Raceleus recognized the gang members from Elmwood High School, from which she had recently graduated. At this point, the gang members shot the couple (137). The gang members killed Eric Vargas and "Receleus, who was also hit by several bullets, managed to drive from the scene before crashing into a nearby light standard" (136). The "senseless" nature of this murder led police to suggest that gangs were changing because this "marks a new step in Winnipeg street gang violence" (138).

In response to these events, officers from the Street Gang Unit, the Winnipeg Police Department and the RCMP began a joint operation called Project Disarm (143-

144). This six-month project was mandated to suppress street gang activity in Winnipeg, and Manitoba generally, by adopting a zero tolerance policy towards street gangs. The goal was to “bring them to their knees”(143). The project was granted \$100,000 from the Manitoba Department of Justice and included 30 officers from both enforcement agencies (143-144). In addition to a reduction in street gang violence, the project aimed at curtailing the expansion of street gangs into rural Manitoba. It was alleged that Aboriginal street gangs were attempting to recruit new members and elicit support from the rural reservations. From information gathered during Project Disarm, police ascertained that the Manitoba Warriors were using their connections on the reserves to expand their membership and store weapons (144).

Near the end of July 1996, the impact of street gangs on the prison system became a topic of concern in Winnipeg. It was maintained that gangs had been a longstanding part of the prison system, but that the increases in Aboriginal street gang arrests led to a dominance of Aboriginal street gangs in the Prairie prison system (145). The explanation submitted for the power of Aboriginal street gangs in prisons was that “fear might drive some prisoners pervasive to seek protection in a gang,” and that this has been exacerbated by “the disproportionate number of Natives in prisons” (145).

It is during this period, in August 1996, that Winnipeg experienced its first triple murder that involved unrelated victims (147). Members of the Warriors and the Los Bravos (a prominent Motorcycle gang in Winnipeg) tortured and murdered three men, one of whom was an associate of the Hell’s Angels (146-153). This triple homicide, at a West Kildonan residence, was extremely violent. Each of the three

men was stabbed over 20 times, shot, and one of them was stabbed in the eyes (146-147, 150, 153). According to the Winnipeg Free Press, evidence revealed that one of the men, Stefan Heinz Zurstegge:

Has been shot twice and stabbed 34 times, including in the left eye. The body of Jason Joseph Gross, 22, was found in the laundry room, at the end of a trail of blood leading from Zurstegge's body. The six-foot tall, 174-pound man died of multiple stab wounds. An autopsy showed Gross had been stabbed 10 times each in the face and chest and hit with a blunt object, likely a baseball bat, at the back of his head (153).

The reports asserted that it was the Hell's Angels associate, Thomas Russell Krowetz:

Who bore the brunt of the killers' wrath. His hulking 'unnaturally muscled' and tattooed body was found lying in a fetal position at the bottom of the basement stairs. The 250-pound man had been shot three times, in the chest, buttocks and right leg, and stabbed 36 times. He also suffered a variety of wounds to the head from a blunt object. The most disturbing injury, court was told, was a 13-centimetre gash across his neck that totally severed his jugular vein (153).

Despite this horrific treatment, the police determined that the victims died very slowly, and this torturous demise was likely the intention of the murderers because two of the men were still alive when the paramedics arrived (146, 150, 153). The killings occurred because Krowetz "was trying to muscle in on prostitution turf controlled by the Manitoba Warriors street gang" (153). At this time, the Manitoba Warriors and the Los Bravos controlled prostitution rings around the low track area of Main Street (153). Roger Sanderson, the vice president of the Manitoba Warriors, Robert Sanderson, a striker for the Los Bravos motorcycle gang and Robert Tews were convicted, in June 1997, of first-degree murder for this triple slaying (153). Following this incident, substantial speculation existed that the Warriors and the Los Bravos had formed a cooperative alliance. This was a major concern to the police because the Los Bravos were reportedly a criminal business organization with international illicit drug connections (151-153).

The slayings prompted Police Chief Cassels to become involved with the suppression of street gangs in Winnipeg. He designed a three-point plan to “make the city’s streets safer” and initiated a change in the scheduling of “the major crimes unit, and the patrol division so that they work weekends” (154). Additionally, he reviewed the structure of the Street Gang Unit and proposed the establishment of “new partnerships” with community agencies “to help keep young people out of street gangs” (154).

While this was taking place, firearms began to play an increasing prominent role during the commission of robberies. This was due, in large part, to street gangs because at this point “gang initiations” often involved “the use of guns to carry out, robberies or shootings” (155). Police alleged that the gangs were changing and becoming more dangerous because they were no longer using replica firearms, as in the past; instead, they were beginning to use real firearms to commit robberies (155).

At the end of August 1996, the street gang problem in Winnipeg received national attention when the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada reported that “in Western Canada, Aboriginal street gangs are becoming prominent. They are gaining an increasing foothold in prostitution, drugs and crimes against persons” (156). Additionally, the Street Gang Unit asserted that there were 700 street gang members, two-thirds of whom were Aboriginal (156).

Approximately one month later, in September 1996, three members of the Manitoba Warriors executed John Henry Bear, a known cocaine distributor (157-159). According to police sources, the Manitoba Warriors “hunted down and killed” Bear for “undercutting their prices” and dealing in their territory (158). Witnesses

reported that three “gang enforcers” in balaclavas, armed with knives and a handgun, kicked in the doors at Bear’s rooming house “terrorizing the occupants at gunpoint” until they found Bear (159). This execution supports the suggestion that Winnipeg’s street gangs were becoming more territorial and were engaging in the protection and maintenance of their territories from outside illicit business interests (157-159). Furthermore, police intelligence indicated that first generation gang members; who were now adults, were using their children to commit criminal acts, primarily drug distribution (160). Moreover, police were reporting that gang members from Winnipeg were migrating to other cities on the Prairies, such as Regina and Saskatoon (161).

During this time, Aboriginal leaders, Ovide Mecredi and Elijah Harper, became involved in “fight [ing] Winnipeg’s growing street gang problem” (162). Mecredi criticized most of the efforts that had been introduced thus far because he learned, through his meetings with leaders of the Indian Posse and the Manitoba Warriors in prison, that the gangs formed:

To create a sense of brotherhood or collective security against a world many of them felt had excluded them from basic opportunities to learn and work (163).

Mecredi asserted that to ameliorate the problem “government and law enforcement officials” must “invite gang leaders to the table for meaningful negotiations” (163).

At the end of 1996, the police convinced the courts to impose an “appear at the door” curfew<sup>18</sup> provision for gang members applying for bail (Cameron, 1998: pc). The courts and police expected that this provision would deter gangs from

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<sup>18</sup> This provision forced the person with the curfew to appear at the door when the police checked curfew orders.

committing crimes while on bail (164). In addition, police planned to tightly enforce these curfew orders on gang members (165-167). This was another suppression policy aimed at combating the estimated 900 active gang members in Winnipeg (168).

Near the end of January 1997, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) and its leader Phil Fontaine carried out the plan proposed by Mecredi to bring gang members to the negotiating table (169-174). They made a controversial decision to hire Brian Contois, the thirty-nine year old reputed leader of the Manitoba Warriors despite his claim that “he is not prepared to give up the gang life, at least until someone gives him a job and he can make an honest living” (171). In addition, he was still appearing on a series of firearm charges and was arrested for trafficking in marijuana while under contract with the AMC (171-172). Nevertheless, he was hired by the AMC to develop a solution to the gang problem in Winnipeg. Part of the plan developed by Contois entailed the purchase of the YMHA building on Hargrave Street for approximately \$4 million (169-171). With the implementation of this plan it was expected that Winnipeg could reduce its street gang problem “through a variety of job-training, employment, education and outreach programs” (170). This program was terminated, as was Contois’ contract, when he was sentenced, in August 1997, to four and a half years imprisonment for trafficking in marijuana and firearms offences (174).

During this time, the impact of street gangs re-emerged, and it was acknowledged that street gangs were widespread in correctional facilities. An attack on an inmate perpetrated by a known street gang member signified that street gangs

were actively recruiting new members in the Manitoba Youth Centre (175, 188). Concurrently, the Deuce street gang, a longstanding rival of the Indian Posse, became regarded as the “farm team” of the Manitoba Warriors (175). It was evident that street gangs were still active in crimes of violence. On one occasion, two members of the Indian Posse carried out a home invasion of a pizza chain owner, Harvinder Sethi. After they “stormed the home,” the Indian Posse members “held the victim at gunpoint and robbed him of money, jewelry, a camera and a cellular phone” (176).

The proliferation of street gangs in Winnipeg, and the political in fighting amongst the various governmental and community groups, led the Federal Government to announce, in March 1997, its commitment to the funding of a Gang Prevention Coordinator (177-180). The purpose of the position, which received funding for a three-year period, was to reduce the estimated 1300 active gang members in the city (177-180). The two specific objectives of the position were to “prevent young people from getting into gangs and to curtail the activities of people already in gangs” (177).

In March 1997 an “invitation-only” gang summit was held at the Broadway Community Centre. This event included Aboriginal leaders, academics, politicians and community agency representatives. The purpose was to foster discussions on the gang problem and to discuss possible remedies (180-181). Ironically, many people, including gang members, Aboriginals and “front-line workers who deal with gangs” were initially denied access to the summit (180).

During March of 1997, a truce was negotiated between members of the Indian Posse, the Deuce, and the Manitoba Warriors. However, this treaty was jeopardized

when eight Deuce members killed Indian Posse member Terry Acoby. In this gang attack, the Deuce members surrounded Acoby in the early hours of the morning outside a suspected gang house on Young Street, and beat him to death with a baseball bat (182). It was feared that “the killing may interfere with a [second] gang summit,” which was to involve members of the Indian Posse and the Manitoba Warriors (182). The purpose of this conference, planned by the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, was to keep First Nations people from joining gangs (182). The symposium was aimed at hearing the perspectives of senior members of the Indian Posse and the Manitoba Warriors (182-183). However, the meeting came under intense criticism because there was no intention of including members of the Deuce. This was an important oversight because the Deuce gang was “the fastest growing gang” in Winnipeg. The gang was actively “recruiting in elementary schools” and their numbers had reportedly tripled since January of 1997 (183). Additionally, it was asserted that the Deuce gang had split into fifteen cells in the city and that their membership totaled 226 individuals (183).

Approximately three months later, at the beginning in the Summer of 1997, the provincial government became directly involved in the fight against street gangs (184-185). The government, through the Winnipeg Development Agreement, committed \$1 million to sport camp programs for “at risk” kids (184). One of the camps, at the Turtle Island Community Centre, was designed to “provide children aged 12-17 with supervised games and sports activities throughout the summer and year-round” (184). It was also developed to provide culturally specific programs and teachings and role models for disenfranchised youth (185).

In July 1997, Glen Cochrane was selected as the first ever Gang Prevention Coordinator in Winnipeg (and Canada). This new agency, funded through the Winnipeg Development Agreement, was allocated \$450,000, and given the mandate to reduce gang membership by 25 percent within three years (187).

At the end of August 1997, the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada (CISC) released its annual report on organized crime. Aboriginal gangs were repeatedly mentioned as "key areas of concern" and the report stated that:

Aboriginal street gangs are undergoing a period of growth. They are extending their influence across the Prairies and into northern Ontario and are forging links with other organized crime groups (189).

Additionally, the manager of the Manitoba branch of CISC added that:

The Manitoba Warriors now include between 150 and 200 members whose sphere of influence is quickly expanding beyond city and provincial boundaries... They have expanded into Kenora, Fort Frances and other parts of northwestern Ontario where they engage in drug dealing, robbery, theft and break and enters. They are organized and they are associating with outlaw motorcycle gangs (189).

In this same report a police officer, commenting on the Winnipeg street gang phenomenon, remarked that there were "1400 to 1500 street gang members in Winnipeg," which comprised "six 'hard core' gangs" (189).

By late 1997, and perhaps as a result of the government-funded initiatives, the gang problem was viewed in a more optimistic light. A report in the Winnipeg Free Press claimed that "gang membership was beginning to retreat" (190). According to the Street Gang Unit:

Gang membership has leveled off at about 1,375 after years of exponential growth. The past year has also seen a marked absence of high-profile street crime. While traditional gang activities like auto theft and robberies remain high, they are not increasing anywhere the rate they did in the early 1990s when auto thefts alone shot up nearly 200 percent to the point where there is, on average, one car stolen hourly in Winnipeg (190).

However, it was suggested that Winnipeg street gangs were becoming less overt with violence, more organized, and were “moving into other types of crime, often working with bikers to control drug trafficking and prostitution in the inner city” (190).

### **Winnipeg Street Gangs in 2000<sup>19</sup>.**

According to the police, currently (June 2000) there are approximately 1,850 street gang members and associates in Winnipeg. The five major gangs which account for most of the 1,850 members and associates are the Indian Posse, the Deuce, the Nine-0, the Manitoba Warriors and the Native Syndicate. In the last five years, the street gangs have become primarily adult based gangs, as the membership is approximately 75 percent adult and 25 percent juvenile. Although the Winnipeg Police Service does not record ethnicity while tracking gang members, it is believed that the ethnic composition of Winnipeg street gangs is for the most part Aboriginal. Furthermore, Winnipeg street gangs have no fixed territory because they have become more fluid as members have moved to different areas throughout the city. However, the Manitoba Warriors are concentrated in low track hotels and bars in Winnipeg. The Indian Posse gang is located above the Canadian Pacific Rail Yards concentrated in the area of Selkirk Avenue, Pritchard Avenue and Manitoba Street.

It seems that Winnipeg’s gangs are moving away from overt acts of violence and are becoming more heavily involved in drug trafficking as middle level and street level dealers, because these crimes are highly profitable with little risk of apprehension. Additionally, these crimes do not invite public complaints, which

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<sup>19</sup> Most of the information reported here was obtained from a police source from the Winnipeg Police Service.

prompt police reactions, as did the sporadic crimes of violence that characterized their recent previous activities. A certain segment of street gang members will always be involved in overt acts of violence. However, it seems as Winnipeg gangs evolve some gang members are moving away from sporadic acts of violence. Overt acts of violence will always exist, and tend to be characteristic of new members in street gangs. Furthermore, gang members are involved in arsons, which are prevalent in the core area of the city, but to a minimal extent. They may tag a building, generally an abandoned residence, with graffiti and burn it to increase their status within their gang. Additionally, gangs and their members have begun to occupy vacant and abandoned buildings, and this may be connected with the rash of abandoned building fires.

