



A Policing perspective of high-risk repeat family violence

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**This thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

School of Business, Law and Entrepreneurship

Swinburne University of Technology Victoria, Australia

2023

Abstract

Family violence has been an international, Australian, and Victorian concern for decades. The researcher, an Inspector in Victoria Police, has seen the far-reaching consequences of high-risk repeat family violence on the victims, the community and the impact on the front-line police members who have managed family violence. Even though some scholars 'identified that women and children are at the most risk of family violence harm, other researchers suggested there was gender symmetry in family violence and that anybody can be a victim, regardless of gender, age, or social status. However, the ongoing conflict in the public discussion about the identity of victims of family violence has complicated the response to, and management of, family violence by police, the courts, and governments. As a result, in the State of Victoria, Australia, Victoria Police adopted a gendered focus in managing family violence. Therefore, it is important to explore the phenomena of high-risk repeat family violence to add to practice, theory and knowledge.

Family violence has been recognised as a crime internationally, and, as a result, the United Nations (UN) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have provided a common philosophy and strategic framework, along with treaties and protocols for governments, police, and communities to help guide the response to family violence. Unfortunately, although the Australian Federal and State governments, police, and courts have adopted many of the international family violence strategies and management processes, family violence has continued to escalate in all Australian jurisdictions.

Two family violence management models were found to be available to Victoria Police to help guide family violence processes in Victoria. These are the Duluth and the Straus Models. The Duluth Model focuses on patriarchy and advocates that males use 'power and control' over female victims in family violence incidents. The philosophy of the Straus Model proposes that males and females both perpetrate family violence, and both genders are also victims of partner violence.

Even though the Duluth Model had a gender focus, and the Straus Model embraced gender symmetry in family violence, Victoria Police was guided by the values of the Duluth Model, primarily the focus on patriarchy and male power and control. Consequently, adopting the Duluth Model has not enabled front-line police members to provide a balanced approach to high-risk repeat family violence victims. Indeed, the model was found to restrict the options for police by obliging them to focus only on female victims of family violence and record a 'Required Outcome' when reporting family violence. This research posits that if some of the elements of the Straus Model had been embraced by Victoria Police, front-line

police would have the flexibility to record an 'Actual Outcome' in family violence that reflects male and female perpetrators of family violence.

Specific components of the Duluth Model are still important in managing family violence when combined with aspects of the Straus Model. Therefore, this research developed a model that incorporates the most significant elements of both models, which may be more effective in managing the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence identified in the research.

The innovation of this research is that it identified the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence and the emerging themes that significantly impacted family violence victims. The research found that illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, mental health issues, and breaches of the Family Violence Intervention Order process all influenced how police responded to family violence incidents. The impact of mental health in family violence was among the most complex and challenging issues for police members to address, as they did not have the appropriate skills to deal with the complexities of mental health.

Among the outcomes of this research was the identification of a mixed-methods, three-step, inter-connected data collection design which could provide a solid foundation for quantitative and qualitative data collection. Employing exploratory research processes offered a flexible approach to gaining deeper insights into the specific drivers that significantly impacted high-risk repeat family violence victims. Adopting a sequential explanatory research design also enabled the quantitative research phase to inform the subsequent interviews and address gaps identified in the data collection processes. Finally, this inductive approach also enabled participants' lived experiences to add to the bank of knowledge and led to a series of recommendations to enhance the family violence management process.

These include (i) an innovative Family Violence Integrated Management Model, (ii) a support process to assist front-line police members with family violence management, (iii) a proposal to establish a multi-agency task force to support police members when attending family violence incidents, and (iv) a proposal for a three-year government-funded trial of an integrated family violence perpetrator change behaviour program for male and female perpetrators of family violence.

The complexities of high-risk repeat family violence were explored from a police perspective. It examined the influence of the gender focus in the family violence management model adopted by the Victoria Police and how that choice impacted the reporting outcomes of the front-line police members who responded to high-risk repeat

family violence. It also identified the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, such as illicit drug use, alcohol consumption, mental health issues and how breaches of Family Violence Intervention Orders impacted high-risk repeat family violence.

This research provided a broader understanding of high-risk repeat family violence and the benefit of embracing gender symmetry in managing the harm. This study also found that by combining the best attributes of the Duluth and Straus Models, a more comprehensive Family Violence Integrated Management Model could be utilised by Victoria Police, the Victorian Government, and Judiciary. This could help enhance the family violence management process.

Acknowledgements

I hope this research will help all victims of high-risk repeat family violence, regardless of gender, to receive the support and dignity they all deserve.

My journey would not have been possible without the support of my wife, Izumi, and my daughter, Rachel. I owe this to both of them. I wish I could have completed this study before my Parents died. I would have liked to have shared this with them. I thank them both.

I am very grateful for the support and encouragement provided by my supervisors, Professor John Dalrymple and Professor Barry O'Mahony. Their belief in me helped me embark on the journey of discovery. Their constant help guided me through the depths of despair and helped me navigate the stormy seas of research.

I would also like to thank my friends Martyn and Patricia Cox and Kayla M. for their assistance and support during this study. Dr David Ballek provided exceptional support in navigating the difficulties of research in Victoria Police. Finally, my friend Dr Bopha R. helped me navigate the focus groups in this research, and I am very grateful for her help.

I want to thank all front-line police members who face the daily trauma of family violence. Unfortunately, it is difficult to achieve the best outcome for all victims of family violence, despite your genuine efforts. You are constantly exposed to trauma and are the invisible victims of family violence. Thank you.

Declaration

I, John Ingham, declare that this thesis is my own original work and does not contain material that has been accepted for an award of any other degree or diploma.

To the best of the candidate's knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text of the examinable thesis.

Signature

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22 September 2022

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List of Abbreviations used in this thesis

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ALRC	Australian Law Reform Commission
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
COE	Council of Europe
CPIOFV	Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DHHS	Department of Health and Human Services
DPMC	Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
EIFGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
FARE	Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education
FVIO	Family Violence Intervention Orders
FVIU	Family Violence Investigation Unit
FVPA	Family Violence Protection Act
FVRAP	Family Violence Rolling Action Plan
LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
PSS	Personal Safety Survey
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RARMFPG	Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework and Practice Guides
RCC	Research Coordinating Committee
SMR	Southern Metropolitan Police Region
SUHREC	Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee
UN	United Nations
VADA	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
VCGLR	Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulations
VPCP	Victoria Police Code of Practice
VRCIFV	Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence
WHO	World Health Organisation

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction

1 Introduction

Family violence has been an international concern for many years, with far-reaching social and financial consequences for victims, governments, and communities (Walby, 2004; World Health Organisation (WHO), 2010). However, one of the issues that has reduced the potential of comprehensive outcomes for the victims of family violence by an appropriate multi-agency response provided by police, the courts and the responsible government family violence specialists has been a consistent lack of public debate among victims, families, and the community about the identity of all victims and the causes of family violence (Hyden, 2015; McKeown, Kennedy and McGrath, 2022; Shuler, 2010).

Since police play a significant role in response to family violence, this thesis examined high-risk repeat family violence from a policing perspective. The researcher in this thesis was a serving police member of Victoria Police with 38 years of experience and retired as an Inspector. He gained a comprehensive understanding of the implications of family violence after responding to numerous incidents as a front-line police member. In addition, the researcher thoroughly understood the Victoria Police family violence management process and saw the impact of family violence on front-line police members.

Research confirmed that anybody could be a victim of family violence. However, women and children have been found to be at the most significant risk of family violence harm. Even though numerous strategies and management processes have been developed and implemented internationally by governments, family violence agencies and police, family violence has continued to escalate (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim, Willis, Canfield, Kazimierczuk, Harley, Hyppolite and Desrosiers, 2018; Morse, 2018). Furthermore, despite the growing awareness of family violence internationally, many cultures and societies still view family violence as a private matter that should be kept within the confines of the family (Meyer, 2012; Vernon, 2017).

Because family violence was recognised as a crime, the international focus and approach of the United Nations (UN) and the WHO provided a common philosophy and strategic framework for governments, police and communities to manage, and respond to, family violence (Cherney, Antrobus, Bennett, Murphy and Newman, 2019; Council of Europe (COE), 2011; Gill, Campbell and Ballucci, 2019; Kelly, 1997; Mooney, 2000; UN, 1993, 1995; Yates, 2020). Whilst many countries embraced UN and WHO international family violence treaties and protocols, the Australian Federal, State and Territory

governments, courts, police and support agencies were also among those encouraged to adopt these strategies to enhance the Australian family violence management process (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Ericsson, 2019; Yates, 2020).

1.2 Family Violence – An Australian perspective

For decades, family violence in Australia has been a serious concern for the Federal, State and Territory Governments and was recognised as a social problem that continued to affect many people across Australia (Day, Chung, O’Leary, Justo, Moore, Carson and Gerace, 2010; Meyer, 2014; Mouzos and Makkai, 2004; Napier, Poynton and Fitzgerald, 2015). Several strategies were adopted to enable Australian Governments to embrace the UN and WHO conventions. The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) (2010), for example, successfully advocated for changes to the Family Law Act (1975) in 1995 to help reflect those conventions. However, the amendments did not provide a consistent national approach to family violence (Yates, 2020; Zimmerman, 2017, 2019). An essential element of the Australian Government’s vision to help protect women and children from family violence was the introduction of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children under the 2010–2022 framework (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), 2019).

A national Personal Safety Survey (PSS) conducted in 2016 reported the extent of the harm caused by family violence and the impact of this harm on victims. The report indicated that approximately 17% (1.6 million) of women in Australia and 6% (548,000) of men had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or former partner (ABS, 2017). In addition, the AIHW (2021) indicated that approximately six thousand five hundred people were admitted to hospital with injuries sustained in family violence incidents every year.

The Australian Government (2019) recognised the need to address family violence and recommended a national whole-of-community approach to reduce the harm to women and child victims. The process included all Australian governments, police, justice systems, health departments and the media to help break the cycle of harm and provide a safer environment for the victims of family violence (Morgan, Boxall, Dowling and Brown, 2020).

In order to achieve these goals, the federal government concluded that more funding was required to provide a national approach to reducing the harm to women and children in family violence (Australian Government, 2019). The financial burden of family violence in Australia has been estimated at \$13.6 billion annually, and this was expected to rise to \$15.6

billion by 2021/2022 (ABS, 2013; Broderick, 2015). Consequently, the Australian Federal Government had an ongoing campaign to help improve the safety of women and children. The government planned to allocate one hundred and fifty million dollars annually to help end family and sexual violence. One example of how this funding has been spent was a recent innovation to reduce the harm to women and children by investing twenty million dollars to help the states and territories trial GPS tracking devices to monitor the movements of family violence perpetrators (Ransley, 2022).

1.3 Family Violence – The Victorian perspective

Family violence has also been a significant concern in the State of Victoria, which has the second-largest State population in Australia (approximately 6.6 million). The Southern Metropolitan Police Region (SMR), where this research was focussed, had a population recorded by the ABS (2016) as approximately 1.3 million. The number of family violence incidents reported to police in Victoria has continued to rise, with reported incidents increasing from 74,378 in 2015 to 84,550 in 2019 (ABS, 2020; Coghlan and Millsteed, 2017; Crime Statistics Agency (CSA), 2020; Sutherland, McDonald and Millsteed, 2016). In the reporting period from 2015 to 2019, the CSA (2020) found that 75% of the family violence victims were female, and 25% were males. During that period, the number of female victims of family violence had increased by over 13%, and male victims had risen by over 14% (CSA 2020).

Even though Victoria led the development of policies and reform in family violence in Australia, there were still critical limitations in the approach taken (State of Victoria, 2016). Existing policies and strategies utilised by the Victorian Government, Victoria Police, and other stakeholders have not helped reduce the cost, prevalence or severity of family violence (Satyen, Toumbourou, Heerde, Supol, and Ranganathan, 2020; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

The financial impact of family violence on the Victorian economy was a concern for the Victorian State Auditor-General (2009). He estimated that family violence had previously cost the Victorian Government and community around \$2 billion annually (Frost, 2009). A later review of the cost of family violence to the Victorian economy demonstrated that the cost had increased to approximately \$5.3 billion in the 2015-16 reporting period (KPMG, 2017). To help address the harm resulting from family violence, the Victorian

Budget 2021/22 delivered over five hundred million dollars to support the reduction of harm in family violence.

Yates (2020) suggested that the Victorian Government's (2017) framing of the family violence approach was influenced by the global vision and Australian Federal Government policy and political perspectives. The Victorian Government's family violence policy and action plan focused on the harm perpetrated against women and children by males. Even though there had been a steady increase in the number of female and male victims of family violence, male victims were not considered in the Victorian Government's family violence policy and approach (Andrews, 2014b; CSA, 2020; Yates, 2020).

Due to the ever-increasing number of family violence reports, there has been considerable frustration and public debate in Victoria regarding the growing trend of violence in the home (Alcorn, 2016; Dragiewicz and Burgess, 2016; McKenzie-Murray, 2015). This prompted the Victorian Government to establish the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (VRCIFV) to provide practical recommendations to improve the family violence process and reduce the harm caused (Prasser and Tracey, 2014; VRCIFV, 2016; Yates, 2018, 2020). As a result of the VRCIFV findings, the Victorian Government invested over three hundred and fifty million dollars to implement the two hundred and twenty-seven Royal Commission family violence recommendations provided to the Victorian Government in 2021 (Andrews, 2021).

The VRCIFV indicated that the existing interventions and responses had not effectively reduced the prevalence and severity of the cycle of family violence (VRCIFV, 2016). The establishment of the VRCIFV enabled a Statutory Authority to examine the seriousness and impact of family violence and why the community and victims did not have confidence in the ability of Victoria Police to respond to the harm appropriately (Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020). In the subsequent report, the VRCIFV identified serious gaps in the family violence management process. The research presented in this thesis sought to identify those gaps and how they impacted the Victoria Police family violence response and management process. The study also explored which strategies could be introduced to address the gaps and improve police responses to family violence incidents. Other strategies could include enhanced change behaviour programs that included male and female perpetrators of family violence (Neave, Faulkner and Nicholson, 2016, Zimmermann, 2016, 2019).