Members of Winnipeg street gangs have been identified in other provinces in Canada. The police attribute this to the notion that members of street gangs, especially the Indian Posse and the Manitoba Warriors, are traveling to expand their opportunities (e.g., to start dealing drugs in another area with less police pressure) and because the families of street gang members often move to different locations.

At the end of 1999, Winnipeg was also the first city to apply Bill C-95, National Anti-Gang Measures to Aboriginal street gangs. The prosecution was initiated by the Manitoba Department of Justice against 35 members of the Manitoba Warriors street gang. This case, R. v. Pangman et al., was concluded in July 2000. By the end of the trial, most of the gang members had made plea negotiations which negated the harsh penalties in Bill C-95.

The police also believe that gang-related crime is under reported in Winnipeg. Police are aware of many incidents in which gang members and victims of gang-related crime refuse to report an incident. For example, some gang members were involved in home invasions of local drug dealers. This type of victimization is not reported to the police because the victim would face criminal charges and the gang would possibly retaliate. In another incident, a gang member was shot twice and would not identify the perpetrator. There have been drive-by shootings that have not been reported because there were no serious injuries. Police attribute this under reporting to a fear of retaliation, and that gang members believe in taking care of problems without outside assistance.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has traced the history of street gang activity in Winnipeg, since 1945. The analysis shows that, prior to 1985, Winnipeg did not have a history of street gang activity. The only exception to this was the appearance of the Dew Drop gang late in 1949 and its disappearance early in 1950. This is in contrast to Vancouver, where street gangs have appeared and disappeared in waves, since 1945. The “gangs” that were depicted in the Winnipeg Free Press, between 1945 and 1985, were not street gangs per se, but were criminal groups and youth groups.

It was after 1985, that street gangs began to emerge in Winnipeg. The chronology of street gang activity showed that the gangs were primarily an Aboriginal phenomenon. The street gangs grew rapidly in the 1990s, expanded their territories, and became heavily involved in sensational crimes of violence. By the

**end of 1997, the street gangs had increased their numbers to approximately 1,850 members, most of whom were adults, and they had become more organized and sophisticated in their criminal endeavors.**

**In order to understand the preponderance of Aboriginal people involved in street gangs, in Winnipeg, the plight of Aboriginal people in the city, and in Canada needs to be examined. This is the topic of the next chapter.**

## **Chapter IV: Street Gangs in Winnipeg. An “Urban Underclass” Phenomenon?**

This chapter is dedicated to explaining the emergence of street gangs in Winnipeg during the late 1980s and early 1990s. The chapter focuses on the tenets of the urban underclass theory developed by Wilson (1987; 1996). It is proposed that a subsection of Aboriginal people in Canada, similar to inner city African Americans and Hispanics in the United States, constitute what has come to be known as an urban underclass.

For the most part the chapter analyses data from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey<sup>20</sup> to demonstrate the depressed and marginalized position of Aboriginal people in Canada, Manitoba and particularly Winnipeg. This descriptive analysis is done to facilitate comparison among Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada, as it has been documented that Aboriginal people and their communities in the Prairie region (Manitoba and Saskatchewan) tend to be well below the national average on indicators of well being (Armstrong, 1999). The data also focuses on Winnipeg because it is the primary location in which street gangs have emerged in Manitoba. These data are supplemented with tabular data obtained from the Indian

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<sup>20</sup> The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey took a representative sample of 36,635 Aboriginal people aged 15 years or more. The sample was taken from all those people who indicated “Aboriginal origins and/or reported being registered under the Indian Act” on the 1991 Census (Statistics Canada, 1995: 11). There were a total of 4,210 Aboriginals sampled from Manitoba and a total of 974 Aboriginals sampled from Winnipeg. All missing values were excluded from the analysis. This included any respondents who answered the “not applicable”, “refused” or “not stated” categories.

Registry<sup>21</sup>, and the Census of Population for the years of 1986, 1991, and 1996. All tabular data was obtained through selected Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) publications. The Census of Population for the years of 1986, 1991 and 1996 are used to promote comparability of Aboriginals with all Canadians.

In this chapter, a number of the most relevant tenets of Wilson's (1987; 1996) "underclass" theory are applied to Aboriginal people. It is imperative that the reader understands that in referring to Aboriginal people, as comprising an urban underclass the author is focusing upon a subsection of Canada's First Nations population. Not all Aboriginal people are entrenched in the "underclass," but the underclass comprises the most marginalized subsections of Aboriginal people. It is hypothesized that the marginalized position of the underclass subsection of Aboriginal people is actually understated in the statistics gleaned from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, the Indian Registry and the Census of Population, as the aggregate trend data include all groups of Aboriginals. The notion that in the inner city there are groups that are more marginalized than others, has been examined by LaPrairie (1995). LaPrairie argues that of three disadvantaged Aboriginal groups found in Canadian inner cities, the "Inner 1" group was the most impoverished. According to LaPrairie (1995), members of the Inner 1 group:

Are characterized by despondency and hopelessness, and many hard-core alcohol problems. They are the least well educated, least employed and employable, and the most or victimized as children in terms of being in foster homes, or victims of family violence or instability. They had fewer positive parental influences, and are more alienated from families, reserves and other people (1995: 77).

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<sup>21</sup> Under the Indian Act, the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is required to record the information of all registered Indians. This data forms the Indian Registry System database.

The first section of this chapter examines the key demographic variables affecting Aboriginals and compares these to Canadians at large. The second section examines employment and income related variables, the third discusses educational variables, and in the fourth section family structure and family related variables are assessed. Fifth, the impact of disproportionate incarceration rates of First Nations is examined and connected to the development of an Aboriginal “underclass”. It is these first five sections which examine the applicability of Wilson’s “underclass” theory to Aboriginal people. The sixth section examines selected variables that demonstrate the impact of the underclass variables on Aboriginal people, including, the residential patterns and the overall health status of Aboriginal people. Each of these variables adds to an understanding of some of the problems that have been identified in First Nations communities. Lastly, these variables are contextualized with the work of Klein (1995) to explain the emergence and proliferation of Aboriginal street gangs in Winnipeg.

### **The Demographic Characteristics of Aboriginals in Canada**

According to DIAND<sup>22</sup> (1995a), in the 1991 Census, a total of 1,016, 340 people reported some sort of Aboriginal origin, with approximately 38 percent (385,800) of these being Registered Indians. The distribution of gender of Registered Indians in 1998 was roughly equivalent, with 49 percent male (314,577) and 51 percent (327,837) female (DIAND, 1999). In Manitoba, there were approximately 117,455 people who reported Aboriginal origins and, of that total, approximately 53

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<sup>22</sup> This DIAND report is based on data obtained from the 1991 Census.

percent (62,635) were Registered Indians (DIAND, 1995a). In 1990, Canada-wide, 49.3 percent of the Registered Indian population was located on a reserve while 50.7 percent of the Registered Indian population was located off reserve. In Manitoba, a slightly higher percentage of Registered Indians were found on a reserve (56.8 percent), while a lower proportion were found off reserve (43.2 percent) in comparison with the Canada wide proportions (DIAND, 1995a). By December 31, 1998, DIAND, using the Indian Registry<sup>23</sup>, reported in Manitoba that 66 percent (66,081) of Registered Indians resided on a reserve while 34 percent (34,446) lived outside of a reserve (DIAND, 1999). These on reserve and off reserve percentages are important to consider because, according to DIAND (1995b), “with the exception of post-secondary funding, all federal benefits that accrue to Registered Indians are tied to the condition that residency be maintained on the reserve” (1995b: 29).

The age breakdown of Aboriginals and non-Aboriginal Canadians is another important demographic variable that requires close attention. According to DIAND (2000)<sup>24</sup>, in 1996, the median age of Registered Indians was 23 years while the median age of all Canadians was 33 (see Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of Aboriginal People in Comparison to All Canadians). This indicates that the Registered Indian population is considerably younger, or bottom heavy (disproportionate amounts of younger people), compared to the total Canadian population, which is noticeably top heavy (disproportionate amounts of older people). This phenomenon is evidenced by the modal age categories for non-Aboriginal

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<sup>23</sup> The Indian Registry records all First Nations people “who have applied to be registered and whose entitlement has been verified” in accordance to the provisions of the Indian Act.

<sup>24</sup> This report is based on data obtained from the 1991 Census and the 1996 Census.

Canadians, Registered Indians living on a reserve and Registered Indians living off reserve. In 1991, the modal age category for Registered Indians living on a reserve was “0-4” and this accounted for 15 percent of this group. Moreover, it accounted for 10.3 percent of the Registered Indian population living off a reserve, and only seven percent of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population. In 1991, the modal age category for Registered Indians living off a reserve was “5-9” which accounted for 10.6 percent of this group, and it accounted for 12.8 percent of the Registered Indian population living on a reserve, and only 6.8 percent of the non-Aboriginal Canadian population. In contrast to Registered Indians, the modal age category for non-Aboriginal Canadians was “65 years and older” which comprised 11.8 percent of this group. However, this age category accounted for a meager 3.9 percent of Registered Indians living on a reserve and 3.3 percent of Registered Indians living off a reserve (DIAND, 1995b). The differing age structures of Aboriginal people and non-Aboriginal people in Canada is important to examine because these age structures have an impact on the underclass variables analyzed in the thesis.

**Table 1: The Demographic Characteristics of Aboriginal People in Comparison to All Canadians<sup>25</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians Living on a Reserve	All Canadians	Non-Aboriginal Canadians
Median Age (1996)	23 years	--	33 years	--
Modal Age Group (1991)	5-9 (10.6 %)	0-4 (15 %)	--	65 years and older (15 %)

<sup>25</sup> This is 1991, 1996 Census data.

## **Employment and Income**

One of the most important propositions of Wilson's "underclass" theory is that since the 1970s, Western economies have shifted "from goods-producing to service-producing industries" (1987: 8), and that the low skill jobs available to people with low levels of education have been markedly reduced. Wilson contends that this places minority groups at an extreme disadvantage, as they tend to be ineligible for sustainable employment. The effect of this economic transformation is that groups comprising an underclass will have disproportionate numbers of people who are unemployed, and who have dropped out of the labor force.

If some groups of Aboriginal people in Canada constitute an "underclass" then this should be reflected in their employment status. According to data gleaned from the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, of those aged 15 or more, 38.7 percent (n=350) of respondents in Winnipeg, 34.7 percent of respondents in Manitoba and 48.7 percent of respondents in Canada indicated that they were currently employed (see Table 2: Labor Force Activity and Income of Aboriginal People in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991). In contrast, 13.2 percent (n=122) of respondents in Winnipeg, 14 percent (n=549) of respondents in Manitoba and 13.2 percent of respondents in Canada were currently unemployed but still looking for work. However, the picture of Aboriginal employment becomes extremely depressing when examining those who have dropped out of the labor force<sup>26</sup>. Forty-nine percent (n=454) of Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, 51.3 percent (n=2,005) of Aboriginals in

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<sup>26</sup> People who are not in the labor force are not factored into unemployment rates, as calculated by Statistics Canada and DIAND.

Manitoba and 38.5 percent (n=13,266) of Aboriginals in Canada responded that they were not in the labor force. These results suggest that Aboriginal people in Winnipeg, and even more so in Manitoba, are at a more disadvantaged position than Aboriginals in the rest of Canada with respect to employment.

Other variables that provide insight into the labor force activity of Aboriginal people include a variable on when each respondent last had some sort of employment. The distribution of this variable shows that 35.1 percent (n=319) of respondents in Winnipeg, 32.8 percent (n=1,255) of respondents in Manitoba, and 29.2 percent (n=9,938) in Canada had not worked in the year 1991. The marginalized employment situation of Aboriginal people becomes more evident when examining the proportion of Aboriginal people who indicated that they have “never worked”. According to the Aboriginal Peoples Survey, 20.1 percent (n=183) of respondents in Winnipeg, 24.7 percent (n=944) of respondents in Manitoba and 14.6 percent (n=4,965) of respondents in Canada specified that they had “never worked”.

**Table 2: Labor Force Activity and Income of Aboriginal People in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991<sup>27</sup>.**

Variable	Winnipeg	Manitoba	Canada
% of Aboriginals employed	38.7	34.7	48.7
% of Aboriginals unemployed	13.2	14	13.2
% not in labor force	49	51.3	38.5
% never worked	20.1	24.7	14.6
% no income for	14.5	9.4	11.1
% \$9,999 or less	54.4	59.4	48
% \$40,000 or more	3.4	3.9	7.5
% no income from employment source	52	55.2	36.9

This depressed employment state is highlighted when First Nations participation rates are compared with those of all Canadians. In 1991, 52.3 percent of Registered Indians participated in the labor force compared to 68.1 percent of all Canadians (Table 3: Labor Force Participation and Income of Registered Indians as Compared to All Canadians). Moreover, 44.4 percent of Registered Indians in Manitoba and 68.6 percent of all Manitobans participated in the labor force (DIAND, 1995a). However, even though these percentages differ considerably, they fail to take into account the age factor. As mentioned previously in the section discussing the demographic characteristics of Aboriginal people, a high percentage of Registered Indians are younger while the larger Canadian society has an older population. It is important to note that those people who have retired from the labor force are counted as not active. Thus, it seems arguable that the precarious socioeconomic status of Registered Indians is understated in these percentages.

Employment and unemployment rates are also a useful indicator of the successful acquisition of employment. In 1991, compared to Canadians actively seeking work with an unemployment rate of 9.9 percent, Registered Indians off a reserve had an unemployment rate of 25.1 percent. The unemployment rate of Registered Indians on a reserve was noticeably higher at 31 percent of the population (DIAND, 1995b). This situation declined somewhat for two of the groups in 1996 as the corresponding unemployment rates were 10.2 percent for all Canadians, 27.2 percent of all Registered Indians, and 28.7 percent of all Registered Indians living on a reserve (DIAND, 2000).

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<sup>27</sup> This data comes from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

**Table 3: Labor Force Participation and Income of Registered Indians as Compared to All Canadians<sup>28</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians on a Reserve	All Aboriginals	Non-Aboriginal Canadians	All Canadians
% who participate in the labor force in Canada (1991)	52.3	46.8	64.9	--	68.6
% who participate in the labor force in Manitoba (1991)	44	42	54.9	--	68.6
% unemployed (1991)	25.1	31	19.4	9.9	--
% unemployed (1996)	27.2	28.7	--	--	10.2
Mean Income in Canada (1991)	\$12,800	\$10,500	\$17,000	--	\$24,600
Mean Income in Manitoba (1991)	\$10,300	\$9,000	\$13,200	--	\$21,600
% with Transfer Payments as major Source of Income in Canada (1991)	40	44.7	27.5	--	17
% with Transfer Payments as major Source of Income in Manitoba (1991)	48.7	50.6	38.3	--	17
% of families below the Low Income Cut-off (1996)	40.9	40.3	--	--	16.5

<sup>28</sup> This is 1991 and 1996 Census data.

These findings are extremely disturbing because according to Wilson, “in the case of young people, they may grow up in an environment that lacks the idea of work as a central experience of life—they have little or no labor force attachment” (1996: 52). It may also be suggested that many of these people lack the necessary skills and experience with work behavior (e.g., being on time, not missing work, and adequate communication skills) that would promote success in the work environment.

If these assertions have any basis, then Aboriginal people must be in a relative state of poverty. The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey denoted many different operational indicators of income for those people aged 15 years and older (see Table 2: Labor Force Activity and Income of Aboriginal People in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991). Results indicate that 14.5 percent (n=118) of respondents in Winnipeg, 9.4 percent (n=309) of respondents in Manitoba and 11.1 percent (n=3,424) of respondents in Canada had no source of income for 1991. Moreover, 54.4 percent (n=443) of Aboriginals in Winnipeg, 59.4 percent (n=1,952) of Aboriginals in Manitoba and 48 percent (n=14,761) of Aboriginals in Canada reported a total income of \$9,999 or less in 1991. A breakdown of the highest total income category, “\$40,000 and over” used in the survey showed that a mere 3.4 percent (n=32) of respondents in Winnipeg, 3.9 percent (n=112) of respondents in Manitoba and 7.5 percent (n=2,317) of respondents in Canada fell into this category. These percentiles support the notion that many Aboriginal people are living in poverty, especially in Manitoba and Winnipeg.

The extreme poverty faced by Aboriginal people becomes more apparent through an examination of the amount of income that is attributable to employment.

According to the distribution of the variable "Employment Income" the situation is bleak. Results illustrate that 52 percent (n=477) of respondents in Winnipeg, 55.2 percent (n=2,104) of respondents in Manitoba and 36.9 percent (n= 13,414) of respondents in Canada specified that they had not received any employment-derived income in 1991. Additionally, 70.8 percent (n=649) of respondents in Winnipeg, 75.2 percent (n=2,868) of respondents in Manitoba and 63.2 percent (n=21,397) in Canada stated that they obtained \$9,999 or less from employment in 1991.

The marginalized position of First Nations people becomes more apparent when they are compared to all Canadians. According to DIAND (1995a), the average annual income in 1991 of Registered Indians was \$12,800, while the average annual income for all Canadians was almost twice that (\$24,100) of the Registered Indian population (see Table 3: Labor Force Participation and Income of Registered Indians as Compared to All Canadians). In Manitoba specifically, although the mean income was lower for Manitobans (\$21,600) than the average Canadian income amount (\$24,100), it was slightly more than twice that of Registered Indians (\$10,300) in Manitoba. In situations where government transfer payments<sup>29</sup> are the major source of income, the situation is bleaker. In Canada for 1991, 40 percent of all Registered Indians reported that their major source of income was derived from transfer payments, while only 17 percent of Canadians reported this to be the case. In Manitoba, a higher proportion of Registered Indians (48.7 percent) received the majority of their annual income from government transfer payments, while

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<sup>29</sup> According to DIAND (1995b), government income includes: Family Allowances, Federal Child Tax Credits, Old Age Security, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Canada or Quebec Pension Plan and Unemployment Insurance (1995b: 102).

Manitobans reported 17 percent of their income was received from this source (DIAND, 1995a). In 1996, as an indicator of poverty, 40.9 percent of all Registered Indians were below the Low Income Cut-Off (LICO) as compared to 16.5 percent of all Canadians (DIAND, 2000). This suggests that large proportions of Registered Indians are not involved in sustainable employment.

## **Education Status**

Wilson (1987; 1996) posits that education is another key variable in the development and maintenance of the “urban underclass,” and he believes that education is intricately tied to the shifting nature of the employment market. Wilson maintains that:

There have been important changes in the patterns of occupational staffing within firms and industries, including those in manufacturing. These changes have primarily benefited those with more formal education. Substantial numbers of new professional, technical, and managerial positions have been created. However, such jobs require at least some years of post-secondary education. Young high school dropouts and even high school graduates have faced a dwindling supply of career jobs offering the real earnings opportunities available to them in the 1960s and 1970s (1996: 31).

Thus, it is important to examine the educational attainment of Aboriginal people to determine if they are obtaining the education necessary to compete in a job market where “job growth has been concentrated in industries that require higher levels of education” (Wilson, 1987: 39).

The 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey examined numerous indicators of educational attainment<sup>30</sup>. This data indicates that 69 percent (n=628) of Aboriginals sampled in Winnipeg, 79.3 percent (n=3,013) of Aboriginals sampled in Manitoba

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<sup>30</sup> It is important to note that data was obtained from people aged 15-19 (15.3 percent of the total sample). Thus, these results must be examined with caution, as some members of this group, as a result of their age could not have finished a high school degree.

and 64 percent (n=21,940) of Aboriginals sampled in Canada completed grade 11<sup>31</sup> (see Table 4: Indicators of Educational Attainment Among Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991), as their highest grade completed during secondary school. Moreover, 22 percent (n=200) of respondents in Winnipeg, 37.8 percent (n=1,436) of respondents in Manitoba and 25.9 percent (n=8,869) of respondents in Canada indicated that they had a grade 8 education or less. These findings offer some tentative support for the notion that Aboriginal people have inadequate levels of educational attainment. These are alarming

**Table 4: Indicators of Educational Attainment among Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991<sup>32</sup>.**

Variable	Winnipeg	Manitoba	Canada
% of Aboriginals completed grade 11	69	79.3	64
% of Aboriginals with grade 8 or less	22	37.8	25.9
% of Aboriginals who have never attended university	89.8	93.3	89.4
% completed a Bachelors degree	4.2	2.2	4.5

findings when one considers the idea that sustainable employment requires, for the most part, a minimum of a secondary school diploma.

It has been noted that in the employment economy in Canada much of the sustainable employment requires post-secondary education. Data obtained from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey indicates that very small proportions of Aboriginals in Canada have attended university. The results reveal that 89.8 percent (n=870) of the sample in Winnipeg, 93.3 percent (n=3,873) of the sample in Manitoba and 89.4

<sup>31</sup> The wording of this question necessitated that grade 11 be chosen. This was because if the respondent had selected grade 12 they could have still obtained some sort of post-secondary education.

percent (n=32,409) of the sample in Canada had not attended university at all.

Moreover, an examination of the proportion of the sample that has completed a Bachelors degree or more is disturbing. The results show that a mere 4.2 percent (n=37) of the respondents in Winnipeg, 2.2 percent (n=79) of the respondents in Manitoba and 4.5 percent (n=1,475) of the respondents in Canada had been awarded a Bachelors degree.

A comparison of indicators of educational status among Aboriginals and all Canadians provides some insights into the marginalized educational status of Aboriginal people. Although Registered Indians have been making some educational gains relative to the past, they are far below all Canadians on most indicators of educational attainment (DIAND, 2000). In 1996, 13.3 percent of Canadians had obtained a university degree while only 3 percent of all Registered Indians and 1.8 percent of all Registered Indians residing on a reserve had done so (see Table 5: Indicators of Educational Attainment of Registered Indians as Compared to All Canadians). Moreover, when all types of post-secondary education are considered Registered Indians are well below their Canadian counterparts. Fifty point nine percent of all Canadians, 36.6 percent of all Registered Indians and 31 percent of all Registered Indians living on a reserve had some sort of post-secondary education. Additionally, 12.1 percent of all Canadians, 21.9 percent of all Registered Indians and 29.6 percent of all Registered Indians living on a reserve had less than a grade nine education (DIAND, 2000). These discouraging findings suggest that many Aboriginal people in Canada do not have the post-secondary skills required to

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<sup>32</sup> This data comes from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

compete in an employment market that is largely service based, requiring specialized training. Thus, it seems that Aboriginals in Canada are in a disadvantaged state because it is difficult to obtain not just employment but also sustainable employment to support oneself and a family without adequate education.

**Table 5: Indicators of Educational Attainment of Registered Indians as Compared to All Canadians<sup>33</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians on a Reserve	All Canadians
% who obtained a university degree (1996)	3	1.8	13.3
% who had some post-secondary education (1996)	36.6	31	59
% with less than grade 9 (1996)	21.9	29.6	12.1

### Family Related Variables

The growth of single parent families, according to Wilson (1987; 1996), is another key factor that explains the emergence of the urban underclass. Wilson argues that these families tend to be much more economically depressed than traditional nuclear two parent families. Wilson asserts that the rise of single parent families, and especially “the rise of female-headed families has had dire social and economic consequences because these families are far more vulnerable to poverty than are other types of families” (1987: 71). In addition, single parent families (mainly female headed) are, in part, the result of out of wedlock births, and a poor “male marriageable pool index<sup>34</sup>” (Wilson, 1987: 83). Thus, if Aboriginal peoples in

<sup>33</sup> This is 1996 Census data.

<sup>34</sup> Counting the number of employed men of the same age and ethnicity for every 100 females of that age and ethnicity creates this index. Thus, men who are unemployed or incarcerated are excluded (Wilson, 1987).

Canada comprise an urban underclass then there should be a preponderance of Aboriginal single parent families, mainly headed by females.

It is important to note that the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey did not track this type of data directly, as it did with employment and educational attainment. However, some of the data do provide some insight into the proportion of Aboriginals who were married, single, divorced or widowed<sup>35</sup> (Table 6: The Proportion of Single and Non-Single Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991). In Winnipeg 53.2 percent (n=518) of the sample were classified as single, while 46.9 percent (n=1,974) of the sample in Manitoba and 45.2 percent (n=16,548) of the Canada wide sample indicated that they fell into this category. When this category is combined with all those respondents who were divorced, separated or widowed, 72.3 percent (n=704) of the Winnipeg respondents, 60.3 percent (n=2,539) of the Manitoba respondents and 59.3 percent (n=21,704) of the Canadian respondents were unmarried.

**Table 6: The Proportion of Single and Non-Single Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada in 1991<sup>36</sup>.**

Variables	Winnipeg	Manitoba	Canada
% of Aboriginals who are single	53.2	46.9	45.2
% of Aboriginals who are single, separated, widowed, or divorced	72.3	60.3	59.3

<sup>35</sup> It is important to note that data was obtained from people aged 15-19 (15.3 percent of the total sample). Thus, these results must be examined with caution, as it would be unlikely that this age group would be married.

Fortunately, the Census of Population documented the percent of lone parent households. According to DIAND (2000), in 1996, 23 percent of Registered Indian families, 19.2 percent of the families of Registered Indians living on a reserve and 12.1 percent of all Canadian families were headed by a lone female (see Table 7: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Family-Related Variables). Additionally, in 1996, 3.6 percent of Registered Indian families, 5.3 percent of the families of Registered Indians living on a reserve and 2.5 percent of all Canadian families were headed by a lone male (DIAND, 2000). In 1991, “26.5 of off-reserve [Registered Indian] families were headed by a lone-parent,” and females accounted for “90.6 percent of such families” (DIAND, 1995b). Thus, it seems that Registered Indian families, especially those who are not residing on a reserve are in a more disadvantaged state than their Canadian counterparts due to the preponderance of Registered Indian single parent families.

The larger proportion of lone parent families should be considered in light of fertility rates among these groups. In 1996, Registered Indians averaged 1.8 children per family and Registered Indians living on a reserve averaged 2.1 children per family while all Canadians averaged 1.2 children per family (DIAND, 2000). According to DIAND (1995b), in 1991, “69.7 percent of all Aboriginal females reported having at least one child” compared to “53.3 percent of all non-Aboriginal females” (81). This suggests that economically, Aboriginals may be more financially deprived than their non-Aboriginal counterparts because of the financial commitment associated with each child.

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<sup>36</sup> This data comes from the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey.

**Table 7: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Family-Related Variables<sup>37</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians on a Reserve	All Canadians
% of families headed by a lone female (1996)	23	19.2	12.1
% of families headed by a lone male (1996)	3.6	5.3	2.5
# of children per family (1996)	1.8	2.1	1.2

### **Aboriginal Imprisonment**

According to Wilson (1987), incarceration rates are important to an understanding of the urban underclass. This is a direct result of the fact that the incarceration of men, especially, has the effect of reducing the “male marriageability pool index” which, combined with out of wedlock births, leads to the rise of female headed families. These families, as mentioned earlier, are not only likely to be poor but are more likely “to be persistently poor” (1987: 72).

According to LaPrairie (1996), Aboriginal offenders are heavily over-represented in Canadian corrections. She found that although Aboriginals comprise only 3.7 percent of the population in Canada, this group formed approximately 17 percent of all inmates and approximately 11 percent of all federal inmates. This dramatic overrepresentation is exacerbated when regional differences are examined. She asserts that 68 percent of all the Aboriginal federal inmates are located in “the Prairie region [Saskatchewan and Manitoba] and within this region Aboriginal offenders comprised 35 percent of the offender population (1996: 32). Moreover,

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<sup>37</sup> This is based on 1996 Census data.

LaPrairie (1996) found, through an examination of provincial incarceration rates, that Aboriginal admissions to prison, in Manitoba, were 5.5 times “higher than would be expected from the provincial Aboriginal population” (1996: 33). In percentage terms Aboriginals, between 1988 and 1995, comprised an average of 57 percent of “sentenced admissions” to Manitoba penitentiaries (1996: 33).