In 2017, the introduction of the Victorian Family Violence Rolling Action Plan (FVRAP) 2017-2020 (2017) became the blueprint that guided Victoria Police's approach to developing processes, policies, procedures and service delivery in responding to family violence (State of Victoria, 2018). In addition, the VRCIFV was able to examine the Victoria Police family violence management processes, the allocation of resources to address the harm and police family violence training (VRCIFV, 2017).

The structure of the FVRAP indicated that the Victorian Government had a gender focus on family violence, but Victoria Police remained a strong advocate of reducing the harm to all victims of family violence in Victoria (Padula, 2009; Yates, 2015, 2020). Therefore, this study also examined the extent to which females and males were the victims of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, the victim focus taken by the Victorian Government and Victoria Police was investigated to establish whether the victim focus was reflected in the experience of the front-line police members who managed the family violence process. In doing so, the study was able to examine if the approach by Victoria Police to the harm suffered by the victims of high-risk repeat family violence was balanced and appropriate.

Wells, Esina and Turner (2016) suggested that police should work with the government, courts, and family violence service providers to establish relevant processes, practices and procedures to help enhance family violence management (Khan, 2000). This research sought to identify the drivers and issues that contributed to the trauma and, thereby, help attenuate the cycle of family violence. More specifically, this study explored how other relevant service providers could contribute to a collaborative approach, thereby helping Victoria Police address family violence.

1.4 Family violence – A Police Perspective

Family violence has been a global health, economic and social concern for police, governments and communities for many decades due to its widespread harmful effects (Council of Australian Governments (COAG), 2009; Shearson, 2014). In most countries globally, in Australia and Victoria, police had the primary responsibility of responding to all reported family violence incidents (Maple and Kebbell, 2021). Therefore, this study examined family violence from a police perspective. However, one of the difficulties facing police is that the causes of family violence are complex, and it can happen to anyone, regardless of age, gender or social position (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Morse,

2018). Wells et al. (2016) articulated the importance of police understanding the issues that contributed to the trauma of family violence and noted that it was not as simple as male perpetrators and female victims. Significantly, the gender paradigm of the identity of victims and perpetrators added to the difficulty for police responding to family violence (Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, 2019; McKeown et al., 2022; Tsui, 2014; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019). Also, one of the complex matters confronting the police was the relationships between the victims and perpetrators in the family environment. These relationships were not just a current or former spouse or partner but often included a child, parent, or grand-parent and extended to specific kinship, cultural and religious connections (ABS, 2009; Pink, 2009; Victorian Government, 2008).

Maple and Kebbell (2021) indicated that as police were regularly required to respond to family violence incidents, many police members had reached an emotional breaking point due to the inherent pressures of police work and their experience in the family violence environment (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave, Wilson and Fitz-Gibbon, 2018). The earlier research by Chung (2006) and Diemer (2015) and the recent study by Maple and Kebbell (2021) indicated that many front-line police members had developed overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards family violence due to the constant stress of being exposed to horrific family violence events. The researcher has witnessed the devastating impact of family violence on front-line police members and has also observed that police members were constantly apprehensive about responding to family violence.

Foley and Massey (2018) and Hartley, Sarkisian, Vioanti, Andrews and Burchfiel (2013) suggested that, due to the constant pressure of police members responding to family violence, many of the members were very likely to experience more instances of sudden trauma than other people in the community due to the number of deaths they encounter in family violence events (Satyen et al., 2020; Wright, Swain and McPhillips, 2017). Their research also found that many front-line police members often developed mental health issues due to the pressure of being exposed to horrific events such as family violence murders (Foley and Massey, 2018; Hartley et al., 2013). The gender focus in family violence by Victoria Police also impacted many front-line members emotionally. The AIHW (2017, 2018, 2019) recorded that one female had been killed every nine days by a partner or spouse due to family violence. The same report found that one male was killed by a partner or spouse every twenty-nine days in a family violence incident, and police members were required to attend the scenes of the deaths (Bryant and Bricknell, 2017). In addition, the

Coroners Court of Victoria (2020) reported the findings on the deaths of victims of family violence in Victoria from 1 January 2011 to 31 December 2015. The report found that 55% of the fatalities in family violence in Victoria were female victims, and 45% were males. However, as Victoria Police had a gendered approach to family violence and the responses were directed to the safety of female victims, many police members felt male victims had been neglected when the male victim reported family violence.

A further concern for police was the extent to which motor vehicles had been used as weapons in the family violence environment. Extreme instances of family violence harm were when a parent or partner had used a motor vehicle to commit suicide or take the life of another family member. Recently, police members and emergency workers responded to an incident where a father set fire to his motor vehicle and burnt his wife and three children to death. He subsequently committed suicide (Robertson, 2017; The West Australian, 2017; Vinall et al., 2021). Since many family violence deaths occur in motor vehicles, it is a concern that the Victoria Government (2016) found that almost 60% of motor vehicle fatalities in Victoria were due to the vehicle running off the road or hitting another oncoming motor vehicle.

Due to the significance and complexity of family violence and the reported lack of confidence in Victoria Police to address family violence as reported by the victims, the literature suggested that police could not break the cycle of harm unilaterally but that it required a multi-agency approach (Hurst, 2022; Khan, 2000; McKeown et al., 2022; Wells et al., 2016). Previous studies found that family violence was difficult for the police to resolve. There were many types of family violence, and the cause of the harm was not always apparent to the police members who attended the incidents. In addition, the diversity of the population and cultural customs added to the complexity of reported family violence. For example, many cultures have overt and loud forms of communication, which, to an observer, could be mistaken for possible family violence (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Lysova, 2015; Papamichail, 2019). The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2021) preliminary census data that presented an overview, rather than fine detail, identified forty-nine nationalities and cultures in the SMR. However, the ABS (2016) full census report identified one hundred eighty-nine nationalities within the SMR. The diversity of these many cultures with their own norms, languages, customs and practices all within the SMR added significant complexity for Victoria Police and the police members who responded to family violence.

Hurst (2022) reiterated the importance of examining family violence from a police perspective after extensive research on family violence strategies in the United Kingdom, Canada and America. He highlighted the importance of exploring the perpetration of family violence and family relationships from a police perspective as it was essential to develop multi-agency family violence partnerships and models, such as change behaviour programs, to help prevent family violence (Hurst, 2022).

Adding to the complexity of how police responded to family violence was how the media reported family violence. Ringin, Morgan and Thompson (2022) suggested that the way the media reported family violence could impact community attitudes and influence politicians and policymakers. How the media framed each family violence incident and what information they included in the reporting could influence how the public perceived the extent and severity of family violence (Entman, 1993, 2007).

Previous research by Sutherland, McCormack, Pirkis, Vaugh, Dunne-Breen, Easteal, and Holland (2016) found that five themes in the Australian media impacted the reporting of family violence. The themes identified by Sutherland et al. (2017) include the lack of context in reporting family violence; the sources of authority and opinion; misrepresentation or myths about family violence; blame and responsibility and, most concerning, the sensationalism of how family violence was reported. Therefore, media reporting added to the complexity faced by police in their response to many instances of family violence (Barber, 2008; Komazec and Farmer, 2020).

Komazec and Farmer (2020) indicated a strong gender focus in the media reporting of deaths in family violence. For example, when a female was killed in family violence by a male partner, between 39% and 50% of the various Australian media outlets reported her death. However, Ringin et al. (2022) indicated that the media, especially the print media, can display information about family violence and deflect the blame from the perpetrator and their violent actions. The view of Ringin et al. (2022) became evident in the research of Komazec and Farmer (2020) who found that when a female killed her male partner, only 13% of Australian media outlets reported the family violence death. This prompted several researchers to conclude that the media had stigmatised many male victims of family violence, possibly contributing to males' reluctance to report family violence to the police. One of the difficulties for police members to fully understand the extent of family violence was that only 5% of male victims reported family violence to the police (ABS, 2013;

Connell, 2014; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005; Komazec and Farmer, 2020; Victoria Police, 2017).

1.5 The extent of family violence

The WHO (2010) asserted that family violence violated an individual's human rights and that most family violence incidents worldwide were perpetrated by males on female victims. They identified many types of family violence. They suggested that the most prevalent types included physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, controlling and economic abuse (WHO, 2010). A concern for police in responding to family violence was the extent of the incidents in Australia. The AIHW (2022) recently revealed the extent of family violence in Australia when it reported that over two million women and over seven hundred thousand men had experienced either physical or sexual violence by their partner at least once since they were 15 years of age. The report further stated that in the preceding twelve months, approximately two hundred thousand females and over a hundred thousand males had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner (AIHW, 2022). In Victoria, Millsteed (2016) reported over four hundred and seventy thousand family violence incidents to the police between 2006 and 2015. The CSA (2022) reported over ninety-one thousand incidents of family violence reported in Victoria in 2022, and Victoria Police attended one family violence incident every six minutes. Police being required to attend to family violence every six minutes added to the demands on police resources (Cornelius, 2015).

Previous studies identified that family violence ranged from 'minor' to 'severe' physical, sexual assaults and sexual slavery and even torture that had impacted the victims, especially women and children (COAG, 2016; De, 2020; Kelly, 1997; WHO, 2006, 2012). However, the extent of the injuries in family violence reported to police had been brutal and often had escalated to the murder of many female and male partners, ex-partners and even children (COAG, 2016; De, 2020; Kelly, 1997; Truong, Yeganeh, Cartwright, Ward, Ibrahim, Cuschieri, Dawson and Bugeja, 2022; WHO, 2006, 2012). The difficulty for police was the frequency of family violence deaths in Australia. For example, the AIHW (2017, 2018, 2019) revealed that one female had been killed by her male partner or spouse every nine days, and one male had been killed by his female partner or spouse every twenty-nine days (Bryant and Bricknell, 2017).

Furthermore, the impact of family violence often had long-term health implications for the victims. For example, the AIHW (2018) revealed that in the reporting period of 2014-2015, eight female and two male victims were admitted to a hospital every day in Australia due to injuries inflicted by a current spouse or partner. The AIHW (2021d) also reported that approximately six and a half thousand hospital admission around Australia every year were related to family violence. However, although the AIHW (2021d) indicated that over six thousand people were admitted to hospital every year due to family violence, a concern for police was that the PSS (2016) reported that 82% of women and 97% of males who were victims of family violence did not report it to the police (ABS, 2017c). Therefore, it is essential to identify the extent of family violence to inform this academic study and help to enhance police management and response to family violence and help reduce the trauma.

1.6 Strategies to address family violence

Due to family violence's devastating impact on the victims, especially women and children, well-designed, adequately implemented global programs are essential to address the harm (Access Economics, 2004; WHO, 2010). To help address family violence harm, the UN, WHO, and the European Union (EU) developed specific strategies and international conventions to help break the cycle of harm in family violence. The strategies included psychological support and interventions for survivors of family violence. Improved relationships and communications strategies were also developed to help enhance the dialogue between victims and perpetrators. In addition, family violence education programs were introduced in schools to help challenge the existing gender stereotypes and help promote relationships based on consent and equality (WHO, 2021). The strategies that were designed to guide the global approach to reducing family violence included the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Istanbul Convention (COE, 2011; Htun and Weldon, 2012; UN, 1979, 1993, 1995; Yates, 2020).

Due to the Australian public's desire to have a robust multi-jurisdictional approach to family violence and the ability for all women and children to access relevant services, a national family violence plan was developed (Australian Government, 2019). The Australian Federal, State and Territory governments developed a national twelve-year plan and framework to address the human rights of Australian women and children based on the UN and WHO strategies, treaties and protocols. They included the 'Declaration to End Violence Against Women', the 'Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action' and the

‘Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women’ (UN, 1995). The twelve-year program provided a coordinated framework for the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, non-government agencies, the community and businesses to help reduce, and respond to, violence against women and their children. The plan also identified the national priorities in all Australian jurisdictions that helped to focus on the areas of greatest need in family violence and violence against women and children (COAG, 2016, 2019).

Adopting the Australian government’s strategies, treaties and protocols, courts and police provided accepted guidelines for the Australian and Victorian authorities to enhance the Australian family violence management process (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Ericsson, 2019; Yates, 2020). To help address the Australian Federal Government’s commitment to reducing family violence in Australia, the Victorian Government (2017) introduced a ten-year reform plan to help fulfil the one-hundred and eighty-seven recommendations that emanated from the VRCIFV and reduce family violence. Since Victoria Police (2009) had an integral role in the Victorian Government’s family violence strategy, it was considered essential to understanding the impact of the family violence strategy and the model adopted by Victoria Police to manage the family violence process. Therefore, this research explored the impact of the strategies and family violence training adopted by Victoria Police to identify how these interventions influenced how police members responded to, and managed, the family violence process.

1.7 Impact of family violence on police members

Due to the Victorian Government and Victoria Police having adopted specific strategies to guide and manage the family violence process in Victoria, there were consequences for police members. For example, Maple and Kebbell (2021) previously indicated that front-line police duties were extremely frustrating and that the family violence management process was difficult and time-consuming for police members (Segrave et al., 2018). In addition, many front-line police members experience psychological trauma, anxiety, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after being exposed to ongoing traumatic events (Cotton, Hogan, Bull, and Lynch, 2016; Police Association of Victoria and Ambulance Victoria, 2016; Victorian Ombudsman, 2016).

The ABS (2016) and the WHO (2012) found that family violence created significant social problems within the community and impacted the responses provided by police

organisations. So, the Australian Federal Government introduced a requirement to improve the services provided by police to victims of family violence (AIHW, 2018; Dowling, Morgan, Boyd and Voce, 2018; Fitz-Gibbon, 2022).