Similarly, the Report of the Aboriginal Justice Inquiry of Manitoba found that although Aboriginal people in Manitoba form approximately 12 percent of the total population, they “account for over one-half of the 1,600 people incarcerated on any given day of the year in Manitoba’s correctional institutions” (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991: 85). This over-representation is especially acute for Aboriginal juveniles in Manitoba. In 1990, these offenders constituted 64 percent of the intakes at the Manitoba Youth Centre and 78 percent of the intakes at Agassiz Youth Centre (Hamilton and Sinclair, 1991).

This over-representation of Aboriginal people in correctional institutions, especially in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, is problematic. First, the stigma attached to being a convicted offender is a barrier to success when searching for gainful employment and, second, the immediate effect of imprisonment, in many cases, is familial disruption and impoverishment.

### **General Health and Housing Status**

Although the indicators of general health and residential status are not among the prime tenets of Wilson’s underclass theory, they may shed some light on whether or not specific subgroups may be experiencing the negative consequences of the

underclass. Thus, it is useful to briefly examine the overall health, and housing circumstances of Aboriginals in Canada.

To get an understanding of the overall health of Aboriginals compared to Canadians it is important to examine the average life expectancy, the crude mortality rates, and the infant mortality rates for each of these groups (see Table 8: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Indicators of Health). According to DIAND (2000), in 1996, male Registered Indians had a life expectancy of 68.2 years, while all Canadian males had a life expectancy of 75.7 years. Moreover, Registered Indian females had a life expectancy of 75.9 years and all Canadian females had a life expectancy of 81.5 years. The crude mortality rate for Registered Indians was 5.1 per 1,000 people while all Canadians had a higher mortality rate at 7.1 per 1000 people (DIAND, 2000). This finding seems to contradict the notion that Aboriginal people are marginalized health-wise, but this rate fails to account for the age structure of the two groups (the substantial older proportion of all Canadians). An examination of the infant mortality rates provides more evidence that the overall health of Aboriginal people is being negatively affected by the underclass variables examined previously. In 1996, Registered Indians had an infant mortality rate of 11.6 per 1000, while all Canadians had a rate which was almost half that at 6.1 per 1000 (DIAND, 2000). These aggregate statistics support the notion that Aboriginals in Canada have a lower overall health status than do all Canadians.

**Table 8: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Indicators of Health<sup>38</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians on a Reserve	All Canadians
Mean male life expectancy in years (1996)	68.2	--	75.7
Mean female life expectancy in years (1996)	75.9	--	81.5
Crude mortality rate per 1000 people (1996)	5.1	--	7.1
Infant mortality rate per 1000 (1996)	11.6	--	6.1

Housing related variables, also provide indications that Aboriginal people in Canada may be experiencing the effects of an underclass status. The average number of persons per dwelling, the average number of persons per room, the percentage of dwellings having more than one person per room, the percentage of dwellings with a water supply and sewage disposal facilities provide an indication of the quality of a residence (see Table 9: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Housing Variables). In 1991, in Canada, Registered Indians in Canada had an average of 3 persons per dwelling while all non-Aboriginal Canadians had an average of 2.7 persons per dwelling. In Manitoba, in 1991, Registered Indians had an average of 3.4 persons per dwelling, while all non-Aboriginal Manitobans had an average of 2.6 persons per dwelling (DIAND, 1995a). In 1996, all Registered Indians had an average of 0.6 persons per room, and Registered Indians on a reserve had an average of 0.7 persons per room, while all Canadians had an average of 0.4 persons per room (DIAND, 2000). Additionally, 9.9 percent of all dwellings occupied by Registered Indians, 18.6 percent of all dwellings occupied by Registered Indians on a reserve and

<sup>38</sup> This is based on 1996 Census data.

1.7 percent of dwellings occupied by all Canadians had more than one person per room (DIAND, 2000). These percentages suggest that the houses occupied by Aboriginal people are more crowded than the houses occupied by non-Aboriginal Canadians.

**Table 9: A Comparison of Registered Indians to All Canadians on Housing Variables<sup>39</sup>.**

Variable	Registered Indians	Registered Indians on a reserve	All Canadians
# of persons per dwelling in Canada (1991)	3	4.1	2.7
# of persons per dwelling in Manitoba (1991)	3.4	4.4	2.6
Average number of persons per room (1996)	0.6	0.7	0.4
% of dwellings with more than 1 person per room (1996)	9.9	18.6	1.7
% of dwellings with a water supply (1996)	--	96.1	100
% of dwellings with sewage disposal facilities (1996)	--	91.5	100

In terms of dwellings with an adequate water supply and sewage disposal facilities Aboriginals are below their Canadian counterparts. In 1996, 100 percent of all Canadians and 96.1 percent of all Registered Indians living on a reserve had a residence with water supply services. Furthermore, 100 percent of all Canadians and 91.5 percent of Registered Indians living on a reserve had dwellings with sewage disposal facilities (DIAND, 2000). It is important to note that these aggregate statistics do not speak to the character and quality of the homes in which people are residing. For examples of the quality of homes in which Aboriginal people live in the

<sup>39</sup> This is based on 1991 and 1996 Census data.

**Downtown core of Winnipeg, see Appendix E: Selected Pictures of Deuce territory and Indian Posse territory: Examples of the Substandard Housing in the Downtown Core of Winnipeg.**

## **The Urban Underclass and Street Gangs**

The question that arises at this point is how does underclass theory explain the emergence and proliferation of street gangs in Winnipeg? This question is answered by applying the model developed by Klein (1995), who posits that the underclass is the “foremost cause of the recent proliferation” of street gangs in the United States and “the likely best predictor of its continuation” (1995: 194). Thus, the purpose of this section is to apply Klein’s (1995) underclass model to street gangs in Winnipeg.

Basically, Klein (1995) proposes that the underclass variables--such as the changing nature of the employment market, educational system failure, historical segregation, the marginalized single parent family, the out migration of the minority middle and upper class, and disproportionate imprisonment--have produced conditions under which gang onset variables flourish in a community. These underclass variables interact to establish onset variables in a community, such as the Downtown core in Winnipeg. The onset variables are large numbers of youth between the ages of 10 to 30, the absence of work, especially sustainable employment, high crime rates, a concentrated marginalized minority group, the absence of alternative activities and the absence of social controls.

At this point it is not possible to assert that these conditions definitely exist in Winnipeg’s Downtown core, but it is possible to speculate, based on the data from the

preceding discussion, on whether they do or not. First, data have shown that the Aboriginal population in Canada is disproportionately young, and there is no indication that this differs substantially in urban centres. Furthermore, many Aboriginal migrants to Winnipeg, were the young, and single parent families (Clatworthy, 1996; CMHC, 1996). Therefore, it can be argued that many young Aboriginals reside in the core area of Winnipeg.

The analysis above does not speak to the absence of employment (i.e., is there enough in the area), directly. However, the disproportionate rates of employment, unemployment and labor force participation indicate that many Aboriginal people are not working at present. Additionally, it seems that a large proportion of Aboriginals have never worked or work so little that the majority of their income is accrued from some sort of government transfer payment. Through an appraisal of income data it seems obvious that Aboriginals are far below the Canadian average, and in many cases are below the poverty line. The lack of employment is also evidenced in Aboriginal communities because most of the street gang members in Winnipeg are adults, who have not matured out of the gang. Instead, as Moore (1991), Klein (1995) and Hagedorn (1998) point out in the United States, gang members are remaining in gangs for longer periods of time, probably because there is a lack of alternatives including a lack of sustainable and meaningful employment in the core community.

The data analyzed here preclude the possibility of assessing whether the Downtown core has a high crime rate or whether Aboriginals are the concentrated minority in the core. In regards to the first issue, crime rates are much higher in the

core area of Winnipeg (e.g., arson) than in other areas. The second issue is also not easily resolved. Many marginalized Aboriginal people now occupy the core area, after the original Russian and Jewish immigrants became part of the status quo and migrated to other areas in the city. The result is that Winnipeg has “the largest single concentration of Natives in Canada” (unknown, 1997: 24).

Lastly, the absence of alternate activities and social control is a little less obvious. The nature of the houses and the general area of the Downtown core in Winnipeg are indicative of these onset variables (see Appendix E: Selected Pictures of Deuce territory and Indian Posse territory). These photographs provide some evidence of the decrepit nature of the surroundings in the core. It is plausible to suggest that the core community lacks effective institutions of social control, such as the family, religious institutions and adequate schools. For example, it would be difficult for the large proportions of marginalized single parent families, in the Aboriginal community in the Downtown core to provide the necessities for youth, because of low paying shift work, and to exert control over them.

It is plausible to suggest that the Downtown core of Winnipeg has all of the onset variables described in Klein’s model (1995). According to Klein (1995), these onset variables interact with maintenance variables to produce street gangs. These maintenance variables are the establishment of oppositional structures and institutions, gang rivalries, perceptions of barriers and the impact of gang intervention programs. From the analysis presented in Chapter III it is argued that these maintenance variables are present. In Winnipeg, oppositional institutions are prevalent. The suppression-only response of the government during most of the

recent history of street gangs evidences this oppositional process. The development of the Street Gang Unit, the street gang coordinator, the reactions of school divisions (i.e. gang summits) and the application of Bill C-95 to the Manitoba Warriors are all examples of oppositional structures in Winnipeg.

Rivalries among groups and different gangs are also prevalent in Winnipeg. These, in fact, occupied much media attention in Winnipeg, and the gang phenomenon became recognized as a problem through these rivalries. For example, specific gangs were documented after the aborted 300-person rumble at Unicity, and gang rivalries were the basis of the series of drive-bys perpetrated by the Indian Posse, the Manitoba Warriors and the Deuce against each other. Additionally, gang graffiti in the core, such as "DK" (Deuce Killers) or "PK" (Posse Killers), are indicative of gang rivalries (for examples of this type of graffiti see Appendix E).

Cook's (1999)<sup>40</sup> exploratory research on street gangs in Manitoba offers some support for the notion that Aboriginal youth in the core area have "shared perceptions of barriers to improvement" (Klein, 1995: 198). Although, there has been little movement in the development of gang intervention programs, Winnipeg has introduced some, and gang membership has increased during their implementation. It is important to note that gang intervention programs, which increase the cohesiveness of the gang as a unit, are counterproductive because gang members become more heavily involved with the gang. Arguably, these programs prompt other youth to join gangs to receive the attention and benefits from the programs (Klein, 1995).

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<sup>40</sup> This article was discussed in Chapter II.

The maintenance and onset variables interact with the psychological needs of youth in a marginalized area. Klein (1995) asserts that these needs (affiliative needs, status needs, identity needs, belonging needs, etc.) are integral to all youth and are not adequately fulfilled in the inner city as a result of the impact of the underclass variables. The development of a street gang is a viable option in an underclass community because the gang fulfills the needs of its members. However, this is not to say that all people in these communities are going to become involved in a street gang. It does suggest that the most marginalized members of this subgroup may join or form a gang because it is one of the only viable options available to them (Vigil, 1994).

## **Conclusion**

It may be suggested that the marginalized position of Aboriginals in Canada is due to discrimination, especially historic discrimination. There is no doubt that this has occurred and continues to occur to a certain extent in Canada. Colonial mentalities and the loss of their traditional way of life through forced relocation on to reserves has wrecked havoc upon Aboriginal people in Canada. Additionally, the impact of the residential schools cannot be discounted. The purpose of these institutions was the implementation of a nation wide policy of assimilation, where Aboriginal parents were forced, by law, to send their children away from their communities (CCJA, 2000). It is important not to discount these historical events, however it is difficult to argue that these are the only causes of Aboriginal marginalization today.

**As Wilson (1987) argues, in the United States:**

**Proponents of the discrimination thesis often fail to make a distinction between the effects of historic discrimination, that is, discrimination before the middle of the twentieth century, and the effects of discrimination following that time. They therefore find it difficult to explain why the economic position of poor urban blacks actually deteriorated during the very period in which the most sweeping anti-discrimination legislation and programs were enacted and implemented. Their emphasis on discrimination becomes even more problematic in view of the economic progress of the black middle class during the same period (1987: 30).**

**These types of social reforms are prevalent in Canada, with the implementation of, amongst other initiatives, affirmative action programs, the implementation of Bill C-31, and educational benefits for Aboriginal students. However, contemporary discrimination has “contributed to or aggravated the social and economic problems” of Aboriginals in Canada and specifically Manitoba (Wilson, 1987: 30).**

**The analysis of underclass variables in this chapter has shown that Aboriginal people in Canada, Manitoba and Winnipeg are marginalized in terms of economic factors, educational factors and family related factors in comparison to the general population of Canada. These factors are exacerbated for inner city youth as a result of the absence of what Wilson (1987) termed a social buffer, which is the absence of an Aboriginal upper and middle class in the core area. The absence of a social buffer creates an absence of legitimate role models and removes the informal job network (Wilson, 1987). This in turn is partly responsible for a concentration of underclass minority groups and the social isolation experienced by an inner city minority, such as Aboriginals in Winnipeg. The social isolation experienced by many inner city Aboriginals is:**

**The lack of contact or of sustained interaction with individuals and institutions that represent the mainstream society (Wilson, 1987: 60).**

The concentration of these disenfranchised people interacts with the social isolation of these people to make it “much more difficult for those who are looking for work to be tied into the job network,” and they “generate behavior not conducive to good work histories” (Wilson, 1987: 60). Aboriginal people are also disproportionately represented in the correctional system, and the impact of underclass variables on Aboriginal people in Canada is evident because Aboriginals have a substandard overall health, and have poorer living conditions than other Canadians.

In conclusion, this analysis has provided some support for the notion that subgroups of Aboriginal people are occupying or becoming a part of a Canadian underclass and that this is why some of them become involved with street gangs. Many of the people to whom this analysis is referring are “the most disadvantaged segments” (Wilson, 1987: 8) of the Aboriginal population in Canada. For Wilson, these underclass subgroups are:

Families and individuals who are outside the mainstream of the...occupational system. Included in this group are individuals who lack the training and skills and either experience long-term unemployment or are not members of the labor force, individuals who are engaged in street crime and other forms of aberrant behavior, and families that experience long-term spells of poverty and/or welfare dependency (1987: 8).

This chapter concluded by applying Klein’s (1995) model of urban underclass theory and gang development to Winnipeg to explain the emergence of street gangs. It has been suggested that Klein’s model of gang formation is applicable in the Winnipeg context because the onset and maintenance variables established by Klein (1995) can be found in Winnipeg. Moreover, it has been proposed that Aboriginal youth in the Downtown core come from a subsection of families experiencing the most dramatic effects of being part of an urban underclass.

## **Chapter V: Theoretical Contributions, Policy Implications, and the Future of Gang Research in Canada.**

As stated in Chapter II, while street gangs have recently become an important social problem in Canada, to date there has been little scholarly research conducted on the topic. In contrast to research conducted in the United States, most of the Canadian research has been exploratory, examining small samples of gang members. Additionally, most of the Canadian street gang research is either atheoretical or limited in terms of theory development and testing. To a certain degree, this thesis has moved beyond these limitations.

The first contribution of this thesis is that it increases our understanding of street gangs in a Canadian context, generally, and in the Winnipeg context specifically. Chapter III has shown that, prior to 1985, Winnipeg had not experienced street gang activity, except during a brief time in 1949 and 1950. This street gang was the Dew Drop Gang. The gang engaged in a number of violent and public nuisance offences which included assaults at canteens, intimidation of community members, and the possession of firearms, brass knuckles and knives. However, this gang disappeared in April 1950. Aside from this anomaly, Winnipeg has not had an extensive history of street gang activity as experienced in other cities, such as Vancouver.

Although, Winnipeg appears to have had a tradition of “gang” activity, as reported in the Winnipeg Free Press, upon closer examination, these gang-like groups

are, in fact, more appropriately labeled youth groups and criminal groups, as defined by Gordon and Foley (1998). The youth groups were engaged in acts of vandalism, neighborhood “rumbles,” and other public nuisance offences. In contrast, criminal groups were primarily involved in property related crimes and crimes of profit. These three types of “gangs” were permanent fixtures in the history of Winnipeg.

Winnipeg continued to be characterized by an absence of street gang activity until 1985. The post-1985 street gang activity, aside from the sporadic appearance of Asian gangs, was primarily an Aboriginal phenomenon. By the end of 1997, there were three dominant and active street gangs in Winnipeg: the Indian Posse, the Deuce and the Manitoba Warriors. These gangs were involved in what Klein (1995) has referred to as a “cafeteria-style of crime” (1995: 22). This included a number of violent offences, such as assaults, assaults with weapons, homicides, and property offences, such as auto thefts and break and enters. These gangs were also involved in other crimes of profit, such as drug trafficking and controlling prostitution rings.

Another contribution of this thesis is that it documented the evolution of these gangs in Winnipeg during the post-1985 period. Prior to 1993, street gangs were engaging in relatively minor offences. They carried knives and intimidated people but rarely committed serious offences. It was not until 1993, that serious violence became a defining feature of street gangs in Winnipeg. There were a series of violent assaults perpetrated by street gang members against other youth not involved in street gangs, teachers, and rival gang members. These assaults often involved the use of weapons, such as knives and baseball bats. Additionally, territorial disputes became an important feature of gangs.

In 1994, street gang members began to use firearms in drive-by shootings and engaged in other more serious forms of violence. Street gangs became involved in armed robberies, murder and more lucrative forms of crime, such as drug trafficking and prostitution. During 1994 there were an estimated 300 active gang members in four major street gangs—the Overlords, the Indian Posse, the East Side Crips and the West End Boys.

By 1995, firearms were a defining feature of street gangs. Drive-by shootings became commonplace, some of which involved victims with no gang association. During this year, much of the inter-gang violence was a result of territorial disputes and gang rivalries, and there was a doubling of gang membership from 300 to 600 gang members.

By 1996 and 1997, street gangs had progressed to a new level. Street gangs instigated the infamous Headingly riot, they became involved in First Nations politics, as evidenced by the Waterhen incident, and were involved in more sophisticated forms of property crime. Additionally, street gang members were convicted in a number of high profile slayings, perpetrated against people with no street gang association. Some of these murders were perpetrated by street gangs to increase their territorial market for illicit drugs and services. At this time, gang members were apparently migrating to other cities to establish a new economic base. These street gangs were becoming intergenerational, they were forging new alliances with established Motorcycle gangs, and street gangs were still heavily active in both Youth Detention Centres and Adult Detention Centres throughout Manitoba. At the end of this period, street gangs had become such a topic of concern that the Assembly

of Manitoba Chiefs became involved, the Criminal Intelligence Service of Canada began tracking them, and there were several gang summits to address the problem. By the end of October 1997, street gang membership had increased dramatically from 600 members in 1995, to approximately 1,500 members. Additionally, by this time street gangs were recognized as a primarily adult based Aboriginal phenomenon.

The second contribution of this thesis is that it examined the governmental reaction to the post 1985 street gang problem. As discussed in Chapter III, the response to the emergence of street gangs in Winnipeg was primarily suppression based. The creation of a street gang unit with an emphasis placed on enforcement, special street gang prosecutors and staff, gang summits, the development of the Gang Prevention Coordinator and extensive funding granted by the Manitoba Department of Justice for collaborative investigation and indictment of street gang members are all indications of the suppression orientation of Winnipeg's responses to street gangs. The extensive funding for suppression based approaches to gang reduction is especially evident in the first application of Bill C-95, in R. v. Pangman. In contrast, very few alternatives to a solely suppression based regimen have been attempted. For the most part, the attempts at social reforms aimed at street gang members have received inadequate funding or have yet to be fully implemented. This is a precarious position because, as the United States experience indicates, most of these suppression based programs have been ineffective or counterproductive (Hagedorn, 1998; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995; Spergel and Curry, 1995).

This thesis also contributes to our understanding of street gangs in Winnipeg through the application of Wilson's "urban underclass" theory to Aboriginal people in

Canada and Winnipeg. The analysis of underclass variables showed that Aboriginals in Winnipeg, Manitoba and Canada are marginalized economically. Moreover, they have low levels of education, they have high rates of single parent families, and they have high rates of incarceration. In comparison to non-Aboriginal Canadians, Aboriginals in Canada are much more marginalized on all underclass variables. The analysis concluded by proposing that a subsection of the Aboriginal population, especially in Winnipeg, was in fact an urban underclass. Following Klein's (1995) underclass model of gang development, some tentative evidence was presented to support the applicability of this model to an explanation for the emergence of Aboriginal street gangs in Winnipeg.

### **Policy Implications**

There are many policy implications that stem from this thesis, but only a few are discussed here. First, in a general sense, it is imperative that the government commit substantial funding to research that attempts to provide an understanding of gangs in a Canadian context. This is necessary because there is a paucity of research on gangs in Canada and in Winnipeg, and sound street gang interventions need to be grounded in research which examines the causes of gang affiliation (Klein, 1995; Spergel and Curry, 1995). In addition, this funding should be allocated to gang research in various locations in Canada because, as this thesis has shown, street gangs have materialized in diverse ways in different urban centres. In Vancouver, street gangs have emerged in a wave like fashion since 1945, but have never remained a constant feature in the history of Vancouver. Conversely, Winnipeg has been

characterized by a noticeable lack of street gang activity, and, since 1985 the growth of street gangs has continued.

This type of funding is necessary to develop an understanding of street gangs, which could then be the foundation for the development of social programming required to address the street gang problem in Winnipeg. This could be accomplished through the establishment of a national funding agency, similar to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in the United States. These types of agencies, which attempt to develop social interventions for street gang members, are important because American research has shown that gang involvement increases the criminal offending each individual member (Battin, et al., 1998; Battin and Thornberry, 1998; Esbensen, et al., 1995; Huff, 1996; Thornberry, 1998; Thornberry and Burch II, 1997).

The second policy recommendation derived from this thesis applies generally to Canada, but is also specific to Winnipeg; namely, the implementation of social programs which are based on Canadian street gang research. As is evident from Chapter III, social interventions to street gangs were notably absent in the history of Winnipeg. It is difficult to speculate on suitable anti-gang programs, but they should have multiple components, one of which is a small suppression component. This multifaceted approach to street gang intervention has been proposed by researchers in the United States (Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995; Spergel and Curry, 1995). It is important that policy makers examine the gang research that has been conducted in Canada for indications of what might constitute an effective street gang intervention program. Additionally, anti-gang programming from the United States should be

examined because the United States has a longstanding street gang tradition and they have allocated extensive funding to anti-gang programs.

These programs should be examined to make sure that we are not repeating the past mistakes of the American policy-makers. As Klein (1995) warns, “gang cohesiveness is central to the nature and control of street gangs,” and many gang intervention programs inadvertently increased the cohesiveness of street gangs which in turn led to an increase in gang related deviance (1995: 42). This would require that all Canadian anti-gang and gang intervention policies be subject to rigorous evaluations by independent evaluators. Many researchers in the United States contend that evaluations of gang intervention programs were not rigorous and thus their effectiveness is in question (Howell, 1998c; Klein, 1995; Spergel, 1995).

The last policy recommendation specifically relating to the findings in this thesis is that subgroups of Aboriginal people in some cities may well constitute an urban underclass in Canada. If this is occurring then the policy solutions to the gang problem are more complex than the simple provision of opportunities (e.g., giving a gang member a job). Wilson (1987) asserts that most race and gender specific anti-discrimination policies, such as affirmative action, have little impact on the conditions experienced by the most disadvantaged minority groups in society. This occurs because “liberal policymakers,” through the implementation of programs “to improve the life chances of truly disadvantaged groups such as the ghetto underclass,” unintentionally emphasize “programs to which the more advantaged groups of all races and class backgrounds can positively relate” (Wilson, 1987: 155). Thus, affirmative action programs disproportionately benefit those members of a

minority who are not part of the urban underclass because those who are part of the underclass do not have the requisite skills necessary to benefit from the policy.

This point is related to the next policy recommendation. If it is accepted that a subsection of the Aboriginal population in Canada and especially Winnipeg, is part of an urban underclass and that this group characterizes most of those involved with street gangs then the policy solutions to this problem are complex. This author agrees with Wilson (1987), who asserts that:

The problems of the ghetto underclass can be most meaningfully addressed by a comprehensive program that combines employment policies with social welfare policies and that features universal as opposed to race- or group-specific strategies (1987: 163).

However, the author suggests that we must begin with interventions specific to gang members. Literature from the United States suggests that gang members tend to be the most marginalized and victimized members of an urban underclass (Shelden Tracy and Brown, 1997), whose existence is characterized by a state of multiple marginality (Vigil, 1994). If successful with street gang members, these policies could be adapted for use with other marginalized people, youth in particular. For example, this thesis has shown that many Aboriginal people in Canada are either unemployed or have withdrawn from the labor force. Youth in these underclass communities, characterized by an absence of employment or an absence of sustainable employment, are operating at an extreme disadvantage in the employment market. This occurs because, unlike youth in underclass communities, youth in a community characterized by high levels of employment:

Tend to develop some of the disciplined habits associated with stable or steady employment—habits that are reflected in the behavior of his or her parents and of other neighborhood adults. These might include attachment to a routine, a recognition of the hierarchy found in most work situations, a sense of personal efficacy attained through the routine management of financial affairs, endorsement of a system of personal and material rewards associated with

dependency and responsibility, and so on. Accordingly, when this youngster enters the labor market, he or she will have a distinct advantage over youngsters who grow up in households without a steady breadwinner and in neighborhoods that are not organized around work—in other words, in a milieu in which one is more exposed to the less disciplined habits associated with casual or infrequent work (Wilson, 1996: 106-107).

This suggests that policies aimed at simply finding work for underclass gang members is doomed to fail because the youth are unlikely to possess the requisite skills to meet the employment criteria, including the requisite social skills required to operate effectively in a work environment. To circumvent this dilemma, this author proposes that a long-term job mentorship program be instituted for gang members in Winnipeg. This would necessitate the involvement of local businesses and the government. In this scheme, local businesses would begin to offer mentorship programs in which a representative from the business would act as a role model by teaching a gang member the routines of the work environment, the social skills necessary to work effectively, and the skills necessary to work in a particular field. Thus, gang members would learn the norms operating in the world of work, which differ significantly from those espoused in the gang environment, and gain practical experience in a particular field. Government would then be able to offer incentives to businesses and corporations, who agreed to offer stable jobs to these gang members.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This thesis and the inadequate state of Canadian gang research provide an almost endless supply of possible avenues for future research. However, this concluding section will present four possible avenues for street gang research in Canada. With regard to the exploratory nature of most Canadian gang research, this

author proposes that scholars must move to develop more sophisticated explanatory models for the appearance of gangs in Canada.

The first avenue of research, is the replication of this thesis in other major urban centres, such as Toronto and Montreal. This type of research provides an invaluable source to compare the history of street gang activity in many urban centres. As has been shown in Chapter III, gangs have a different history in Winnipeg than in Vancouver. It is important to locate gangs in their specific environmental and historical context in different urban locales. The public responses to gang activity are important to document in order to understand the ways in which gangs have been treated by the larger society. Research has shown that a uni-faceted suppression approach, which is the dominant response in Winnipeg, is a problematic response to the street gang phenomenon. It is important to understand the approaches adopted by other cities to deal with their gang problems. Furthermore, if the urban underclass is the "foremost cause" of gang emergence and proliferation than this should be reflected in the history of other cities (Klein, 1995: 194). Thus, this type of research acts as a preliminary test of the validity of underclass theory in different locations.

The second suggestion for street gang research, which can compensate for the lack of research in Canada, is returning to the ethnographic tradition that has been prevalent in the United States (Campbell, 1991; Hagedorn, 1998; Moore, 1991; Shaw, 1930; Thrasher, 1963; Vigil, 1994; Whyte, 1993). This type of qualitative research yielded an in-depth understanding of street gangs in different historical contexts in the United States. The ethnographic approach provides an understanding of the

perspectives of street gang members in order to develop effective policy proposals that would, for example, meet their needs and deter others from being involved in gangs.

The third area of street gang research is one that focuses on how the media constructs public images of street gangs in Canada. This thesis examined the phenomenon, to a minimal degree, in the context of Winnipeg. This type of research is important for three reasons. First, many American gang researchers have found that the media misrepresents street gangs because the media focuses on the sensational aspects of gang life even though most of gang life is replete with boredom (Hagedorn, 1998; Klein, 1971; 1995; Moore, 1991; Vigil, 1994). The second purpose of this research would be to determine whether the media is creating a moral panic<sup>41</sup> on street gangs, as was the case in Britain during the 1970s (Cohen, 1980). The last reason is that this research could assess the impact of the media's coverage of street gangs on anti-gang policy implementation which is stimulated, in part, by the reaction of the public. Researchers have shown that the public obtains the bulk of their current knowledge of street gangs from the media (Klein, 1971; Perrone and Chesney-Lind, 1997).