Therefore, it was essential to examine the experiences of front-line police members in the management of family violence to identify how they responded to the harm. Since most of the family violence managed by Victoria Police was by police members of the ranks of Constable to Senior Constable, this research included those police ranks in the investigation. The experience of the police members in this research ranged from six months to thirty years. It was essential to explore the rich and diverse insights that the front-line police members had about the issues, themes and reporting outcomes that guided the response to, and the management of, the high-risk repeat family violence process by Victoria Police (Douglas, 2019). By examining the lived experience of the front-line police members, this research sought to identify any potential gaps in the existing Victoria Police family violence management processes and data collection. This study also explored whether the current Victoria Police family violence management model impacted how police members responded to harm in the family environment.

1.8 Rationale for this research

Previous studies found that the impact of family violence presented an exceedingly complex problem for governments and police. Adding to this complexity was the abundant misinformation from various sources about family violence, often presented in public debates (Phillips, Dunkley, Muller and Lorimer, 2015; Diemer, 2012, 2015). Due to the growing public concerns regarding the increasing number of family violence incidents reported to police, this research aimed to add new knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence to the existing body of knowledge and understanding of how police responded to family violence. To this end, this research explored the issues, drivers and emerging themes that impacted the response to and the management of, family violence by police and the judicial system. Although most family violence incidents reported to police in Victoria were minor arguments and one-off events, minor disputes often escalated into criminal behaviour. They could, in extreme cases, result in the death of family violence victims and perpetrators (Mayshak, Curtis, Coomber, Tonner, Walker, Hyder, Liknaitzky and Miller, 2020, 2022).

Previously, the Australian Federal and Victorian Governments indicated that high-risk repeat family violence presented a much greater risk to victims than minor family

violence disputes, the area of interest in this research was the impact of high-risk repeat family violence. It was estimated that approximately 5% of reported family violence in the SMR escalated to high-risk repeat family violence, creating a much greater risk to the victims. The Australian Federal and Victorian Governments previously confirmed this. This research also focused on the drivers and associated issues of high-risk repeat family violence in the Australian state of Victoria (Australian Government, 2019; State of Victoria, 2016). Although all family violence should be addressed and minor incidents acknowledged, this research focused on the greater risk, potentially severe harm, and complexity of high-risk repeat family violence. Victoria's general definition of family violence did not incorporate high-risk repeat violence. However, the Victoria Police submission to the VRCIFV indicated 'High-risk family violence' was any family violence that could potentially escalate into the commission of a 'serious crime'. 'Serious crime' included more severe assaults and other psychological, emotional, economic and other types of violence (Victoria Police, 2015).

Consequently, the study explored the issues and drivers that directly contributed to high-risk repeat family violence that added to the trauma and harm experienced by the victims. In addition, the research explored the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence and the family relationships that presented the most significant risks. This examination may help Victoria Police to provide appropriate support and assistance to future victims (Neave et al., 2016).

The research examined the family violence management model utilised by Victoria Police and how it influenced the decisions of front-line police members. To help identify if Victoria Police provided the most appropriate response in managing high-risk repeat family violence, the research analysed the themes and outcomes that directly influenced the family violence management process. In so doing, the study sought to develop recommendations that could enhance the Victoria Police family violence management processes.

Furthermore, this study sought to identify specific themes and issues that may impact how police members responded to high-risk repeat family violence (Satyen et al., 2020; Yates, 2020). Understanding the drivers, issues, and the family violence management processes utilised by Victoria Police may help provide alternative strategies for Victoria Police to consider that may help break the cycle of harm. The research also explored how the government, police, courts, and family violence service providers could establish

relevant processes, practices and procedures to help attenuate the cycle of harm and enhance the family violence management process (Wells et al., 2016; Khan, 2000).

1.9 Research questions

The research questions underpinned the study parameters and provided flexibility in addressing each of the elements of the study (Saunders, Lewis and Thornbill, 2012; Seric, 2006). Flick (2007) previously expressed the importance of developing the most appropriate research questions for any study to be undertaken. Furthermore, it is essential to structure the research questions to enable the study to explore the issues, raise new concepts, and consider new ideas to add to knowledge (Goldschmidt and Matthews, 2022; Lipowski, 2008).

Janesick (2000, p.382) suggested that it was necessary, to begin with the question “What do I want to know in this study?” before considering the research questions. This study sought to explore the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence drivers and how it can add to knowledge. It also aimed to examine the emerging issues and reporting outcomes that impacted the police practice, process and service delivery in managing the violence.

The research question that was used to help to explore the complexity and issues of high-risk repeat family violence was:

“How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”

Previous literature indicated that several drivers impacted high-risk repeat family violence. The Victoria Police data collection needed to be improved to inform the police, the government and family violence specialists (VRCIFV, 2017). To help guide this research, the supporting questions provided further structure to help identify which drivers affected the harm to victims and determine the gaps in the data collection process deployed. Therefore, the following research questions were developed to address these issues:

“What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

1.10 Research Methodology

Answering the research questions is the central purpose of any study, so it is essential to select the most appropriate research design to help explore the various types of data collected in the research (Dulock, 1993; Woodyard, 2019). In addition, the research design provides the blueprint and guidelines within the methodology to help gather, interpret and analyse the data that impacts high-risk repeat family violence.

This research will present a mixed methods exploratory research framework that provides the most appropriate design to collect the data required to help explore the drivers and issues contributing to high-risk repeat family violence (Shearson, 2014). Exploratory research provides the most appropriate design to collect the quantitative and qualitative data required to help explore the drivers and issues contributing to high-risk repeat family violence (Shearson, 2014). Exploratory research provided a logical starting point and a structured approach that was required in this research. The research explored existing literature, collected archival and primary data, conducted surveys and used all of that information to guide the focus groups and the interviews conducted with police experts and victims and perpetrators. Therefore, a sequential explanatory research design was adopted to underpin and guide the quantitative and qualitative phases (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012, 2016). In addition, this required the flexibility of mixed methods exploratory research to gain new insights into the drivers, issues, and how police procedures, processes and service delivery in the family violence management process were achieved. Therefore, the emphasis of an exploratory research framework was not to create a new model or design but to evaluate and analyse the data collected in the search to understand high-risk repeat family violence and provide the flexibility to adapt to any change required when new evidence was uncovered (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012).

1.11 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in this research provided a logical structure to help explain how the research would be explored, and a visual display and how the research progression answered the research questions (Adom, Huessein and Joe, 2018; Camp, 2001; Grant and Osanloo, 2014; Liehr and Smith, 1999; Peshkin, 1993). Adom et al. (2018) further articulated the importance of the conceptual framework being the model the researcher utilised to suit the specific variables selected and data explored in the research being undertaken.

Victoria Police categorised family violence as low-level, recidivist, and high risk of escalating violence (Victoria Police, 2019). Therefore, the response provided by police was graduated due to the level of risk and potential for harm. To enable this research to answer the research questions, this conceptual framework reflected the logical research process to demonstrate the levels of the family violence process which were the focus of this research. When family violence is reported to the police in Victoria, it is usually made in one of two ways. The first way is made by Triple Zero calls to an emergency centre or a police station, requiring police to attend an address or location. The second way is when a person attends a police station to report family violence.

When family violence has been reported, the initial triaging of the violence may find that extensive police intervention may not be required. In such cases, the report may be addressed by uniformed police members in the initial stage. However, if the reported family violence appears to be serious or escalating, such as serious crimes, severe assaults, threats to kill or threats to cause serious injury, then the reported family violence will be referred to specialist police to manage.

Numerous factors contribute to family violence, so it is essential for police to understand those issues and drivers so that the most appropriate management responses, strategies, and interventions can be implemented to minimise the harm. Since this research focused on the harm that has exceeded low-level family violence, the conceptual framework demonstrates a clear pathway to where the study will be concentrated and where the investigation management lies.

By clearly identifying the actual issues and drivers of family violence in the research location, a greater understanding of how the management of police practice, procedures, policy and service delivery can be enhanced to minimise the impact of family violence. The current data collected by Victoria Police did not provide sufficiently detailed information to assist front-line police in reducing high-risk repeat family violence. The conceptual framework in **Figure 1.1** designed for this research demonstrates the contribution to high-risk repeat family violence and new knowledge.

Conceptual Framework and Contribution

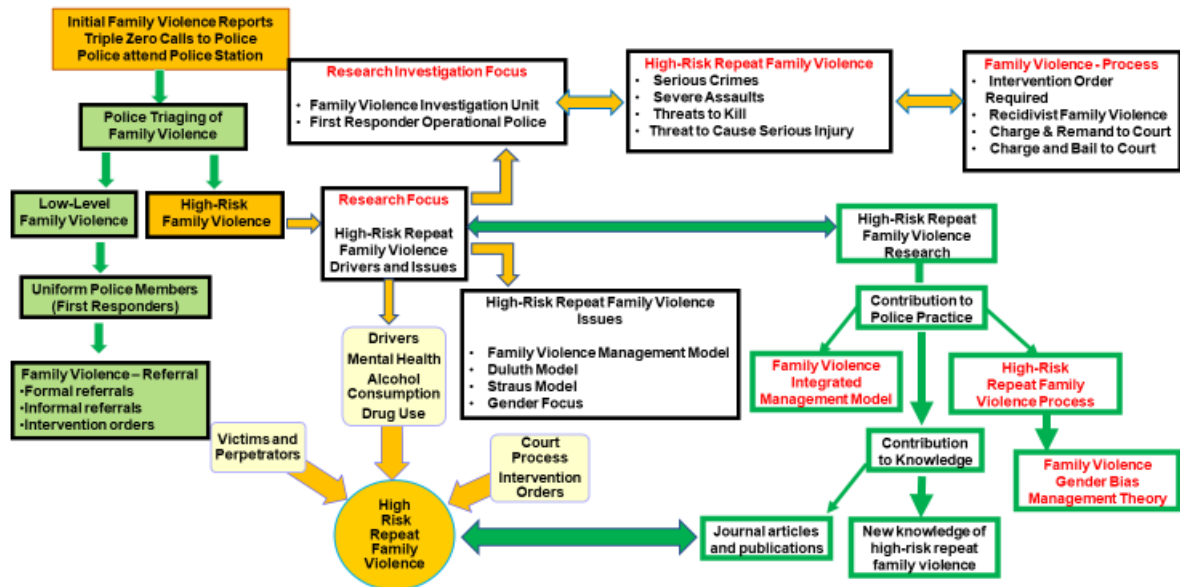


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.12 Thesis structure

This thesis comprises seven chapters that examine the issues, drivers and themes that impact the police practice, processes, procedures, and service delivery in dealing with high-risk repeat family violence. Each chapter is now outlined and briefly described.

Chapter one provides the context for the research and why it is required. It also details the impact of high-risk repeat family violence on the victims and the police members who respond to family violence incidents. Finally, the chapter describes the research questions that guided the study and the research methodology selected to explore the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence.

Chapter two provides a comprehensive review of the relevant family violence literature and discusses the complexity of the harm caused by family violence. The chapter explores the two prominent family violence management models available to help reduce the harm in the family environment. The chapter discusses the impact of the model chosen by Victoria Police and its influence on the police members who responded to family violence. The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence is discussed along with the drivers and the other issues that add to the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence.

Chapter three provides an overview of the methodology used and the justification for the research approach chosen to gather, interpret and analyse the data relating to high-risk repeat family violence. The chapter introduces the research design, methods utilised to

undertake the research and ethical considerations. This chapter also explains the types of data required and the methods used to collect it. It also describes the rationale for the data collection, the stakeholders' participation, and how they contributed to this research.

Chapter four provides an overview of the data collection process using the research plan and the methodology previously identified as the most appropriate to help gather the data required to answer the research questions. In addition, the chapter provides insights into the data collection phase, the participants and how their experiences added to the body of knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence. The chapter also discusses the archival family violence data used in this research and the introduction of a survey specifically designed to capture the experiences of the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence.

The archival data is existing family violence statistical data collected by Victoria Police using the Victoria Police Family Violence Form, VP Form L17 (VP-L17) and recorded in the Victoria Police Law Enforcement Assistance Program (LEAP). This data is then distributed to the CSA (CSA, 2019) and made available to any member of the public making a request, as well as to policymakers and researchers.

Chapter five provides an overview of the information obtained and the analyses of the data collected. The data analysis explores the issues and drivers that have impacted the victims of family violence and how police responded to this violence. The data collection phase included surveys, focus groups and interviews with victims, perpetrators, and police members. In addition, the narratives from the lived experiences of the victims, perpetrators and police members added to the description in the research analysis. This chapter also explores the themes and outcomes that emerged naturally from the lived experiences of the victims, perpetrators and police members.

Chapter six discusses the study's key results, the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence and the impact on the victims and front-line police participants in Victoria Police response and management. This chapter examines the complex interrelated factors influencing the family violence management process. It is divided into three sections to gain a conceptual understanding to answer the research questions and to provide insights into the components of high-risk repeat family violence.

Section 1 examines and discusses the issues and drivers that directly impacted victim support and police policy, procedures, and service delivery in the family violence process. The discussion in this section helped to answer the three research questions.

Section 2 examines the police practice that impacted the police response to high-risk repeat family violence and discusses the results of the data analysis and the impact on the police members who responded to family violence as well as the victims and perpetrators.

Finally, Section 3 discusses the results of the emerging themes, the outcomes identified in the research, and how they impacted the family violence management process.

Chapter seven discusses the research approach and the study's relevance in broadening the understanding of high-risk repeat family violence. The uniqueness of this study of high-risk repeat family violence is also discussed. It examined the harm through a police lens and was conducted by a serving Victoria Police Inspector. The chapter also discusses the original contribution to knowledge and practice that this study has made.

The chapter also summarises the relevant findings related to the family violence literature and the conflict within the specific study. That is, the chapter explores the benefits of gender symmetry in managing high-risk repeat family violence and identifies a new model that may provide a gender-free, balanced approach to managing high-risk repeat family violence. Finally, the chapter outlines the study's key limitations and provides recommendations to help future research enhance high-risk repeat family violence research and practice.