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<sup>41</sup> According to Cohen (1980) a moral panic occurs when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible. Sometimes the object of the panic is quite novel and at other times it is something which has been in existence long enough, but suddenly appears in the limelight. Sometimes the panic passes over and is forgotten, except in folklore and collective memory; at other times it has more serious and long-lasting repercussions and might produce such changes as those in legal and social policy or even in the way society conceives itself" (1980: 9).

The last area of future research that flows from this thesis is a study that examines the applicability of Wilson's (1987) underclass theory and Klein's (1995) underclass model of street gang formation to street gangs in Canadian cities. There is some evidence to support this model in the context of Winnipeg, and the analysis points to the need for more detailed research in the City. It is necessary to determine whether there is an underclass in Winnipeg's Downtown core and how this is reflected in the experiences of gang members. This research is imperative because it is hypothesized that the majority of gang members are from the underclass subsections of the Aboriginal population in Winnipeg. Once this link has been established, a large sample of gang members from the downtown core could be studied to determine whether Klein's (1995) underclass model explains the emergence and proliferation of gang activity in Winnipeg.

## Appendix A: Gordon and Foley's (1998) Typology of Gangs<sup>42</sup>

**Youth Movements** are extensive national, and often international, social movements characterized by a distinctive mode of dress or other bodily adornments, a leisure time preference, and other distinguishing features. The vagaries of adolescent fashion and other larger social and economic developments tend to determine the life spans of these movements. To the extent that birds of a feather flock together, adolescents who subscribe to a movement often accumulate in groups and may be erroneously referred to, usually by the media, as a "gang".

Examples include the "*zoot-suiters*" (the 1940's and 1950's); the "*mods and rockers*" (the 1960's), etc.

**Youth Groups** are sometimes referred to as "social gangs" insofar as they are comprised of small clusters of young people who "hang out" together in public places such as shopping malls, fast food outlets, and large convenience stores. They are often quite visible, noisy and energetic and can seem intimidating. At one time, these groups were referred to as "Mallies" because of their frequent appearance in a major mall in the Greater Vancouver area. They may be referred to, by the media, as "gangs of youth" or just "gangs".

**Criminal Groups** are small clusters of friends who band together, usually for a short period of time (no more than one year) to commit crime primarily for financial gain. They can be composed of young people and/or young, and not so young, adults and may be mistakenly, or carelessly, referred to as a gang; usually by the media.

An Example includes the *626 gang* in Vancouver.

**Street Gangs** are groups of young people and young adults who have banded together to form a semi-structured organization the primary purpose of which is to engage in planned and profitable criminal behavior or organized violence against rival street gangs. Street gangs can be distinguished from other groupings (except wannabe groups) by, (i) a self-perception of the group as a gang; (ii) a name that was selected by and is used by gang members; and, (iii) some kind of distinctive marks such as clothing or colors. The members will openly acknowledge gang membership because they want to be seen as gang members by other people but street gangs will tend to be less visible but more structured, better organized, and more permanent than wannabe groups.

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<sup>42</sup> This typology was taken from Gordon and Foley's (1998) Criminal Business Organizations, Street Gangs and Related Groups in Vancouver: The Report of the Greater Vancouver Gang Study.

Examples include the *Los Diablos* and *East Vancouver Saints* in Vancouver.

**Wannabe Groups** are young people who band together in a loosely structured group primarily to engage in spontaneous social activity and exciting, impulsive, criminal activity including collective violence against other groups of youths. A wannabe group will be highly visible and its members will openly acknowledge their “gang” involvement because they want to be seen by others as gang members. This group will have a local gathering area and a name, selected and used by its members, which may be a modified version of the name of either a local or an American street gang. The group may use clothing, colors, or some other kind of identifying marks. The group’s name, meeting ground, and colors may fluctuate.

An example includes the *Los Cholos*, active in Burnaby and Coquitlam area of Greater Vancouver.

**Criminal Business Organizations** are organized groups that exhibit a formal structure and a high degree of sophistication. These groups are comprised primarily of adults, including older adults. They engage in criminal activity primarily for economic reasons and almost invariably maintain a low profile, which is a key characteristic distinguishing them from street gangs. They may have a name and, in the Vancouver area, may have a membership dominated by individuals of Asian ethnic origin.

Examples include, *Lotus*, *The Red Eagles*, and *The Big Circle Boys*.

## **Appendix B: Method**

The first part of this Appendix sets out the focus of this thesis and the research questions that were addressed through the socio-historical analysis of gang related articles in the Winnipeg Free Press. The second part describes, in detail, the procedures followed in, and the problems associated with, the collection of the gang-related articles. The third part of this Appendix explains the procedures used to code and analyze the gang related articles to enable the construction of the chronology of gang activity. The final part discusses the problems associated with a qualitative newspaper analysis and the steps that were taken to address these issues in this thesis.

### **Research Focus**

This socio-historical analysis of street gangs in the Winnipeg Free Press has two foci. The first is to construct a descriptive chronology of street gangs in Winnipeg from 1940 to 1997 using the “bibbits”<sup>43</sup> coded from the Winnipeg Free Press. This focus is similar to that of Michael Young (1993). This chronology is important to gain an historical understanding of street gang activity and the events relating to gangs as depicted in the print media. This chronology provides a description of street gangs as they exist in their Winnipeg context. Several research questions were used to guide the construction of the chronology: who is involved with street gangs in Winnipeg; what are the prevalent activities of Winnipeg’s street

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<sup>43</sup> A term used by Kirby and McKenna (1989) which refers to loose bits or sections of data that are linked together to form categories required to analyze data.

gangs; what are the reactions of the public, criminal justice system authorities and the municipal, provincial and federal governments to street gangs in Winnipeg?

The second focus of this thesis is to attempt to account for the emergence of Aboriginal street gangs during the late 1980s, and their continuing activities. This is accomplished through the use of “urban underclass” theory (Wilson, 1987; 1996), and its application to the emergence of street gangs (Cummings and Monti, 1993; Hagedorn, 1998; Klein, 1995; Moore, 1991). The salience of this theoretical position is assessed through an examination of the 1991 Aboriginal Peoples Survey, and tabular data obtained from the Indian Registry, and the Census of Population for the years of 1986, 1991, and 1996. It is argued that in Canada we have an emerging “underclass” in First Nations communities, and those who are suffering extreme forms of “multiple marginality” (Vigil, 1994) are becoming involved in street gangs in Winnipeg.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

The central focus of the thesis is the description of street gangs in Winnipeg from 1945 to 1997. This 52-year period represents the time parameters of the research project. 1945 was chosen as a starting point for data collection because it approximates the time when serious gang activity began in Vancouver (Young 1993). The city of Winnipeg was chosen as the research site for two reasons. The first is that the author is from Winnipeg and has an interest in a significant social problem which is absorbing considerable local and national attention. The second reason is that there is a paucity of research on the subject of street gangs in Winnipeg, specifically and

Canada generally.

The primary data source, the Winnipeg Free Press, was selected because it was published during the time parameters of the project, and this newspaper is available at the Elizabeth Bennett Library at Simon Fraser University. Its main competitor, the Winnipeg Sun, was not published throughout the time parameters of the study and is not available at Simon Fraser University. As there exists no comprehensive database or newspaper index prior to 1982<sup>44</sup>, each daily edition was examined for gang-related articles.

Each article extracted from the Winnipeg Free Press, after 1985 was selected if it met the criteria of a “street gang” or “wannabe group” as defined by Gordon and Foley (1998). These are the operational definitions for this thesis and they were adopted to facilitate the selection of articles that focused on street gangs. It was necessary to utilize both these definitions because, as Girard has noted in her analysis of the portrayal of gangs in the Vancouver print media, “the terms youth gang and gang were used interchangeably” and that they made “no differentiation between these two terms on the basis of age” (Girard, 1992: 60). In addition, Klein and Maxson (1989) assert that the terms “‘gang’ and ‘group’ are used interchangeably” (1989: 201). Thus, in order to focus specifically on street gangs in Winnipeg it is important to differentiate between the different types of groups commonly labeled as “gangs”. Prior to 1985, it was found that the term “gang” was used by the Winnipeg Free Press to describe the criminal activities of many different types of groups (e.g., the behavior of youth groups, and of criminal groups).

Many different procedures were used to collect all of the gang-related articles from the Winnipeg Free Press. The first procedure was used to collect all the gang-related articles from 1945 to 1985. This involved an examination of each newspaper to find articles which employed the use of the word "gang". For the entire year of 1945, each daily edition was examined from cover to cover. It was found that the majority of local crime news, and all the articles that mentioned the word "gang" were reported within the first six pages of the newspaper. Thus, after 1945 until 1985, the first six pages of each daily edition of the Winnipeg Free Press were examined for gang-related articles. To account for changes in the format of the Winnipeg Free Press, a full examination of the newspaper was conducted at each ten-year interval (1955, 1965 and 1975). The year at the ten year interval was read cover to cover, as in 1945. It was found that, for the most part, the reporting style of the Winnipeg Free Press remained consistent until 1975.

From 1985 to 1997, gang-related articles were located in three ways. The first method in which articles were located was through the use of the Canadian Business and Current Affairs database (CBCA)<sup>45</sup>, which provides an index of the Winnipeg Free Press and other Canadian print media from 1985 to the present. Each article was read numerous times and selected based on an evaluation of the correspondence between the article and the definitional scheme provided by Gordon and Foley (1998).

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<sup>44</sup>The Canadian Business and Current Affairs database indexes the Winnipeg Free Press beginning in 1982.

<sup>45</sup> This part of the data collection process was conducted for a project under the direction of Professor Robert Menzies, in the criminology 862-seminar course. Giles, C. (1998). Winnipeg's Street Gangs 1982-1997: A Qualitative Newspaper Analysis. Unpublished paper.

To find gang-related articles a search using the key word 'gang' was initiated. This search produced a lengthy list of gang-related articles. A reduction of articles was necessary because many of the article titles did not clearly state whether the body of the article discussed street gangs, criminal business organizations, (e.g., Motorcycle gangs, or Asian Triads) gangs of kids involved in sports, or gangs from other countries. Articles focusing on the aforementioned were excluded from the analysis. In addition, if the keyword "gang" did not appear in the title of the article it was missed, even though the article had street gang-related text. This occurred due to the fact that the Winnipeg Free Press full text articles are not on-line, unlike most other prominent newspapers. According to Hill, this type of problem is prominent in most archival research because many archival sources are not "adequately inventoried and catalogued" (1996: 48). In an attempt to circumvent this problem, an extended search of five days forward and five days backwards was conducted whenever a major gang-related incident was identified (i.e., a murder, or a violent robbery). Furthermore, the Local section of the Winnipeg Free Press, where reports of crime incidents are commonly printed if they are not headline stories, was searched for the entire month when a major gang-related incident (e.g., an aggravated assault, a violent robbery, or a murder) occurred.

To supplement this procedure and to verify that all gang-related articles were collected prior to and after 1985, the Canadian News Index was examined from 1977 to 1993. This index, which is published in volume and year format, catalogues all the titles of articles from the Winnipeg Free Press, and other prominent newspapers, by

subject and by author. To obtain gang-related articles the subject headings of juvenile delinquency, gangs, youth and young offenders were reviewed. Any article which mentioned the word "gang" or had the semblance of youth group activity was retrieved for examination.

The last procedure used to obtain gang-related articles was through a search of the Globe and Mail News Disk (1993-1997). The Globe and Mail News Disk is a database available on CD-ROM that catalogues the full-text articles of the Winnipeg Free Press beginning in 1993. In addition, this database searches the full-text of each article for the keywords that are entered. Thus, the keyword used to retrieve the full-text articles was "gang"<sup>46</sup>. This assisted in the retrieval of articles missed through the CBCA search, during the peaks of gang activity in Winnipeg which began in the early 1990s.

These extensive data collection procedures yielded approximately 900 gang-related articles from 1945-1997. It is the contention of the author that the combination of these procedures allowed for a fairly complete acquisition of all articles that depicted gang activity. All of the articles were coded, as discussed below. However, due to time constraints and the length limitations of the thesis a total of 232 articles were used to construct the chronology of street gang activity in Winnipeg. For a complete list of the articles used in this thesis, see Appendix C: The List of Newspaper Articles from the Winnipeg Free Press Used in the Qualitative Newspaper Analysis.

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<sup>46</sup> The word stem "gang" is a wildcard, and the database searches for any word with that stem. Thus, it would search for articles containing gangs, gang-bangers, gangsters, etc.

## **Coding and Analyzing Data**

The data contained in the Winnipeg Free Press was coded and analyzed to construct a chronology that describes the history of Winnipeg's street gangs and identifies the prominent themes reported in the articles. The unit of analysis for this project is each individual newspaper article and each of the articles extracted was coded and analyzed according to the research questions and foci presented earlier. The articles were read and separated into "bibbits"<sup>47</sup>. Each "bibbit" and article was dated, labeled with its title in the Winnipeg Free Press and the page number and section were indicated. According to Kirby and McKenna, though a constant review of "bibbits" conceptual categories begin to emerge (Kirby and McKenna, 1989). In a previous exploratory study<sup>48</sup> which examined street gangs from 1982-1996 specific categories did emerge which enabled the construction of a preliminary chronology of gang activity in Winnipeg, from 1982 to 1996. These categories are used in this thesis.

1. The first category is 'Who'. This category indicated who was represented in the article (i.e., a gang member, a victim, the police).
2. The second category was labeled 'What'. This category documents what has taken place in the article. Is this a gang-related criminal incident, the reaction of the police department or an interview with a gang member?

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<sup>47</sup> refer to footnote 43.

<sup>48</sup> Giles, C. (1998). Winnipeg's Street Gangs 1982-1997: A Qualitative Newspaper Analysis. Unpublished paper.

3. The third category was catalogued as **'Location'**. This category documented the location or the setting of the **'What'** category. Is this taking place in a specific part of Winnipeg, Manitoba or elsewhere?
4. The fourth category is entitled **'Causes'**. This category contains all the gang-related themes that were offered in the article. These mostly addressed the causes of street gangs as represented, in the print media.
5. The fifth category was labeled **'Solutions'**. This category documents the solutions which the public, criminal justice authorities, and the three levels of government proposed or enacted. It is very similar to the **'Causes'** category. However, it became very clear that the solutions to the street gang phenomenon were very different from the themes that were presented to identify the causes of street gang formation and proliferation.
6. The sixth category was labeled **'Evolution'**. This category included any specific reference to the changing nature or evolution of the street gangs in Winnipeg.

A concern that arose during the collection stage, which is important in the analysis stage, is the language used during the earlier part of the century. A preliminary test run in gathering articles showed that terms such as "gangsters" and "hoodlums" were common. In addition, many articles were lacking in details and a concordance with Gordon and Foley's (1998) definition of a street gang, which makes their classification as street gang-related articles problematic. Thus, as mentioned earlier, all articles which included the term "gang", either in the title or in the body of the news text were included for the purposes of analysis. The purpose of

this inclusion was to determine how the term was used, if in fact there was no street gang activity prior to the current wave of Aboriginal street gang activity.

### **Limitations of a Qualitative Newspaper Analysis**

This section addresses some of the concerns and problems that must be considered when using newspaper articles as the sole or primary data source. These concerns question the validity of the information covered in the reports.

It has been well documented that the media tend to focus on crime, and more specifically violent crime, in their reports (Vounvakis and Ericson, 1984; Altheide and Snow, 1991; Kidd-Hewitt, 1995; Osborne, 1995; Altheide, 1996; Perrone and Chesney-Lind, 1997). Additionally, the media exaggerates and sensationalizes the gang problem, and focuses exclusively on the negative behaviors of gangs (Klein, 1971; Jankowski, 1991; Perrone and Chesney-Lind, 1997).

Klein asserts that the media focus “does not represent the reality” of street gang activities (1971: 17). According to Klein, the news media is a highly suspect source because the media reports of gang activity tend to be extremely inflammatory and serve to “reinforce dramatic stereotypes of gang structure and behavior” (1971: 17-18). Klein (1971) argues that the media focus on the sensational and uncommonly violent aspects of gang membership and not the more routine behaviors of most gang members.

These types of concerns center on the credibility and representativeness of the data contained in the newspaper articles. According to Davidson and Layder, a researcher must assess the credibility of documentary sources through an “appraisal

of how distorted the contents are likely to be” (1994: 188). The credibility of the Winnipeg Free Press is of central concern because journalists engage in selective reporting, sensationalism and exaggeration. Davidson and Layder (1994) maintain that the issue of representativeness revolves around the issue of sampling. Thus, as Klein (1971) has argued, the news media will not focus on the more routine, day-to-day behaviors of gang members. An exploratory study (Giles, 1998<sup>49</sup>) found that almost all the articles focused on the negative behaviors of Winnipeg street gang members, and all the articles implicitly or explicitly discussed the street gang situation as an emerging threat or problem.

The majority of these concerns are not insurmountable. For example, overall, the Winnipeg Police Service is content with the accuracy of the reporting of gang-related incidents in the media (print, radio and television). A police source asserted that the media was “fairly accurate” in their reports, and that this was due to a solid working relationship between the police and media reporters<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, the fact that the media focuses on crime is important to this project. It is imperative for the construction of the chronology that describes and identifies the periods of street gang activity. The focus for this project is essentially on how the activities of street gangs have waxed, waned and evolved from 1945 to 1997. Arguably, an increase or decrease in violent crime (among other indicators) is indicative of a heightened period of street gang activity in Winnipeg. The media, which has as a focal point violent

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<sup>49</sup> Giles, C. (1998). Winnipeg’s Street Gangs 1982-1997: A Qualitative Newspaper Analysis. Unpublished paper.

<sup>50</sup> This information was provided by the police source mentioned in Chapter III.

**crime, would report a violent crime whether it occurred in the context of a street gang or not.**

## **Appendix C: The List of Newspaper Articles from the Winnipeg Free Press Used in the Qualitative Newspaper Analysis.**

### **The History of Winnipeg "Gangs": 1945-1985.**

	<i>DD/MM/YR</i>	<i>Pages</i>	<i>Title</i>
1.	07/03/45	2	Winnipeg's Population Estimated At 343,698.
2.	10/01/47	5	Many Thieves Rounded Up In 1946.
3.	21/04/47	1	Yeggs Gag Couple; Take \$3,000.
4.	07/05/47	1,6	Thieves Get \$2,705 In Jewellery.
5.	19/05/47	1,8	Bandit Trio Rob Winnipeg Bank, Escape with Undisclosed Loot.
6.	19/05/47	1	Police Chief Describes Robbery.
7.	20/05/47	1,10	Police Seek Four Men for Bank Robbery.
8.	20/05/47	1,10	Tied to a Tress at Gun Point.
9.	20/05/47	1	Bank Manager Explains Secrecy.
10.	30/08/47	1	Hunt for Bandit Lair Broadens.
11.	08/09/47	1	\$1,000 Reward Posted.
12.	24/10/47	1	Bank Loot Soars Over \$100,000: Total May Go Higher.
13.	18/12/47	1	3 Held in Bank Robbery.
14.	31/12/47	1	Fourth Suspect Seized In Big Bank Robbery.
15.	03/01/47	3	Hold Juveniles on Theft Charge.
16.	17/01/47	3	Alleged Juvenile Burglar Caught.
17.	09/06/49	1	Theft Probes Bring Arrest Of 6 Juveniles.
18.	11/06/49	3	Record Round-Up Nets 12 Juveniles.
19.	27/01/56	3	Young Gang Admits 3 Months of Crime.
20.	01/02/45	3	Morality Squad To Keep Close Tab On City Pool Hall Proprietors.
21.	01/11/46	1,10	Hallowe'en Gang Runs Amok.
22.	19/05/49	1,11	Police Asked to Curb Teen-Agers.
23.	19/05/49	1	Police Body Urges Action.
24.	19/05/49	1,11	2 ½-Year Sentence For Youth.
25.	08/10/55	3	Teenagers Beat Up Policeman.
26.	09/10/55	1	14 Held For Attack on Policeman.
27.	11/04/58	3	Court Will Jail Members of Juvenile Gangs.
28.	12/04/58	3	Another 8 Arrests In Attack.
29.	14/10/64	1,7	Police Avert Gang War; Nab 54 Boys.
30.	19/10/64	3	Publicity Hits Youth Activity.
31.	12/12/64	3	Hearing Continues on Teen Gang Violence.
32.	16/11/49	3	Gang Member Gets Jail Term.

33.	10/01/50	1,6	Gun-Toting Charges Face Three Winnipeg Youths.
34.	11/01/50	1	Pistol-Packing Case Remanded One Week.
35.	11/01/50	1,10	Roving Gang of Thugs Threatens Teen Club Events.
36.	12/01/50	1	Police Spur Drive Against Hoodlums.
37.	13/01/50	1,9	Police Answer 2 Calls For Aid in Gang Raids.
38.	14/01/50	1	City Police Clamp Down on Young Ruffians.
39.	16/01/50	1,8	Police Press War on Rowdies, 11 More Young 'Punks' Nabbed.
40.	16/01/50	1	Hard Answer to Hoodlums Seen in Law.
41.	21/03/50	1,11	Fracas Brings Charge of Unlawful Assembly.
42.	22/03/50	1,8	Police to Protect School Dances.

### **The History of Winnipeg Street Gangs: 1985-1997.**

1.	27/05/82	1,4	Children "terrorize" Winnipeg residents.
2.	10/03/85	1,4	Gang Blamed in Several School Attacks.
3.	13/05/85	1,4	City gangs declare truce at peace negotiations.
4.	16/06/85	11	Gang Kids.
5.	02/06/85	3	Loitering gangs harass students at Gordon Bell.
6.	29/08/86	1,4	Asian gangs feared threat.
7.	25/01/87	1	Vancouver police fear Asian war.
8.	10/10/87	1	Oriental gangs surface.
9.	15/01/88	1,4	Chinese merchants claim extortion bid by Vietnamese gangs.
10.	15/01/88	1,4	Police probe Asian claims of extortion.
11.	25/01/88	3	Gang success linked to fear in community.
12.	25/02/88	3	Oriental youth gang reports exaggerated.
13.	20/01/89	1,4	Youth gangs rule northern community.
14.	12/02/89	1,4	Boredom cited in youths' reign of terror.
15.	16/03/89	1,4	Asian gangs fuel crimes.
16.	18/03/89	1,4	Winnipeg called Asian gang target.
17.	19/05/90	1,4	Asian code of silence protects killers.
18.	20/05/90	1,4	Ghost of 'Halloween Gang' haunts city.
19.	24/03/91	3	Asian gangs double threat.
20.	27/09/91	1,4	Restauranteurs serve Asian extortion gang to police.
21.	16/07/92	A9	Asian refugees blamed.
22.	18/07/92	A8	Crime conference racist, Asians say.
23.	19/03/93	A1	Students idolize jailed leader.
24.	25/03/93	B1	Parents alerted to gang recruiting.
25.	14/04/93	B2	Youth crime grabs attention.

26.	14/04/93	B2	Teen gangs attractive to students.
27.	14/04/93	B1	Gang assaults principal.
28.	14/04/93	B2	Justice system frustrates beating victim's mother.
29.	31/05/93	A1	Fight rumors draw 300.
30.	01/06/93	B1	Youth gangs "scary".
31.	13/01/93	A1	Gang attack shocks police.
32.	31/08/93	B1	Police downplay gang-war reports.
33.	19/09/93	A1	Violence summit called.
34.	19/09/93	B1	Teen violence boils over.
35.	19/09/93	B1	Killing work of an instant.
36.	19/09/93	B1	Tough kid was hoping to turn his life around.
37.	20/09/93	A1	Teen charged in fatal knifing.
38.	21/09/93	B2	Slain teen's family wants retribution.
39.	21/09/93	B2	Media blamed for youths weapons fad.
40.	21/09/93	B2	Slaying reveals cultural clashes.
41.	23/09/93	A1	Arrested boy sounded SOS on violence.
42.	23/09/93	B2	Natives see racism behind boy's death.
43.	24/09/93	B1	Boys' dad wants parlay.
44.	27/09/93	B1	Gang beats two teens.
45.	23/10/93	B1	Street gangs scorn summit.
46.	05/12/93	B2	Media help gangs recruit members, police critic claims.
47.	09/12/93	B2	Bullets holes look like gang's work.
48.	11/01/94	B1	Gang member's mom suspected in shooting.
49.	03/04/94	A1	Young car thieves baffle police, leave owners jaded.
50.	04/04/94	B1	Cars first, guns next.
51.	04/04/94	A1	Working the 24-hour target.
52.	09/04/94	B2	Drive-by shooter gets four years.
53.	15/04/94	B1	City police target gangs.
54.	29/06/94	B1	'Fink line' aims to cut youth crime.
55.	14/07/94	B1	City youth gangs not kids' stuff.
56.	28/08/94	A1	Robberies hit roof.
57.	28/08/94	A5	Unit works deadly beat.
58.	02/09/94	B1	Children hookers arrested.
59.	13/09/94	B1	Biker gang lays down the law to help clean up neighborhood.
60.	14/09/94	B1	Not such bad guys'.
61.	15/09/94	B3	No one messes with us'.
62.	15/09/94	B1	Gangs clash at Elmwood High.
63.	29/09/94	A1	Kids' pact was path to crime.
64.	29/09/94	B1	Angry, bitter kids flex their muscles.
65.	30/09/94	A1	"Just a regular kid".
66.	30/09/94	B1	Free at last and full of fear.

67.	01/10/94	A1	Gang banks illicit cash for legal muscle.
68.	01/10/94	A10	More bark than bite.
69.	02/10/94	A1	In Maryland, boot camp means officers love taking out the 'trash'.
70.	02/10/94	A5	Discipline, Marine-style.
71.	03/10/94	A1	Canadian go home, says Klan.
72.	03/10/94	B2	Building hope their business.
73.	04/10/94	A1	Angry electorate boots progress.
74.	04/10/94	A1	Boot camps don't work.
75.	04/10/94	B3	Jamming the revolving door.
76.	04/10/94	B3	System neglects kids after release.
77.	06/10/94	B1	Skateboarder jumped in lot, clubbed, robbed by youth.
78.	10/22/94	A11	Posse's influence worries city police.
79.	18/01/95	B2	Open late, ripe for picking.
80.	25/01/95	B1	Murder Dad's fears come true.
81.	18/03/95	B1	Gang vows to kill police officer.
82.	02/04/95	A1	Gangs strike again?
83.	04/08/95	B1	Teens pleading for help.
84.	26/11/95	A5	A violent end to a brutal life.
85.	02/06/95	A1	Police reorganize to fight grown-up street gangs.
86.	08/20/95	B1	Gang warfare, police-style.
87.	06/07/95	B4	Ganging up on youth crime.
88.	24/07/95	A1	Boy 13, shot dead; killing tied to gangs.
89.	24/07/95	B3	Gangs prey on core kids.
90.	24/07/95	B3	Angry coach loses second pitcher to a bullet.
91.	24/07/95	B3	Friends mourn upbeat 'Beeper'.
92.	25/07/95	A1	Slain teen mourned.
93.	25/07/95	A1	'An achiever...a good kid'.
94.	25/07/95	B3	What was he doing out at 2?
95.	25/07/95	B3	Mother fears for girls safety.
96.	26/07/95	B3	Crown seeks to try youth as an adult.
97.	26/08/95	A16	Two more youths charged in Spence killing; girl sought.
98.	15/12/95	B2	Old rules should apply to client, 17, lawyer says.
99.	03/01/96	B3	Judge lets girl in killing case evade tough youth-crime law.
100.	31/07/95	B3	Guns and knives used in violent crime spree.
101.	01/08/95	A1	Charity offers refuge from gang violence.
102.	31/07/95	B3	Sanctuary under attack.
103.	01/08/95	B3	From auto theft to murder.
104.	01/08/95	B3	Shooting tied to escalating war over turf.
105.	05/08/95	A11	Gang member arrested in shooting.