1.13 Conclusion

This chapter introduced the issues and drivers such as illicit drugs, alcohol consumption and mental health issues that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence and its impact on victims, communities, governments and police (COAG, 2009; Shearson, 2014). The chapter also discussed the impact of family violence on front-line police members. The family violence incidences they were exposed to range from minor arguments to gruesome murders and suicides within the family environment. These events and the number of deaths have often significantly exacerbated the emotional stress of many police members and impacted their approach to family violence (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave et al., 2018). This has contributed to many police members developing mental health issues due to the constant pressure. In addition, continuous exposure to family violence has also contributed to emotional stress and sudden trauma, far beyond that experienced by the general public (Foley and Massey, 2018; Hartley et al., 2013; Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Satyen et al., 2020; Segrave et al., 2018; Wright et al., 2017).

This chapter also discussed the complexity of family violence and the gender focus of Victoria Police, and the difficulty of police responding to family violence due to the gender paradigm of the identity of the victims and perpetrators (Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, 2019; McKeown et al., 2022; Tsui, 2014; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019).

This chapter presented the research questions and the rationale for using a mixed-methods approach to help guide and answer the research questions. The chapter also highlighted the consequences of reporting family violence in the media and how that may have stigmatised male victims of family violence (Barber, 2008; Komazec and Farmer, 2020).

The next chapter (Chapter 2) examines the extensive international, Australian and Victorian literature to help identify the drivers, issues, themes and outcomes of high-risk repeat family violence and how police address that harm (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). Chapter two will also examine the existing family violence models available to Victoria Police that influence and guide the organisation's response to family violence harm (Boxall and Morgan, 2020).

CHAPTER TWO: Literature Review

Due to the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence, this literature review has been divided into three parts to help explore the components of family violence.

Part One – The root causes of family violence and the available management models – Part one will discuss the root causes of family violence, and the gaps in existing knowledge. It will also examine the Duluth and Straus models and explore how they impact the family violence management process.

Part Two – The components of family violence – Part two will explore the impact of the gender focus and the international, Australian and Victorian issues in family violence. Part two will also examine the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence, the types of family violence experienced, the reporting of the harm, and the victim and perpetrator demographics.

Part Three – The drivers of family violence - This will examine the implications of the drivers of family violence and the intervention order process.

Part One – The root causes of family violence and the available management models

2.1 Introduction

Family violence and the harm perpetrated by males against females has been a concern for decades and been identified as a global phenomenon with widespread harmful effects in many communities (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Morse, 2018; Papamichail, 2019; Schuler, 2010; Truong et al., 2022). However, despite the prevalence of family violence and its potential to affect society at all levels, it has traditionally been viewed by the international, Australian, and Victorian communities as a private phenomenon (Meyer, 2012; Vernon, 2017). As a result, public conversations about family violence had not been encouraged, which meant families and communities did not speak about it publicly and, most importantly, neither did the police (Hyden, 2015; Shuler, 2010). The WHO (2006, 2012) previously identified that, historically, the most prevalent types of family violence globally was physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, controlling, and economic abuse. In some of the worst cases of family violence, there has been torture and sexual slavery that often escalated to the murder of a spouse, partner, or ex-partner (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019; De, 2020; WHO, 2006, 2012).

However, family violence is now recognised as a crime in Australia and worldwide. Family violence incident reporting in Australia continues to rise and, in Victoria, reported

family violence incidents have increased from 74,378 in 2015 to 84,550 in 2019. Therefore, considerable police time and resources were required to respond to the harm (ABS, 2020; Coghlan and Millsted, 2017; Crime Statistics Agency (CSA), 2020; Frost, 2009; Gill et al., 2019; Goodman-Delahunty and Corbo-Crehan, 2015; Sutherland, McDonald and Millsted, 2016; Victoria Police, 2019). To help the courts, police, and relevant agencies to address the issues of family violence crimes, the Australian Federal and Victorian Governments introduced legislation to help provide clear, direct, and comprehensive guidelines to address family violence, protect the victims, and prosecute the perpetrators (COAG, 2016; Kelly, 1997). The Australian Federal Government acknowledged the growing concern about family violence within the community, and so, in 2019, the Commonwealth of Australia Family Law Act (1975) was updated to provide the Australian community with a clear definition of family violence and the types of behaviour that contributed to the harm (Commonwealth of Australia, 1975). The Australia Family Law Act (1975) definition of family violence is described as follows:

“4AB Definition of family violence etc.

(1) For the purposes of this Act, family violence means violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person’s family (the family member) or, causes the family member to be fearful (p. 33)”.

The Victorian Government used a similar definition to the Federal Government described in the Australian Family Law Act (1975). The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (Victorian Government, 2018) described family violence as

“Any violent, threatening, coercive or controlling behaviour that occurs in current or past family, domestic or intimate relationships. This includes not only physical injury but direct or indirect threats, sexual assault, emotional and psychological torment, economic control, damage to property, social isolation and any behaviour which causes a person to live in fear”.

In response to the Australian communities’ concern about the increasing family violence, the Australian Federal and Victorian Governments amended the relevant family violence legislation to address those concerns. Victoria Police also adopted the Victorian family violence amendments to help enhance the approach taken by Victoria Police in the response to, and management of, family violence. A comprehensive breakdown of the relevant Australian Federal Government and the Victorian Government’s family violence legislation is found in ‘Appendix I’.

The WHO (2016) identified many root causes of family violence internationally. The causes of the harm included drivers such as the lack of education, social and economic exclusion, financial insecurity, employment status, gender inequality, drug and alcohol use and mental illness issues. However, even though the WHO (2016) did identify an extensive list of drivers that were the root cause of family violence, this research will explore the international, Australian and Victorian literature to identify the drivers that directly impacted the ability of Victoria Police to provide an appropriate response for victims and the management process for family violence (AIHW, 2018; Cherney et al., 2019; Ericsson, 2019; Fisher, Hebel, Bray and Withiel, 2022; State of Victoria, 2014-2016; Victorian State Government, 2019; Weiss 2020). Even though Victoria Police respond to all reported family violence, some incidents are minor.

The Victorian Government's general definition of family violence did not include high-risk repeat family violence even though the Australian Federal and Victorian Governments previously indicated high-risk repeat family violence presented a much greater risk to the community than minor family disputes (Australian Government, 2019; State of Victoria, 2016). Victoria Police (2015) indicated that 'high-risk repeat family violence' was any family violence that could escalate into a serious crime that created a greater risk to the victims. By understanding the root causes, drivers, issues and themes that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence, a multi-agency collaborative approach could be developed to help attenuate the cycle of family violence (Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Wells, Esina and Turner, 2016).

The VRCIFV (2017) indicated that the community wanted to understand the approach to family violence taken by the Victorian Government and Victoria Police. However, the Commission indicated there were vital gaps in various aspects of the approach to family violence in Victoria and that restricted the ability of the Victorian Government and Victoria Police to provide a comprehensive response and management of high-risk repeat family violence (State of Victoria, 2016; VRCIFV, 2017). Therefore, it is important for this research to explore the gaps identified by the VRCIFV (2017) in the management of the family violence process. By examining the characteristics of the victims and perpetrators and identifying the drivers such as drugs, alcohol and mental health issues in family violence, this research can contribute to narrowing the gap in family violence knowledge. As indicated by the VRCIFV (2017) it is also important to identify the gaps in the Victoria Police family violence data collection process so that the family violence management

process can be enhanced (Mayshak et al., 2020; Miller et al. 2016; VRCIFV, 2017; Yates, 2019).

A review of the literature identified the importance of improving the police response to help reduce the frequency and severity of the harm experienced by victims (Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). Victoria Police (2022) indicated family violence is extremely serious and everyone deserves to feel safe and secure in family relationships. In many cases, police are the first contact a victim has following family violence; therefore, they are responsible for responding to, and investigating, the family violence (Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Victoria Police, 2022). The police must have the proper knowledge, attitudes, skills and understanding of family violence to ensure the most appropriate response was provided to ensure the victims seeking support and protection and had a sense of safety and security (Islam and Mazerolle, 2022; Victoria Police, 2022). This chapter examines the literature to uncover the various challenges that face governments, police, courts and communities in managing the family violence process (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Morse, 2018; Wells et al., 2016). The chapter focuses specifically on the international, Australian and Victorian literature to uncover the issues and drivers that impact family violence and the ability of police to provide an unbiased approach to managing the family violence process (Abu Saada, 2019; Boxall and Morgan, 2020).

Scholars identified numerous factors that have impacted the police response and the delivery of family violence services (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019). This research acknowledges that many factors have exacerbated and contributed to abusive behaviour in family violence. To help understand the drivers of repeat family violence, exploring the issues contributing to the harm is essential. Issues include financial insecurity, education, employment status, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, gender inequality, and social and economic exclusion. This research examined which of these drivers directly impacted the ability of Victoria Police to provide an appropriate response to the harm caused by family violence in these contexts (AIHW, 2018; Ericsson, 2019; Fisher, Hebel, Bray and Withiel, 2022; State of Victoria, 2014-2016; Victorian State Government, 2019; Weiss 2020; WHO, 2016).

Wells et al. (2016) articulated that researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have recognised the complexity of family violence as the concept of the family construct has been changing for decades, and so has the perpetration of family violence (Walsh, 2012). The focus of family violence research has been primarily on the harm perpetrated by males on

female victims and minimal exploration of female-perpetrated family violence (Reeves, 2020). However, Coogan (2011) articulated that the recent concentration of family violence research had been predominantly on the harm perpetrated by adults and overlooked the violence perpetrated by children and adolescents. The recognition of this perspective of child and adolescent family violence perpetration expanded the requirement for more focussed research, policy and intervention responses for the police and governments (Coogan, 2011).

Anderson (2013) and Malbon, Carson and Yates (2018) explained that the focus on gender had been a significant issue in determining policy development and the causes of, and solutions to, family violence. However, the gendered focus within family violence research and policy development has remained controversial as family violence is multidisciplinary and continuously growing (Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Reeves, 2020). More recently, however, Lien and Lorentzen (2019) identified a degree of disagreement in international research and ongoing debate about the gender of the perpetrators of family violence. In addition, Wells et al. (2016) noted that disagreements about gender perpetration in family violence have persisted over the last forty to fifty years in countries like the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia.

Lysova's (2016) comprehensive review of forty years of research revealed a continuing emphasis by scholars on 'which partner is more violent' and 'who needs more help' when dealing with family violence. However, she also found that by focusing on 'which partner is more violent' and 'who needs more help', there was a difference of opinion in the academic literature. The different opinions she identified were between two groups of scholars and, as such, these opinions impacted family violence policy. Some scholars argued that males predominantly perpetrated family violence against females and the patriarchy where males used power and control over their female partners. However, the second group claimed that family violence was perpetrated equally by males and females (McKeown et al., 2022). Lysova's (2016) research also identified that opposing views of the perpetration of family violence had been influenced by the philosophies of the Duluth and Straus models. She indicated that the Duluth and Straus Models had directly impacted the management of, and the police response to, family violence incidents. Each Model created differences in the strategies, policies and management of family violence by police forces in the Australian State of Victoria.

2.2 Duluth Model – The requirement for the Model

The Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (Duluth Model) came from the school of thought that was a concept of an ever-evolving way of thinking about how a community could work together to end domestic violence (Pence, 1983). It also articulated that family violence was caused by males who engaged in patriarchal relationships and maintained dominance and control over female partners. The Duluth Model was established in Duluth, Minnesota, America (population of 90,000), in 1981 (Pence, 1983). The city was identified as the most suitable location in Minnesota to offer the community a program with a coordinated approach and response to family violence harm. It was also the first city in Minnesota to attempt a program designed to address the increasing number of family violence incidents within the community (Pence, 1983).

Due to male violence against women in the 1960s and 1970s, successful protests by feminists, political activists, and other groups in America highlighted the growing issue of family violence within the country and Duluth's city (Papamichail, 2019; Shuler, 2010). Several scholars, such as Dobash and Dobash (1979) and Downes, Kelly and Westmarland (2019), indicated that family violence was perpetrated by males who tried to preserve the power of males within a relationship (Archer, 2002; Kimmel, 2002). Powney and Graham-Kevan (2019) then described the Duluth Model as a program that held male perpetrators accountable for the abuse they had committed against female victims. After a domestic murder in Duluth in 1980, the Duluth Model team members found that the local community members were willing to try a different approach to deal with the violence perpetrated by males (Pence and Paymar, 1993). However, the team had difficulty persuading police agencies, the judiciary, and human services providers to overhaul how each organisation responded to family violence.

The vision of the Duluth Model was to develop a co-ordinated multi-agency approach to address the growing problem of male-perpetrated family violence in the city of Duluth (Corvo, Dutton and Chen, 2009; McKeown et al., 2022). Before introducing the Duluth Model, Pence (1983) found no appropriate or consistent police approach to responding to family violence. There had been a standard and detrimental practice of dropping family violence charges against the perpetrator. After the Duluth Model was introduced, family violence charges were no longer dropped, even if the victim requested it (Pence, 1983). As a result of the change, the Model then utilised an expanded 'probable

cause' in the family violence process. Pence (1983) explained that the purpose of the new policy was to ensure the 'probable cause' arrest laws were fully utilised.

When the 'probable cause' arrest laws in family violence were being introduced, Pence and Paymar (1993) observed a dramatic increase in the number of arrests and prosecutions. The city and the courts then had to decide what to do with the perpetrators. Previously they did not usually impose custodial sentences without the opportunity for perpetrators to rehabilitate themselves first. Pence (1983) noted that offenders' court process and sentencing had treatments for other offences, but they had no actual treatment process concerning the perpetration of family violence. In addition, after the police assumed the responsibility of the informants from the city of Duluth, there was an increase in the male perpetrators' guilty pleas. Due to the increased perpetrator guilty pleas, members of the Duluth team concluded that male perpetrators saw their arrest differently if they were arrested and charged by the police. The introduction of the Duluth Model and the co-ordinated approach introduced a specific focus on including the community as an essential partner in the program's delivery (Pence and Paymar, 1993). Including the community in the model helped empower and protect the victims and held the perpetrators accountable for the harm they caused (Bohall, Bautista and Musson, 2016; Mankowski, Haaken and Silvergeid, 2002; Pence and Paymar, 1993).

2.2.1 Duluth Model – Philosophy

The philosophy of the Duluth Model was to understand how power worked and to develop a behavioural change program through conceptual practices to enable a coordinated approach with other relevant agencies and service providers. Thus, the model introduced and implemented the multi-agency coordinated and structured approach by police, the judicial system and support services when dealing with male perpetrators of family violence (Emerson, 1979; Pence 1983, 1999). Pence and Paymar (2003, p.1) further articulated the importance of the philosophy and implementing a multi-agency response to family violence by stating:

“negotiating common understandings among agencies lessens the negative impact of fragmented philosophies and responses on the victims of domestic violence”.

The introduction of the Duluth Model change-behaviour program helped the team understand that not all of the family violence perpetrated by the male offenders were

assaults. In addition, the model helped develop suitable methods to distinguish between male perpetrators who used low levels of violence and those who escalated the family violence to high levels and severity (Pence, 1999). Finally, the philosophy enabled the identification of those perpetrators who assaulted their partners and the male offenders who engaged in a pattern of coercion and violent behaviour.

2.2.2 Duluth Model – Development

A crucial feature in developing the Duluth Model was the introduction of the change-behaviour program. This program established a systematic approach to helping perpetrators who had anger issues (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). By developing a co-ordinated approach, along with standard procedures, policies and language, the model helped overturn the deeply entrenched social beliefs of the patriarchy. Rizza (2009) further described the Duluth Model's development as more than just a change-behaviour program for male perpetrators of family violence.

Corvo et al. (2009) found that the development of the Duluth Model was designed as an intervention program, which provided compulsory educational programs for male perpetrators of family violence that encouraged them to change their behaviour. Participation of male perpetrators in a mandatory court-ordered intervention program replaced the relevant court potentially ordering a period of custodial incarceration (Graham-Kevan, 2007, 2017; Pender, 2012). Participation by the male offenders also held them accountable for the violence they had committed against their female victims.

During the development and design of the Duluth Model, there were meetings with the major stakeholders, including the community, law enforcement, the courts and human service agencies (Pence, 1983). The participants met between October 1980 and March 1981 to evaluate the existing policies and practices in relation to male-perpetrated family violence. Unfortunately, due to a lack of engagement by some police members, compliance with the program dropped when it was scaled up (Pence, 1983). Having been part of the development of the Duluth Model, each of the participating agencies went through a three-part process designed to bring focus to the model that included policy revision, implementation, and policy adjustment. In March 1981, nine participating agencies simultaneously adopted the development process and changed policies and procedures to support it (Pence, 1983).

2.2.3 Duluth Model – Structure

The Duluth Model was structured on a power and control model after extensive consultation with female victims of family violence who identified that these were the drivers of male perpetrated family violence (Adams, 1989; Pender, 2012). As power and control had been identified as significant contributors to family violence, the Duluth Model focused on the feminist theory that family violence was the wilful exercise of male privilege and patriarchy (Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). So, in that context, the structure and delivery of the Duluth Model only focused on males as the perpetrators of family violence and was influential in the development of family violence policy (Hine, Noku, Bates and Jayes, 2022). Because of the gender focus in the Duluth Model, only males were the focus of the change-behaviour program (Bohall et al., 2016; Corvo et al., 2009; Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Hogue-Vincent, 2017; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019).

Bohall et al. (2016) described the most prominent tool in the structure of the Duluth Model as a ‘Power and Control Wheel’, where the core was the concept of male privilege (Chavis and Hill, 2009). Gondolf (2010) described the Power and Control Wheel as a method of confronting and exposing the dynamics of the violent behaviour of male perpetrators. It helped to understand the violence and its impact. He also found that the components of each segment of the Power and Control Wheel (**Figure 2.1 below**) helped to articulate the type of harm inflicted by the male perpetrators.

Figure 2.1- Power and Control Wheel



Figure 2 – ‘Power and Control Wheel’ Source: Pence and Paymar (1993)

Pence and Paymar (1993) described the Power and Control Wheel as a model that contained a series of tactics and behaviours used by males to control female victims. The information about male behaviour was gained from the lived experiences of over two hundred female victims of family violence in a Duluth shelter. Chavis and Hill (2009) stated there were eight core themes, or tactics, used by male perpetrators in the Power and Control Wheel segments. Pender (2012, p.219) described the eight-core themes contributing to male perpetrator behaviour:

“(1) Using intimidation, (2) using emotional abuse, (3) using isolation, (4) minimizing, denying and blaming, (5) using children, (6) using male privilege, (7) using economic abuse, and (8) using coercion and threats”.

Family violence has been described as the domination and control of an intimate partner or family member (Hart, 2023; Ramesey, Kim and Fitzgerald, 2022). The eight core themes described in the Duluth Model’s Power and Control Wheel have encapsulated many of the tactics and behaviours used by males to control their female partners (Chavis and Hill, 2009; Pence and Paymar, 1993). Increasingly, many non-physical acts of family violence have been used by males to maintain their power over their partners. However, using non-physical violence such as intimidation, isolation, coercion and threats to terrorise their female partners is often invisible and not seen by others outside the family environment (Crossman, Hardesty and Raffaelli, 2016; Stark, 2007). Hart (2023) further stated that if the concepts of male privilege and dominance were not addressed, many males would continue to intimidate and control their female partners as family violence escalates (ANROWS, 2021; Ramesey, Kim and Fitzgerald, 2022).

The Power and Control Wheel structure of the Duluth Model was described by Powney and Graham-Kevan (2019) as enabling a change-behaviour process consisting of a twenty-six-week group counselling intervention program. The counselling programs for male perpetrators helped develop skills to avoid abusive and violent behaviour. The programs included the expertise of law enforcement organisations, civil and criminal justice systems and relevant human services (Corvo et al., 2009; Pence, 1983; Pence and Paymar, 2003; Pender, 2012; Rizza, 2009). Pence and Paymar (1993) identified that many males who perpetrate violence against their female partners had a history of childhood abuse and may have been exposed to a ‘woman-hating’ environment. They further suggested that the male perpetrators of family violence may have witnessed racial and class oppression and alcoholism.

2.2.4 Duluth Model – Informing the police

Since introducing the Duluth Model approximately forty years ago, it has provided guidance and direction for courts, legislators and the police response to family violence. The components of the ‘Power and Control Wheel’, together with the inter-agency and community integrated approach of the model, provided a solid structure to help address the harm of family violence. However, the concern for police and law enforcement agencies when responding to family violence was the restrictions of the Duluth Model and the focus on males being the only perpetrators of family violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1984, 2000; Hoff, 2012; Hogue-Vincent, 2017; Pence and Paymar, 1993, 2003). The Duluth Model was problematic for the police responding to family violence as it did not enable them to apply the law equally, without fear or favour and not discriminate against anyone, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator (Papamichail, 2019). Due to the enforcement expectations and the gender focus within the Duluth Model, many police members indicated that they did not feel they had the discretion to nominate males as victims and must record them as the perpetrator, even if they were the victims (Gracia, Gracia and Lila, 2011; Gill et al., 2019).

Research indicated that the existing policies concerning family violence discretion did not provide a consistent or uniform response to family violence as the gendered approach of the model confused many police members (Gracia et al., 2011). However, Lysova (2016) and Dutton (2012) found that the gender paradigm of the Duluth Model, together with the police training, resulted in males usually being arrested in a family violence environment. If police members had responded to the family violence incident and not been focused on the gender of the perpetrator, a consistent approach could have been achieved by police (Machado, Hines and Matos, 2016). The police training and the gender focus of perpetrators mentioned by Dutton (2012) and Machado et al. (2016) helped explain why male victims of family violence did not receive the positive support offered to female victims by the police attending family violence incidents. Consequently, police support was not applied equally and without ‘fear or favour’ (Bates, 2019; Seelau, Seelau and Poorman, 2003; Zimmermann, 2018).

More generally, patriarchy was found to be the only explanation for family violence, which was the ethos of the Duluth Model (Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Dutton, Corvo and Hamel, 2009). In addition, Powney and Graham-Kevan (2019) found that organisations such as government departments, police organisations, and academia had adopted and

maintained the patriarchy principles in their approach to family violence. However, Walker, Lyall, Silva, Craigie, Mayshak, Costa, Hyder and Bentley (2019) identified substantial research to indicate that family violence was perpetrated by males and females more equally against their partners. However, the influence of the Duluth Model meant that males and females were not seen as equally contributing to the harm in family violence and were not reflected in police practice. The difficulty facing police in many countries such as America and Australia was that female-perpetrated family violence was not seen to be as serious or as harmful as that of the male perpetrators and was often viewed as ‘self-defence’ against male violence (Bohall et al., 2016; Dutton, 2007; Graham-Kevan and Archer, 2005; Hammock, Richardson, Lamm, Taylor, and Verlaque, 2017; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019).

The academic focus of the Duluth Model that found males were the perpetrators and females were victims directly impacted police policy and responses provided by police when attending family violence (Walker et al., 2019). Police family violence training based on the Duluth Model influenced how police responded to the harm. There was the perception that police would not take the claims of male victims seriously, especially if the alleged perpetrators were female (Douglas and Hines, 2011; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019).

Morgan et al. (2020) found that intervention models, like the Duluth Model, had limited effectiveness in the short term when trying to reduce instances of family violence. However, the Duluth Model was described by the head of the Victoria Police Centre for Family Violence, Brotto (2019), as a multi-disciplinary model and was widely supported as the guide to the family violence response within Victoria and Victoria Police. She noted that the creators of the Duluth Model came to Australia, where members of the Victoria Police, Magistrates and Prosecutors received training conducted by the Judicial College of Victoria.

2.2.5 Duluth Model – Outcomes

One of the most significant outcomes of the introduction of the Duluth Model was that female victims of family violence were not required to give evidence in court because the police members in Duluth became the informants in each legal matter. That was a fundamental change that helped reduce the trauma for the female victims of family violence (Pence, 1999). In addition, the model enabled the police, prosecutors, courts, prisons, counselling agencies and women’s shelters in the United States to have a standard set of policies and procedures to ensure a uniform response when dealing with family violence (Emerson, 1979; Pence, 1983). Another benefit of implementing the Duluth Model included

greater compliance with the family violence process with the introduction of the multi-agency approach to family violence and the strict monitoring of the probation agreements made by the perpetrators. In addition, probation officers had the new authority to revoke any probation agreement of a male perpetrator if they failed to participate in the change behaviour and anger management program as required. The implementation of the Duluth Model brought community, social and organisational changes to address the issue of family violence. The model also became the most used court-sanctioned intervention program in America and Canada, with mandatory treatment conditions only placed on male perpetrators convicted of family violence assaults (Corvo et al., 2009; Graham-Kevan, 2007).

The initial introduction of the Duluth Model saw fundamentals of the model used in most states in America and around the world and strongly influenced many of the accredited domestic violence prevention programs in various countries. The model also influenced how police responded to family violence (Bates, Graham-Kevan, Bolam and Thornton, 2017b; Gondolf, 2010; Corvo et al., 2009; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). However, the Duluth Model's influence on public policy and the police response in addressing family violence was problematic (Hoff, 2012). Hoff (2012) stated that the "Duluth Model is not based on scientific evidence, but on the opinions of female victims of family violence..." (Hoff, 2012). Rizza (2009) articulated a similar view and suggested that for change behaviour programs such as the Duluth Model to be successful, the programs should be flexible and focus on all perpetrators, regardless of gender (Hine et al., 2022). The American National Institute of Justice report (2003) articulated that the Duluth Model did not work or help change the behaviour of family violence perpetrators. Therefore, as the program did not influence the behaviour of the perpetrators, police would often be required to investigate repeat instances of reported family violence (Jackson, 2003; Rizza, 2009).

2.3 Straus Model – The approach

The second approach examined to guide the Victoria Police policies, processes, and practices in managing family violence was the philosophy advocated by Straus (1973). The approach and emphasis on gender symmetry in family violence by Straus (2010) are referred to as the 'Straus Model' in this research. The approach of gender symmetry within the context of the Straus Model appeared to be relevant as it provided an alternative option to enable police to manage family violence. Police responding to reported family violence utilising the Straus Model were not compelled to only consider males as perpetrators but

were empowered to identify them as victims (Adams, 1989; Celani, 1994; Garfield, 2005; Hine et al., 2022; Pence and Paymar, 2003; Pender, 2012). The benefit of the Straus Model for police responding to family violence was that Straus (1973, 2010) found that females perpetrated physical violence against their male partners at a similar rate, but not necessarily severity, to that of males. Extensive research by Graham-Kevan (2007) found little evidence to support the emphasis that the male perpetrator model in family violence was applicable; gender symmetry was relevant (Ahmadabadi, Najman, Williams, Clavarino and d'Abbs, 2021).

When attending reported family violence, there are challenges for the police when identifying the perpetrators, victims, and also providing safety and security. If police do not consider gender symmetry when investigating family violence, they are often ineffective in addressing the harm inflicted on all victims (Bernardi and Steyn, 2019; Boxall, Dowling and Morgan, 2020; Fagerlund, 2020). Walker, Lyall, Craigie, Mayshak, Costa, Hyder and Bentley (2019) suggested that police appeared to have a gender-stereotypical perception in family violence that often led to inadequate support for male victims of family violence. By police incorporating the concepts of the Straus model and gender symmetry in family violence, a much more balanced response can be provided to all victims (Ahmadabadi et al., 2021).

2.3.1 Straus Model – Philosophy – Gender Symmetry

The concept of a fair and well-balanced approach to family violence by the police response, the courts and the subsequent family violence interventions have been the subject of robust academic conversations over an extended period (Straus and Gelles, 1986). Lysova (2016) proposed that better-designed, targeted, effective and lasting interventions could be developed to address family violence and help break the cycle of harm (Livings, Hsiao and Withers, 2022). The Straus Model demonstrated that change behaviour programs to reduce family violence should be developed to address the harm both males and females perpetrated. Straus and Gelles (1986) and Chen and Chan (2019) indicated there was significant evidence to highlight the issue of gender symmetry in family violence. They found that males and females were equally capable of perpetrating harm, as well as being victims of the harm (Ahmadabadi et al., 2021; Fiebert, 2004, 2010, 2012, 2014; Powney and Graham-Kent 2019).