106.	20/08/95	A1	City's gangs can be tamed but clock ticking.
107.	20/08/95	B1	Gang warfare, police-style.
108.	12/10/95	A1, A2	Bar boss turfs teen, gets shot.
109.	20/10/95	A4	Threat underlies climate of fear.
110.	03/01/96	A4	Gang unit earns spurs.
111.	04/01/96	A1	Police crack youth crime ring, seize firearms.
112.	07/05/96	A2	Guards say concerns real, ignored too long.
113.	08/05/96	A3	Young inmates victims of lost hope.
114.	18/05/96	D5	The street gangs of Winnipeg (Globe and Mail).
115.	10/12/96	A1	Guards ripped in riot report.
116.	10/12/96	A1, A5	Litany of warnings ignored for years.
117.	10/12/96	A4	Jail boss blamed for gangs.
118.	10/12/96	A4	'Turning the page will be difficult'.
119.	10/12/96	A4	Just what was said.
120.	10/12/96	A4	Vodrey admits some regrets.
121.	10/12/96	A5	Poor need help: judge.
122.	10/12/96	A5	Jail boss got death threats from staff: wife.
123.	03/05/96	A1, A2	Rebels up the ante.
124.	02/07/96	A1, A2	Gunman blasts teens.
125.	03/07/96	A7	Winnipeg teens' shooting gang-related, police say (Globe and Mail).
126.	03/07/96	A1, A3	Bad blood between gangs spills onto inner-city project.
127.	06/07/96	A4	Waterhen families flee city.
128.	30/06/96	A1, A2	Kids with zilch to lose.
129.	30/06/96	A5	Gangs shatter city's image.
130.	02/07/96	A1, A3	They won't run away from crime.
131.	02/07/96	A3	Gangs leave their mark on the core.
132.	15/07/96	A1	Woman loses everything, fears for life.
133.	16/07/96	A4	Police trying to determine if fire was set by gang.
134.	16/07/96	A12	Gang members arrested, cases of cigarettes seized.
135.	21/07/96	A1, A2	Two die in violent night.
136.	22/07/96	A1, A3	Two face murder charges.
137.	23/07/96	A5	Shootings linked to aborted rumble.
138.	23/07/96	A5	Slaying of stranger a new level in city's gang violence police say.
139.	24/07/96	A1, A2	Relatives of slaying victims demand crackdown on crime.
140.	25/07/96	A5	A mother grieves for her only son.
141.	27/07/96	A4	'A real waste of life'.
142.	28/07/96	B1	Outrage at killing in full bloom.
143.	24/07/96	A1, A2	RCMP join war on gangs.
144.	25/07/96	A4	Joint force targets gangs' expansion to rural

			areas.
145.	27/07/96	A2	Gangs flex their muscles in prisons.
146.	07/08/96	A1, A2	Three die in bloody massacre.
147.	07/08/96	A2	Simple Ave. slayings mark a watershed.
148.	08/08/96	A1, A2	Biker link sought in triple slaying.
149.	08/08/96	A2	Dead men good people, friends say.
150.	09/08/96	A1, A3	Killers were "cruel, sadistic".
151.	06/11/96	A6	A new partner in crime.
152.	06/11/96	A6	They're the Angels of Death.
153.	27/06/97	A7	Jury convicts trio in gang-related triple murder.
154.	12/08/96	A1, A3	Cassels moves to clean up streets.
155.	26/08/96	A1, A3	It's chic to carry, use guns in crime.
156.	28/08/96	A1, A2	Alarm rung over gangs.
157.	27/09/96	A5	Murders soar in city.
158.	28/09/96	A1, A2	Drug-turf dispute blamed in gang hit.
159.	03/10/96	A4	Gang pair held in hit.
160.	22/12/96	A1	Dads drag kids into crime, police find.
161.	26/12/96	A8	Regina police crack down.
162.	04/11/96	A1, A2	Native leaders tackle gangs.
163.	08/11/96	A1	Street gang bosses impress Mercredi.
164.	08/08/96	A4	Chief eyeing limited curfew.
165.	13/10/96	A1, A2	Police want thug curfew.
166.	22/11/96	A1, A2	Curfew sweep a bid to shackle youth gangs.
167.	30/11/96	A5	Curfew checks called success.
168.	31/12/96	A8	'96 a year of gangs and home invasions.
169.	30/01/97	A1, A2	Street gang savior.
170.	31/01/97	A1, A3	Give us options: gangs.
171.	09/02/97	B1	'Risky' alliance.
172.	15/02/97	A2	Gang leader's role in doubt.
173.	12/03/97	A4	Contois offers a ray of hope.
174.	12/08/97	A6	Gang leader's jail term gets longer.
175.	31/01/97	A3	Gang role confirmed in youth centre attack.
176.	24/10/97	A6	Posse members lassoed, put in jail.
177.	06/03/97	A1, A2	Ottawa targets city street gangs.
178.	07/03/97	A4	Federal anti-gang money 'a slap in the face'.
179.	08/03/97	A12	Fighting solves nothing.
180.	23/03/97	A1, A2	Teens demand help.
181.	27/03/97	A15	Aboriginals want real reform.
182.	05/04/97	A1, A2	Gang clubs teen to Death.
183.	05/04/97	A8	Street-gang summit ignores Deuce.
184.	18/06/97	A3	Sports camps to help tackle gang problem.
185.	19/06/97	A8	Sports camp offers culture, mentors.
186.	07/07/97	A4	Dog sniffs out robbery suspect.
187.	23/07/97	A3	Gang prevention co-ordinator knows how outsiders feel.

188.	27/07/97	B2	Gang demolition starts with family.
189.	31/08/97	A1, A2	Native gangs gain influence, turf.
190.	06/10/97	A1, A2	Street gangs loosen grip.

## Appendix D:

### Your Racist Blood We Will Spill

The following poem was written by an anonymous Indian Posse member in an attempt to describe the feelings that bind the street gang together;

The marching feet of the Indian Posse echoes in your mind getting stronger day by day.  
Our color is red and it's here to stay, some of us have something to prove some of us already have.  
But all in all we are the Indian Posse and together we stand tall.  
We are a breed that has seen it all and has had its better days, but in the end we will learn our true native ways.  
We don't mean to disrespect our elders, but we want to stand proud like they did in our hearts.  
We are warriors and in our minds we will survive the war path.  
In the days of old, our people used to fight and kill each other and, as they did, we will if there is no other way.  
We hold our heads high because we are not scared to die for one another, for we will join the Great Spirit in the sky.  
Call us what you will, but it is your racist blood we will spill.

**Brothers Forever: Indian Posse**

Source: cited from the Winnipeg Free Press, September 29, 1994, B1.

### The Philosophy of Richard Wolfe

The following was written by Richard Wolfe, an Indian Posse gang leader, to describe his philosophy of the Indian Posse. The text is reproduced in its original form.

"Indian Posse." When you see Red, you see a proud Indian stand tall for what he or she believes in, but all in all we're "Indian Posse."

If a brother or a sister dies, it's not because he or she was in a gang, it's because they had pride for themselves & wanted to prove to everyone else they were warriors & in our minds they were Indians & in our hearts they were brothers & sisters.

But if we have to kill another brother or sister then let it be, we will survive the war path in the future. We will join the great Spirit in the sky & we don't mean to disrespect any people but we all have something to prove for one another & it will be done if there is no other way to do it.

But we all have to remember we're all in it together & will die together & sometime down the road we will be remembered as proud Indians.

But any people must understand we didn't do this to make any people look bad, if any people can't understand that then we feel sorry for any people because we all have a dream & the dream is to be a proud Indian you are & believe in yourselves.

A lot of people think they know us but really don't, they just go by the papers & what they see.

Call us what you want but it's your spirit you will see, brothers & sisters for ever.

**"Indian Posse."**

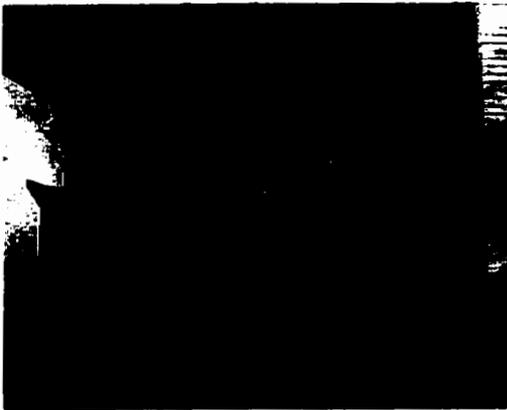
- From Wolfe Man!  
(Richard Wolfe)

Source: Winnipeg Free Press, September 30, 1994, B1.

## **Appendix E: Selected Pictures of Deuce Territory and Indian Posse Territory<sup>51</sup>**

### **Examples of the Housing in the Downtown Core of Winnipeg.**

**Plate 1:**



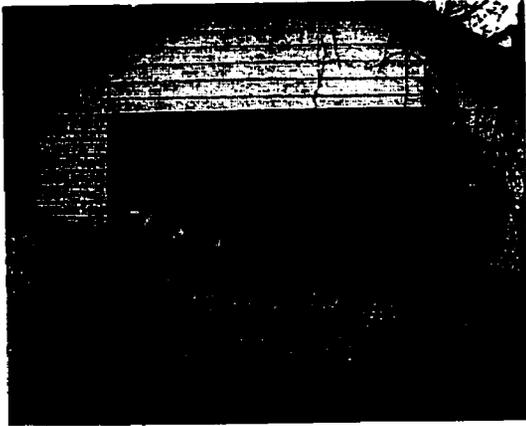
**Plate 2:**



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<sup>51</sup> All the pictures that follow were obtained by Terry Whin-Yates, President and CEO of CPAL Inc., and Chris Giles in November 1999.

**Plate 3:**



**Plate 4:**



## **Examples of the Graffiti in Deuce Territory.**

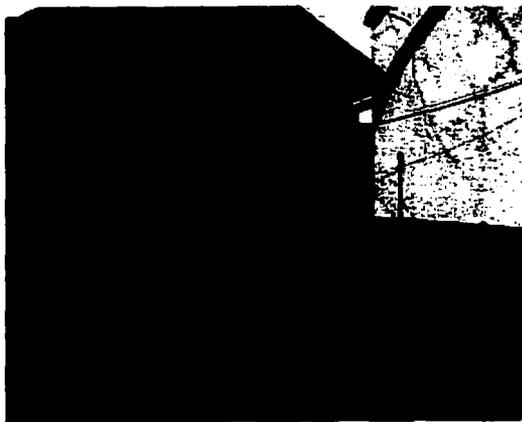
### **Plate 5:**

Notice the Deuce symbol painted on this house.



### **Plate 6:**

This substandard house is covered in Deuce graffiti. Deuce on Central (D.O.C.), 187 (the California Penal Code for murder) and AK47.



**Plate 7:**

Notice the graffiti indicating a gang rivalry. Posse Killers, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



**Plate 8:**

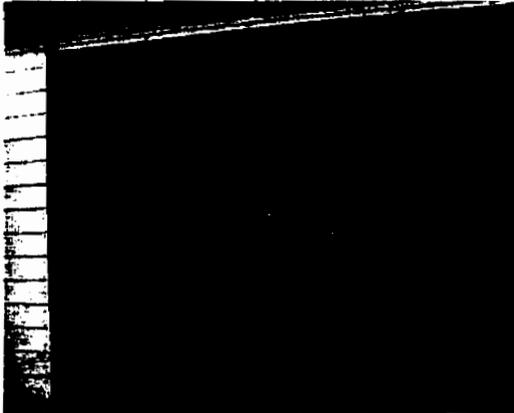
Notice the graffiti indicating a gang rivalry. Posse Killers All Day, I. P. suck.



**Examples of the Graffiti in the Indian Posse Territory.**

**Plate 9:**

An Indian Posse symbol.



**Plate 10:**

Another example of Indian Posse graffiti.



**Plate 11:**

Another example of Indian Posse graffiti, and graffiti indicating a gang rivalry.  
Deuce Killers (DK).



**Plate 12:**

Another example of Indian Posse graffiti, that shows the intense rivalry between the  
Deuce gang and the Indian Posse gang.



**Plate 13:**

An Indian Posse symbol (I. P.) appears on a burnt garage in the core. To the left there is a boarded up house.



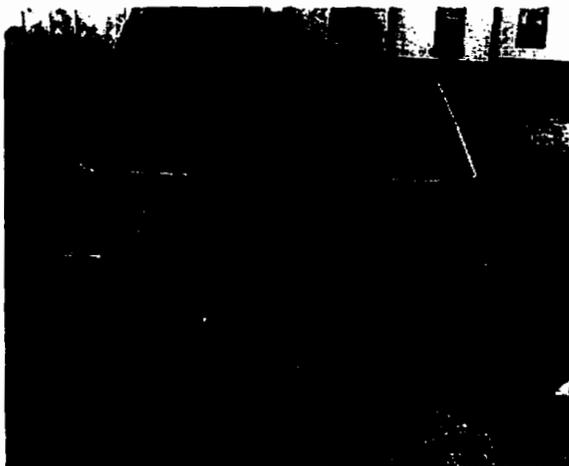
**Plate 14:**

A member of the Indian Posse, by the name of "Cody", is indicating that he/she burnt down this abandoned home.



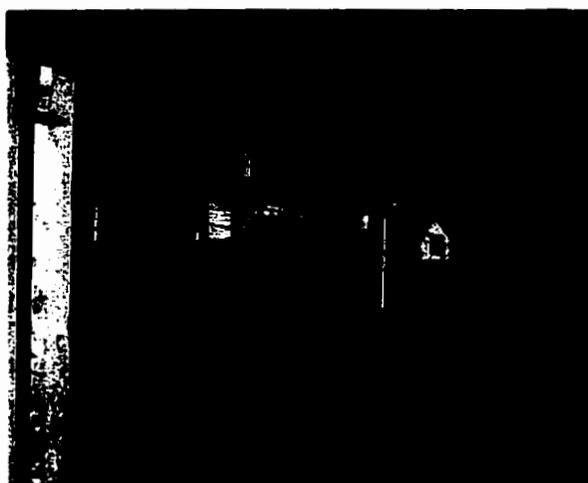
**Plate 15:**

"Cody" is claiming responsibility, by tagging "by Cody," for this garbage bin arson.



**Plate 16:**

This picture indicates a gang rivalry. Deuce Killers (DK), signed by the Indian Posse. Condemned houses can be seen in the distance.



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