To enable police, the courts and the government to have a positive impact on reducing family violence, consideration must be given to understanding the roles, risk factors, dynamics, and interactions of all perpetrators in family violence and the concept of gender symmetry (Dowling et al., 2018b). The philosophy of the Straus Model identified that gender symmetry was an important factor in family violence, and that the same percentage of women and men had physically assaulted their partners. Therefore, understanding the concept of gender symmetry in family violence was essential. Meier et al. (2001) proposed that the philosophy of the Straus Model provided a framework for the police to examine family violence and gender symmetry in the perpetration of the harm in a more inclusive way. The Straus Model provided a broader context of family violence for police and supported the assertion that it was not a single-gender issue (Straus, 2011). Furthermore, Morgan et al. (2020) indicated that if all victims of family violence were not considered equally, police could not implement an effective and balanced family violence management process (Dowling et al., 2018b; Morgan et al., 2020; Straus, 2007; Tsui, 2014).

2.3.2 Straus Model – Development and Importance

2.3.2.1 Police and enforcement agencies

To ensure police, governments, and service providers effectively helped all victims of family violence and prosecuted the perpetrators; it was essential for them to fully comprehend the family violence environment and the perpetration of the harm. Fiebert's (2004, 2010, 2012, 2014) studies previously identified that family violence was not solely male perpetrators violating female victims, but an issue of gender symmetry where males and females were equally the perpetrators of the harm. The value of his research was significant and consisted of over four hundred and forty thousand participants. A benefit for police in Fiebert's (2004, 2010, 2012, 2014) examination of three hundred and forty-three scholarly studies found there was gender symmetry and females in family violence could be just as aggressive as males (Powney and Graham-Kent 2019).

The importance of considering the concept of gender symmetry in family violence by police was stressed by Burczykca (2016). She suggested that gender symmetry was identified in the 2014 Canadian General Social Survey, which found that 4.2% of males and 3.5% of females who participated in the survey, had experienced physical and sexual assaults in their relationships. Furthermore, she found that 15% of male and 13% of female

participants were also victims of emotional and financial family violence. The extent of gender symmetry in family violence had previously been identified in the United States 1975 National Family Violence Survey (Gelles and Straus, 1988; Straus, 2009a, 2010; Straus and Gelles, 1986; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 2006). The survey's overall results demonstrated gender symmetry when it identified that there were similar rates of assault in family violence by males (12%) and females (11.6%) on their partners. The report further stated that the males and females who attacked their partners using an object, choking, punching and kicking were statistically similar (Straus, 2010). A major benefit of the Straus Model philosophy for police enforcement, the court process and enforcement agencies was that it provided a structured framework to investigate family violence in an inclusive way that provided an effective and balanced approach to the response to, and management of, family violence (Dowling et al., 2018b; Morgan et al., 2020; Straus, 2007; Tsui, 2014).

2.3.2.2 The self-defence debate

The subject of female perpetrated family violence has been a contentious issue for many years and, in heterosexual relationships, males and females have used similar levels of violence against their partners (Douglas and Hines, 2011; Walker et al., 2019; Yates, 2020). Previously, females had been identified as being the perpetrators of family violence against their male partners. However, the WHO (2006) suggested that female perpetrated violence against male victims was more likely to be acts of self-defence (Krug Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi, and Lozano, 2002). Earlier research by Pearson (1997) clearly disputed the later claim of self-defence by females in family violence, as suggested by the WHO (2006). She found that self-defence was not the leading cause of the violence perpetrated by females on their male partners and 90% of the women in her study had assaulted their respective male partners. She also indicated that violence perpetrated by females on their male partners had been caused by jealousy, frustration and anger and, therefore, was not self-defence (Pearson, 1997). In addition, McKeown et al. (2022) found that approximately 50% of reported family violence was mutual violence and therefore, not self-defence.

By considering gender symmetry, the Straus Model provided police and enforcement agencies with an expanded view of how researchers described female-perpetrated family violence as acts of self-defence (Straus, 2010). The constant use of the self-defence debate by some individuals and organisations to explain female perpetrators who had assaulted their male victims had caused difficulties for police. Research by Pearson (1997) concerning the

Straus Model and gender symmetry was important for police to understand and had been supported by the extensive studies of Cascardi and Vivian (1995), Fiebert and Gonzalez (1997) and Kernsmith (2005). These authors identified that, over ten years from 1995 to 2005, most of the violence perpetrated by females on male victims had not been self-defence as suggested by organisations such as the WHO (2006). Instead, their research identified that female and male perpetrators had used the same motivations of anger, coercion and punishment to commit violence against their partners. The research by these authors provided a strong argument for the inclusion of the Straus Model in the police approach to gender symmetry and the management process for family violence.

2.3.3 Straus Model – Structure

When police respond to reported family violence, they are often faced with the dilemma of identifying the perpetrator of the harm and, importantly, who is the victim. In many cases, police training has centred on the concept that family violence is a gendered issue and males were the perpetrators of the harm and gender symmetry was not a popular consideration (Dutton, 2012; Lysova, 2016; Machado et al., 2016; Straus, 2010). Adding to the difficulty for police in identifying the perpetrators and victims of family violence was the ongoing debate about the acceptance of female self-defence in family violence (McKeown et al., 2022; Pearson, 1997).

To enable police to provide a balanced response to all reported family violence, another perspective of family violence reporting was required to assist in the investigation (Tsui, 2014). Straus (1979) observed that researchers and professionals, including police and the courts, required better techniques to help investigate the harm and measure the way families used conflict and violence. He also identified that inadequate and unsatisfactory family violence models were used by relevant professionals and police when managing and resolving family conflict (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979).

A significant model that had the potential to enhance the police and the court family violence management process, was the development of the Conflict Tactics Scales (CTS) (Straus, 1979). The CTS provided an objective instrument that contained eighty elements that measured the conflict, tactics and personal interactions used by family members in violence in the home. The CTS provided police with an additional avenue of investigation into family violence that could help to achieve a balanced outcome for all victims, regardless of gender (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979, 1987).

2.3.3.1 The use of the Conflict Tactics Scales

Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2005) described the Straus Model CTS as one of the most important tools to evaluate the prevalence of family violence and was used in more than thirty countries. One of the unique aspects was measuring how family members used reasoning, physical aggression, and verbal aggression in a relationship conflict, especially in family violence (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979, 1987; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy and Sugarman, 1996). The CTS also allowed researchers to complete quantitative studies of family violence previously ignored (Hardesty and Ogolsky, 2020). A benefit of the CTS for police and the courts was the adaptability of the questions within the scales. They were structured to replicate any role in a relationship that had experienced family violence (Straus, 1974; Straus and Douglas, 2004).

A further benefit of the CTS was that it recorded the harm caused by physical assault, psychological aggression, negotiation and sexual coercion and could also measure the results of the harm (Straus, 1987). The CTS and the associated questions also provided police with new skills and instruments to investigate family violence and replicate specific scenarios as required. An important aspect of the Straus Model for police and the investigation of family violence was the evidence of gender symmetry in the family environment. A fair and open approach to family violence was required with the inclusion of instruments such as the CTS, used to inform police and research, and a balanced approach to questions was achieved. To ensure the approach to the investigation was balanced, the CTS ensured the same questions and information were asked of male and female perpetrators of family violence (Straus, 2007).

2.3.4 Straus Model – Informing Police

The introduction of the Straus Model provided an alternative model that informed police in relation to the practice, response to, and management of, family violence. Furthermore, as the police had the opportunity to examine family violence using a gender symmetry lens, a fair and balanced approach to the harm perpetrated was possible (Straus, 2007). One of the issues that impacted the ability of front-line police to provide a fair and balanced approach to all victims was the reluctance of many scholars, organisations, and even some police management to acknowledge the concept of gender symmetry in family violence.

The view of gender symmetry and the associated research was contrary to the long-held view that only males perpetrated family violence (Straus, 2007). The impact for police in the management of the family violence process and appropriate responses for all victims of the harm had been identified by Straus. He observed that, in December 2005, the American National Institute of Justice provided funding for research about the harm caused by family violence. However, the American National Institute of Justice stated that any study investigating the harm suffered by male victims of family violence was not eligible and would not be considered for any family violence research funding (Straus, 2007). Therefore, the research into family violence was influenced by authorities such as the American National Institute of Justice. Consequently, police were deprived of sufficient research to inform them of the extent of harm perpetrated in family violence.

The Straus Model identified that ‘gender symmetry’ did exist in family violence, and the same percentage of women and men had physically assaulted their partners (Straus, 2011). Therefore, the concept of gender symmetry in family violence was essential. Furthermore, Morgan et al. (2020) indicated that if all victims of family violence were not considered equally, police could not provide an effective and balanced family violence management process (Dowling, Morgan, Hulme, Manning and Wong, 2018b; Morgan et al., 2020; Straus, 2007; Tsui, 2014).

2.3.5 The issue of balance and reporting

To enable police, courts and governments to provide a balanced approach to managing family violence, valid and reliable reporting of the data related to the harm within the family environment was essential (Straus, 2007). Unbalanced data collection and reporting influenced how police structured their family violence policies, strategies and procedures. For example, a necessary element of the Straus Model was gender symmetry and recognising that males and females committed violence against their partners. McKeown et al. (2022) suggested that family violence perpetrated by females was still a challenging concept for society. However, Straus (2007) identified that many researchers failed to publish the data that referred to female perpetrators of family violence. This impacted police strategic family violence modelling.

Despite being dated, Schulman (1979) found that the Kentucky Commission on the Status of Women had collected data concerning male and female perpetrators but only published the data relevant to the male perpetrators. Johnson and Sacco (1995) found that

the Canadian Violence against Women survey used a version of Straus's CTS but excluded critical questions that referred to female perpetrators and their violence against their male victims. Straus (2007) identified another twelve significant Canadian studies that were completed in relation to the perpetration of family violence. He found that ten of the twelve studies failed to mention female violence on male victims.

Further changes in the narrative of gender symmetry and unbalanced reporting were identified by Tjaden and Thoennes (2000). Unexpectedly, they found that the United States Department of Justice's 1975 US National Violence against Women Survey excluded questions about female perpetrated violence against their male partners. However, the United States Center for Disease Control identified the bias and included questions related to female-perpetrated violence (Tjaden and Thoennes, 2000; Straus, 2007).

Straus (2010) mentioned the media's importance in reporting all academic data and research that identified gender symmetry in family violence. However, due to the lack of balanced reporting by the media of all of the family violence data, the concept of gender symmetry was not readily accepted by governments, police and the community (Follingstad and Rogers 2013; Straus 2010). Bates (2019) indicated significant research and evidence that supported gender symmetry in family violence. However, many police organisations, governments and support agencies failed to recognise the abundance of balanced reporting emanating from the use of the CTS and the philosophy of the Straus Model. By failing to recognise the concept of gender symmetry in family violence, a balanced approach to managing the process could not be achieved (Follingstad, Rutledge, Berg, Hause and Polek, 1990; Saunders, 1986, 1988; Straus, 2007).

2.4 Impact of the Duluth and Straus Models

To effectively introduce the correct strategies to manage the family violence process, police and governments required the most appropriate model to inform strategic planning. The Duluth and Straus Models provided different approaches to the family violence process that introduced options for the police, governments, and the courts to consider (Bates, 2019; Powney and Graham-Kent, 2019; Robbins, 1994; Wallace, Wallace, Kenkre, Brayford and Borja, 2019).

The Duluth Model offered a multi-agency approach that incorporated police, the court system and relevant support agencies. It provided a mandatory change-behavior program that helped address the anger management of male perpetrators with standard

procedures, policies and language (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Rizza, 2009). However, Rizza (2009) indicated that to enable change-behaviour programs to succeed, they had to be broad and flexible and incorporate all perpetrators, regardless of gender. Rizza (2009) articulated that the Duluth Model in its original form had proven to be inadequate because of the single gender focus in family violence. Rizza's view was supported by the findings in the report of the American National Institute of Justice (2003). The report suggested that there had not been any benefit from any perpetrator counselling programs. Also, the American National Institute of Justice report went further to expressly state that the Duluth Model did not work or help change behaviour (Jackson, 2003).

Conversely, the Straus Model had a significantly different focus and approach to family violence. The importance of this model, especially for policy development and police responses to family violence, was the concept of gender symmetry (Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Straus, 2010). One benefit of the Straus Model was that family violence was viewed in a broader context. The model proposed that focusing on the violent event perspective, rather than a specific gender focus, provided a suitable framework to analyse family violence as a 'contextual dynamic process' (Lysova, 2016; Meier et al., 2001; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). A significant aspect of the Straus Model was that the CTS was an essential instrument for police, governments, and courts to consider when examining family violence. Kimmel (2002) suggested that the use of the CTS failed to examine the issue of who initiated the incidents of family violence. With the questions within the CTS, police had the opportunity to infer the types of aggression used in family violence.

2.4.1 Impact on policing

Police internationally were routinely required to respond to a significant number of family violence incidents each year. They were in a unique position to identify victims, prevent further harm, ensure perpetrators were prosecuted and provide insight and direction about the police response (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Stanko, 2008; Watkins, 2005). How police managed the family violence process was crucial for victims, perpetrators, police and the community. Therefore, it was important to have a balanced approach to the police response (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008).

This literature review previously revealed that the Duluth and Straus Models were two models that could directly impact how the police, courts and the government responded

to, and managed, family violence. Each model had individual strengths, but when these models were utilised separately, they did not provide the best outcome for victims, police, the courts or even the perpetrators. The strengths of the Duluth Model were the multi-agency, collaborative community approach, the change-behaviour programs and the eight elements of the 'Power and Control Wheel'. The combination of all elements of the Duluth Model provided the opportunity for police to identify the violent behaviour of male perpetrators and implement a corrective legal process (Gondolf, 2010).

After the police members in Duluth raised concerns about the concepts of the Duluth Model, they were still encouraged to only focus on male perpetrated family violence and that caused some trepidation for those police members. There were similar concerns about the focus on male perpetrators with the police internationally, including in Australia. Many police members did not feel they had the authority or discretion to nominate males as victims of family violence. They felt that they had an obligation to record males as the perpetrator, even if, in their professional opinion, the males were the victims (Gracia et al., 2011).

Due to the fact that the Duluth Model did not provide the opportunity for police members to identify all victims and perpetrators of the harm in the home alike, the management of the family violence process by police and the courts was not applied equally for all (Papamichail, 2019). Lysova (2016) suggested that to enable police to provide a balanced approach to managing family violence, the gender of the victim should not have been the primary concern. Instead, the emphasis should have been placed on the event and the violence that had taken place, regardless of the gender of the perpetrator (Lysova, 2016).

The Straus Model acknowledged that conflict was an inevitable part of personal interactions that contributed to family violence (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979). The focus on gender symmetry in the Straus Model and the CTS provided an alternative family violence service delivery model for police (Stanko, 2008; Straus, 2007, 2010). The practical elements of the Straus Model also added to the existing police intervention strategies that had been adopted to help manage the family violence process (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). The CTS allowed police and governments to utilise an objective instrument of eighty elements that measured the tactics utilised by family members when family violence was perpetrated (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979). If police provided a timely and balanced response with appropriate care and support to minimise further harm, all victims were likely to be encouraged to report family violence to the police (Rollings and Taylor, 2008).

2.4.2 Strengths of the Models for police and courts

The Duluth Model's "Power and Control Wheel" and the Straus Model's "Conflict Tactics Scales" combined elements that provided a positive and robust alternative for police, the courts, and victims. The "Power and Control Wheel" of the Duluth Model identified eight core themes and behaviours used by male perpetrators to control female victims. The "Conflict Tactics Scales" of the Straus Model contained eighty elements that measured the extent to which family members used reasoning, physical aggression, and verbal aggression in a relationship conflict, especially in family violence (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Chavis and Hill, 2009; Pence and Paymar, 1993; Straus, 1979, 1987; Straus et al. 1996).

One of the strengths of the Duluth Model for police and the courts was the multi-agency approach that incorporated the police, the court system and relevant support agencies. In addition, the mandatory change-behavior program helped address the anger management of male perpetrators by incorporating standard procedures, policies and language (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Rizza, 2009). However, one weakness of this approach was the exclusion of female perpetrators from the program.

A strength of the Straus Model for police was the inclusion of gender symmetry in family violence. The CTS provided police and the courts with a balanced approach to the scales' questions. The CTS ensured gender symmetry in the perpetration of family violence by asking the same questions of male and female perpetrators (Stanko, 2008; Straus, 2007, 2010). By asking the same questions, without exception, police and the courts established a more coherent understanding of the harm perpetrated in family violence. Of further importance in the Straus Model for police was the concept of examining family violence from a violent event perspective (Lysova, 2016).

The combined strengths of the CTS and the "Power and Control Wheel" provided police with a viable option to manage the family violence process. All victims could receive equal support from police, the courts and service providers, whilst all perpetrators were prosecuted regardless of gender and included in the change-behaviour programs. By combining the strengths of both models, a more comprehensive approach to family violence could be achieved by police and the courts for all victims and the prosecution of all perpetrators.

Part Two – The components of family violence

2.5 Examining Gender Focus in family violence

Family violence was a serious matter for police that impacted victims, families, and the community. One of the difficulties faced by police in the management of the family violence process was the ongoing debate regarding gender. Hine et al. (2022) recently indicated that most early family violence research had a gendered focus or a feminist model (Dobash and Dobash, 1979). Laroche (2005), Magdol, Moffitt, Caspi, Newman, Fagan, and Silva (1997) and Whitaker, Haileyesus, Swahn, and Saltzman (2007) identified that only a small sub-group of the male population had assaulted their partners in family violence. Archer (2006) found that in countries such as the United Kingdom, Poland, France, Russia and Finland, most males did not, nor had ever, assaulted a current or past female partner (Archer, 2006; Zimmermann, 2019). However, Dobash and Dobash (2004) emphasised that males were the predominant perpetrators of family violence. This view of family violence continued to be expressed by scholars from the 1970s until 2019 (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; Douglas, 2019; Morgan and Chadwick, 2009; Pagelow, 1992). The WHO (2005) also reported that male perpetrated violence against females had impacted millions of women worldwide and was no longer acceptable (WHO, 2012, 2013).

However, Tsui (2014) found that extensive family violence research conducted between the 1970s and 2019 had only focused on female victims' experiences and failed to consider the impact of family violence on males (Bograd, 1988; Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, 2019; Roberts, 2005; Shuler, 2010; Stets and Straus, 1990). The complication for police and the management of family violence was highlighted by Zimmermann (2016, 2019) when he stated that for the last four decades, research had also identified that males had been the victims of female violence in Australia. McKeown et al. (2022) indicated that the view of women perpetrators of family violence against their male partners was not popular in the community (Pizzey, 1998). Despite this observation, there was little consideration for the male victims of family violence by police, academia, politicians and the media.

The complication of the gender focus in family violence for the police was revealed by Jacobson, Gottman, Gortner, Berns and Shortt (1996). Douglas and Hines (2011) found that males had been the victims of female-perpetrated family violence for the preceding three decades. Jacobson et al. (1996) alluded to gender symmetry in family violence when they

indicated that whilst females were the victims of male violence, males had been the victims of severe physical violence from their female partners (Bates, 2019). To add to the complication of the family violence management process by police, Lysova (2016) found that more women had been identified as the perpetrators of violence than previously understood. She further stated that in 16% of family violence episodes, female perpetrators reported to police that they instigated violent events against their male partners. Dutton (2012) also found that a large percentage of women had initiated family violence and suggested it had not been self-defence. However, Douglas and Hines (2011) added that for the last forty years, research in western countries has shown that males and females in heterosexual relationships used similar levels of violence against their partners (Archer, 2000; Straus, 2011, 2012; Walker et al., 2019; Yates, 2020).

The gendered view of family violence in the community influenced how police responded to, and managed, the harm. The view of male and female violence in the family environment and how it was reported has been seen differently within society (Hine et al., 2022). For example, Taylor and Sorensen (2005) found that the community considered male-to-female violence was much worse than female-to-male violence. However, Allen and Bradley (2018) indicated that the community perception was that female-to-male perpetrated family violence was not a serious crime. Therefore, there was a possibility that the police and the courts may not respond to all family violence the same way, regardless of the gender of the victims. As a result of the community perception of female-to-male violence identified by Allen and Bradley (2018), there was an opinion that this type of violence may not have required police intervention as it was seen as 'just a domestic' and often, was not appropriate for police intervention. To help police provide the most effective and balanced strategies and responses that guided family violence management and satisfy community expectations, they needed to understand why female perpetrated family violence was not seen the same as male violence against their female partners (Bohall et al., 2016; Choi, Wong, Kam, Lau, Wong and Lo, 2015; McCarrick, Davis-McCabe and Hirst-Winthrop, 2016; Truong et al., 2022).

2.5.1 Examining Female victims of family violence

The importance of understanding the context of females as victims of family violence was highlighted by the European Institute of Gender Equity (EIGE). The EIGE (2018) found that family violence was actually a gendered issue and suggested that the violence

perpetrated against women by their male partners was solely because they were females and that had been an issue for the last four decades (Garcia-Morero, Jansen, Ellsberg, Heise, and Watts, 2006; Papamichail, 2019; Shuler, 2010). Therefore, it was important to acknowledge the impact of the harm suffered by female victims of family violence and further research should continue into that harm (Lysova, 2016).

The COAG (2016) found that male perpetrated violence against women in Australia was not restricted to physical violence. It also included economic, psychological, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse. COAG (2016) also stated that all types of violence against females led to the loss of choice and personal freedom and contributed to ongoing trauma and fear for the victims. Straus (2010) acknowledged the importance of recognising the adverse impact of physical violence on female victims in the family environment by male perpetrators. However, he further stated that all female victims of family violence still required ongoing support to help overcome the harm they had suffered.

2.5.2 Examining Male victims of family violence

A concern for police, and the management of the family violence process in Australia, was the low reporting rate of male victims. The extent of the low reporting rate of family violence by male victims was highlighted by the ABS (2013) in the Personal Safety Survey (2012). Brotto (2019) previously mentioned that Victoria Police and the Victorian Judiciary had selected the Duluth Model as the preferred structure to guide Victoria's family violence management process. However, the influence of the Duluth Model and the gendered philosophy of the model impacted the delivery of the Victoria Police family violence training. The focus of the gendered approach to the family violence training influenced how police responded to the reported harm and the probability of male victims reporting the violence perpetrated against them (Douglas and Hines, 2011; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Walker et al., 2019). Hine et al. (2022) recently found that male victims of female perpetrated family violence may have been perceived differently by police and the community. The failure of police and the community to recognise the violence suffered by males in the family environment perpetrated by their female partners led to gradual indifference of males to report their experiences of family violence, as many felt the police would not believe them (Allen and Bradley, 2018; Hine et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2019).

The ABS (2013) previously identified that 95% of all male victims of family violence in Australia did not report the harm, perpetrated by their female partners, to police. Also, the ABS (2013) estimated that 80% of female victims of family violence did not report the harm. A concern for police in Victoria was that even though the ABS (2012) identified that only 5% of the male victims of family violence had reported the harm Australia wide, the Victorian CSA (2020) found that from the 2015/16 reporting period until 2020, males had averaged 25% of all victims of family violence in Victoria.

Douglas and Hines (2011), Felson and Outlaw (2007), Lysova (2016) and Zimmerman (2019) all found that males had been victims of female perpetrated family violence for decades. However, there had been a lack of focus on the male victims by police and other agencies (Lysova 2016). One of the difficulties that faced police when they identified males as victims of family violence was the influence of their Duluth Model training. Furthermore, there had been very little external support provided for the victims (Choi et al., 2015; Machado et al., 2016). Douglas and Hines (2011) and Tilbrook, Allan and Dear (2010) revealed that domestic violence support agencies were not usually available to male victims of family violence as they had been established solely for female victims (Douglas, Hines, Dixon, Celi and Lysova, 2018).

2.5.3 Examining Gender focus in family violence – Australia

The impact and harm caused by family violence was recognized by the WHO (2012) and later by the ABS (2016) as significant social problems within the community. Family violence was a growing social problem and a concern for the Australian Federal Government. The Federal Government indicated that all national, state and territory governments needed to improve the services provided to victims of family violence (AIHW, 2018; Dowling et al., 2018). Due to the extent of the growing problem, the AIHW (2018, 2019) advocated that there was a requirement for police and the courts to protect all victims, regardless of gender. Also, it was important to provide balanced strategies and policies of managing the family violence process without being influenced by the gendered concept of the harm perpetrated in the family environment (AIHW, 2018).

The AIHW report titled ‘Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018’ provided essential data from more than 20 sources that demonstrated harm was caused to female and male victims of family violence in Australia, and was not a gendered phenomenon as suggested by the Duluth Model philosophy (ABS, 2016; AIHW, 2018). To

illustrate the extent of harm perpetrated in the family environment, the AIHW (2018) noted that in the reporting period of 2014-2015, every day, eight female and two male victims of family violence were admitted to the hospital due to injuries sustained by the actions of a current spouse or partner. Often, however, the harm in family violence escalated from injuries to victims being killed by their current or former partners. The extent of female and male victims being killed in family violence in Australia by a current or former partners was articulated by the AIHW (2019) and injuries were not unique to females. The AIHW (2019) found that one female was killed every nine days by a partner or spouse, and one male was killed every twenty-nine days by a partner or spouse in family violence (Bryant and Bricknell, 2017). The ABS (2016) Personal Safety Survey (PPS) (2016) revealed the extent of the harm in family violence when it found that 1 in 6 female victims (17% or 1.6 million) over the age of 15 had experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner. The same report for male victims over the age of 15 found that 1 in 16 male victims (6.1% or 548,000) had also experienced physical or sexual violence from a current or previous cohabiting partner.

Straus (2010) previously stated that it was important to stop all family violence because all victims, regardless of gender, needed to be protected. Therefore, police and the courts needed to provide a balanced response to family violence and not be influenced by the gender focus of the Duluth Model and ensure all perpetrators were prosecuted (Straus, 2010). The ABS (2016) highlighted the need for a balanced approach by police and the courts when the PPS (2016) recorded that 1 in 6 young female victims (16% or 1.5 million) and 1 in 9 young male victims (11% or 992,000) experienced physical violence and sexual abuse before they had turned 15 years of age (ABS, 2016). The ABS (2017b) also reported that 1 in 4 (23%) adult female victims, and 1 in 6 (16%) adult male victims had experienced emotional abuse from a current or previous partner since the age of 15 (ABS, 2017b).

Following the introduction of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022, Zimmermann (2019) found that the Australian Government had not considered the evidence of gender symmetry and the ‘lived experiences’ of male victims in family violence. Therefore, the approach by the Australian Federal Government and the State and Territory governments was not balanced when addressing family violence harm and did not provide the same level of protection to male victims of the harm (McLachlin, 2012; Zimmermann, 2019). This created issues for the police and the courts by not providing a balanced approach to the family violence process. The legal system was less

sympathetic towards males, so a balanced outcome for all victims of family violence was not achieved (Zimmermann, 2019).

2.5.4 Examining Gender focus in family violence - Victoria

Historically, family violence has been an ongoing issue in Victoria, Australia, for an extended period. The Victorian Government's approach to family violence reflected the gender focus of the Duluth Model philosophy and, in turn, the COAG (2011) National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. The Victorian Auditor-General's 2009 report (Frost 2009) stated that (p.1) "men are the main instigators of violence against women, children and other vulnerable people".

The Victorian Government's fundamental principle in the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework and Practice Guides 1-3 (2012) added complexity for the police who responded to family violence. The government stated that females and children were the victims, whilst males were the perpetrators. One difficulty for police was that male victims of family violence were not considered in the principal framework of the risk assessment and management framework and practice guide (Victorian Government, 2012). Adding to the difficulties for police members, the Family Violence RARMFPG 1-3 (2012) cast doubt on the credibility of any males who reported being a victim of family violence. For example, the document stated in the section titled: - Responses to men who report or are assessed to be victims of violence in a heterosexual relationship says:

"Men may claim injuries (for example scratches or bite marks) as evidence of their victimisation that are likely to have been received from their partner in self-defence" (p.40).

The Victorian Government (2012) declared that female and child victims of family violence were provided with one-on-one counselling support. However, the police who managed the family violence process were required to refer the male victims of family violence to the Men's Referral Service for a comprehensive assessment or the Victims of Crime Helpline. The concern for the police members was that the Men's Referral Service was not an appropriate support process for male victims of family violence. The Victorian Government designed the Men's Referral Service to address the anger management issues of males who had perpetrated family violence.

The RARMFPG noted that many family violence professionals in Victoria indicated that relatively few male victims of family violence were recorded. However, the CSA (2019) data concerning male victims of family violence in Victoria did not support that assertion. Instead, it noted that the number of male victims was quite substantial. For example, in the reporting periods of 2014-15 to 2018-19 inclusive, the CSA (2019) found that females averaged 75% of all victims whilst male victims averaged 25% per year. Due to the result of the CSA data, police members managing the family violence process should not neglect the harm suffered by females; however, the trauma suffered by male victims of family violence should not be overlooked or minimised (Lysova, 2016; Straus, 2010; Zimmerman, 2019).

With the introduction of the Victorian Government Family Violence Rolling Action Plan 2017-2020 (FVRAP) (2017), it appeared that the government had moved away from the gender focus in relation to family violence. The FVRAP (2017, p.1) initially stated: “family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated”. Furthermore, the document's wording implied that all victims of family violence in the State of Victoria, regardless of gender, would be recognised equally.

However, the Victorian Government confirmed the continued gender focus in family violence in the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (2018, p.9) by stating:

“...family violence is deeply gendered — overwhelmingly the majority of perpetrators are men and victim survivors are women and children”.

The difficulty for some members of Victoria Police who managed the family violence process, the gender focus in family violence was embedded in Victorian Legislation. The Family Violence Protection Act (FVPA) 2008, Authorised Version incorporating amendments as at 10 December 2019, further added to the family violence gender debate by stating (p.1):

“In enacting this Act, the Parliament also recognises the following features of family violence—

- (a) that while anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of family violence, family violence is predominantly committed by men against women, children and other vulnerable persons.”

Yates (2020) found the previous wording, “family violence being predominantly committed by men against females, children and other vulnerable people” reflected the historical gendered focus of family violence in Victoria. She identified the first two

Victorian Government domestic and family violence strategies with a gender focus (Murray and Powell, 2011; Theobald, 2011; Yates, 2020). Boxall et al. (2020) also identified that there had been very little research in relation to the violence perpetrated by females on their male victims. If there had been more research about male victims of female perpetrated violence, a balanced approach to family violence could be achieved (Victorian Government, 2017).

2.5.5 Examining Gender focus in family violence – Police

One of the core functions of the Victoria Police is to respond to family violence (Victoria Police, 2017). Victoria Police recognised family violence as a violation of an individual's human rights and was unacceptable for anyone. When attending family violence, police members had to consider all the available evidence to identify the real victim and the perpetrator (Victoria Police, 2019). In addition, due to the gender focus in family violence, the police members needed to remain cautious with any potential undue influence, manipulation or power imbalance in the reported family violence (Victoria Police, 2019). However, Victoria Police continued to focus on the harm perpetrated against female victims in relation to family violence (Victoria Police, 2019).

To ensure all police members understood the complexity of managing the family violence process, Victoria Police provided comprehensive training, policies, procedures, and protocols to ensure the violence stopped, the victims were supported, and the perpetrators were apprehended (Victoria Police, 2019). However, police members responded to numerous family violence incidents daily and had first-hand knowledge, but Ulbrick and Jago (2018) asserted that Victoria Police members did not understand the requirements of the Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (CPIOFV) (2019) (Stewart and Maddren, 1997).

Due to the influence of the Duluth Model, many police members accepted family violence as a female victim phenomenon and failed to report the violence perpetrated by females (Dobash and Dobash, 2004; McKeown et al., 2022; Zimmerman, 2016). However, Straus (2010) previously stressed the importance of stopping all family violence and protecting every victim, regardless of gender. All victims needed to be protected by the police, and all perpetrators needed to be prosecuted in the courts (Greenblat, 1983). The government and police needed to introduce legislative reforms to reduce the harm for all victims of family violence and meet the community's expectations. However, if the

legislative reforms only focused on one specific group of people, then the outcomes of the legislation may not have helped all victims. Andrews, Pritchett and Woolcock (2012, p.2) described such an approach of introducing reforms as ‘isomorphic mimicry’, which was “the tendency to introduce reforms that enhance an entity’s external legitimacy and support, even when they do not demonstrably improve performance”.

The reforms introduced in the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (FVPA) No. 52 of 2008 initially appeared to embrace the concept of gender symmetry and recognised all victims of family violence. However, the ability of police to have a balanced approach to managing the family violence process and protecting all victims of the harm was exacerbated when the government introduced gender-specific legislation in the FVPA. The gender-specific intention of the Government in relation to family violence was stated on page (1):

“In enacting this Act, the Parliament also recognises the following features of family violence—

- (a) that while anyone can be a victim or perpetrator of family violence, family violence is predominantly committed by men against women, children and other vulnerable persons”.

Because the Victorian Government had introduced the gender focus in managing the family violence process, police members, who responded to family violence, were influenced by legislation to select males as the perpetrators of family violence.

2.6 Family violence

Police had a crucial role in managing family violence and reducing the frequency and severity of the harm experienced by victims. An appropriate and timely response to family violence incidents by police with the relevant skills was a crucial aspect of the overall strategy to reduce the harm (Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Voce and Boxall, 2018). However, the management of the family violence process by police was complicated, and numerous factors impacted the response and service delivery provided by police (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019).

Furthermore, many issues within the family environment added to the complexity and were not always apparent to the police members who attended family violence incidents. Therefore, the literature and research that informed police practice, procedures and service delivery needed to be rigorous and robust (Eisikovits and Buchbinder, 2000; Lysova, 2015; Papamichail, 2019; Stewart and Maddren, 1997). It was also crucial that the same literature

informed the structure of policy and legislation that enabled police to enhance family violence practice and service delivery (Dowling and Morgan, 2018; Prifiti, 2020).

Appropriate literature that embraced all victims and perpetrators of family violence could have been improved to enhance the courts' family violence management process and prevention programs (Prifiti, 2020). In addition, to achieve a balanced approach and response to family violence by police, the government and the courts, a better understanding of the literature in relation to international, Australian and Victorian family violence was required (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Ericsson, 2019; Gill et al., 2019; Weiss, 2020).

2.6.1 International issues

The issue of family violence was not a new problem facing police, governments and society. For decades, the UN and most countries worldwide have been concerned about the violation of victims' human rights caused by family violence (Yates, 2020). Due to the suffering experienced by victims of family violence, organisations such as the UN, WHO, and the EU implemented strategies that addressed the harm it caused, especially to females (COE, 2011; Htun and Weldon, 2012; UN 1979, 1993, 1995; Yates, 2020). Several strategies and international conventions were ratified to provide a structured approach to reducing harm in family violence. They included the UN Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Vienna Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women and the Istanbul Convention (COE, 2011; Htun and Weldon, 2012; UN, 1979, 1993, 1995; Yates, 2020).

The UN introduced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to strengthen the previously adopted conventions. This provided much more robust language and terminology in relation to violence against women and girls than was previously used in the Vienna Declaration (Htun and Weldon, 2012; UN, 1993, 1995). The introduction of these treaties and conventions by the UN, EU and the WHO placed an obligation on the international community, including Australia, to prioritise the harm caused to females in family violence (Abramsky, Watts, Garcia-Moreno, Devries, Kiss, Ellsberg, Jensen and Heise, 2011; Kelly, 1997; Mooney, 2000; UN, 1995).

The international focus on the gender-specific approach to family violence encouraged governments and police to embrace the accepted frameworks and the philosophy of the Duluth Model (Kelly, 1997; Mooney, 2000; UN, 1995). The narrative and research in

relation to family violence internationally were driven, in the main, by the UN protocols and the Duluth Model (Cherney et al., 2019; COU, 2011). By embracing the framework and agreeing to the international treaties, the UN protocols and the philosophy and structure of the Duluth Model, the Australian police, governments, courts, and support agencies adopted a gender-specific approach to the management of the family violence process. This gendered approach did not provide a stable platform for a balanced approach to managing family violence for all victims (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Ericsson, 2019; Htun and Weldon, 2012; UN, 1993, 1995; Yates, 2020).

2.6.2 Australian approach to family violence

The AIHW (2019) stated that addressing family violence was a priority for the Australian federal, state and territory governments. With the introduction of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children—2010–2022 and agreeing to the international treaties and the UN protocols, there was a vision and framework to protect Australian women and children from violence, especially family violence. The Australian Government (2019) indicated a need for a whole-of-community approach to reduce family violence. That included all governments, police, justice systems, health departments, and even the media. Zimmerman (2016, 2017, 2019) found that the Australian State and Territory governments were providing services for victims of family violence but still needed to assist all victims of the harm and prosecute all perpetrators. The Federal Government also recognised that more significant funding was required to provide a national approach to reducing the harm to women and children in family violence (Australian Government, 2019). The Federal Government had made a significant financial investment in reducing the harm; however, family violence remained high (Morgan et al., 2020).

Braaf and Meyering (2013) identified that the Australian Government's and the Australian public's attitudes toward family violence had changed (Meyer, 2012). The opinions had moved from family violence as a tolerable private matter to being included as criminal offences in the Australian Courts (Carney, Buttell and Dutton, 2007; Dutton, 2007; Minaker and Snider, 2006; Shuler, 2010). To assist the changing Australian attitudes towards family violence and the commitment to the UN and the WHO conventions, the ALRC (2010) changed the Family Law Act (1975) in 1995. However, the Family Law Act (1975) amendments did not provide a nationally consistent and non-discriminatory approach

to family violence that supported all victims of the harm (Yates, 2020; Zimmerman, 2017, 2019).

2.6.3 Victorian issues – Family violence reporting

The State of Victoria had the second largest population in Australia, with approximately 6.6 million people (ABS 2020). Family violence remained a significant focus of the Victorian Government, police and the community because the number of incidents reported to police increased (Coghlan and Millsteed, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2016). The CSA (2020) reported that family violence incidents had increased from 74,378 in 2015 to 84,550 events reported to police in 2019. The CSA (2020) data also indicated that 75% of the family violence victims had been female during the same five-year reporting period, and 25% were males. During that period, the number of female victims of family violence had increased by over 13%, and male victims had risen by over 14% (CSA, 2020).

Despite approximately 25% of all victims of family violence being male over the five years, Yates (2020) found that the Victorian Premier still insisted family violence was not gender-neutral but solely an issue of male perpetrated family violence. The difficulty for the police members who managed the family violence process was that the Premier stressed that the focus of the Victorian Government on family violence had only been on female victims and their children (Andrews, 2014b; Yates, 2020). The Victorian Government's family violence policy and action plan only focused on the harm perpetrated against women and children by males. Despite a steady increase in the number of female and male victims of family violence over the five-year period, male victims were not considered in the Victorian Government's family violence policy (Andrews, 2014b; CSA 2020; Yates, 2020).

2.6.3.1 Victorian approach

One issue Victoria Police faced in managing the family violence process was providing a balanced approach for all victims of harm. Victoria Police were required to follow the approach taken by the Victorian Government and, as the government had a specific gender focus that was reflected in the police response (Yates, 2020). She suggested the Victorian Government's (2017) framing of the family violence approach had been influenced by the global vision, the Australian Federal Government policy and political perspectives. In addition, the recommendations that emanated from the VRCIFV also

influenced the reforms and approaches to family violence taken by the Victorian Government (Yates, 2020).

The FVRAP 2017-2020 (2017) became the new blueprint that guided the Victoria Police and service providers' approach to family violence. The FVRAP provided information and direction concerning the management, process, policies, procedures and service delivery when responding to family violence. However, it had a specific gender focus that only emphasised female and child victims of family violence (Victorian Government, 2017). The literature revealed a requirement to have a balanced approach to family violence by police and support agencies. They needed to help reduce harm for all victims of family violence; however, male victims were not part of the planned response (Harne and Radford, 2008; Victorian Government, 2017; Zimmermann, 2019). The structure of the FVRAP did not embrace all victims of the harm; nevertheless, Victoria Police remained a strong advocate of reducing the harm for all victims of family violence in Victoria (Padula, 2009; Yates, 2015, 2020).

2.6.3.2 Victorian family violence terminology

Yates (2020) identified that Victoria used the term 'family violence' in legislation and policy documents, setting the state apart from most other Australian jurisdictions concerning family violence. She indicated that the Victorian Government had considered numerous international and cultural factors when it adopted the term 'family violence', especially when it incorporated the extensive descriptions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definitions of family violence (Murray and Powell, 2011; Olsen and Lovett, 2016; Ramsay, 2007; Stubbs and Wangmann, 2017; Yates, 2020). When the FVRAP adopted the specific term 'family violence', it was not popular with some people within the community. Some community groups, for example, were not comfortable with the term 'family violence' because it was considered a gender-neutral term for the harm perpetrated in family violence (DeKerseredy, 2016; Dragiewicz, 2013; Nixon, 2007, 2011; Stubbs, 2015). The concern of some community groups with the family violence term was the perception that it reduced the focus of men's violence against women. That then made it a worse outcome for females and children who were victims of family violence (DeKerseredy, 2016; Dragiewicz, 2013; Nixon, 2007, 2011; Stubbs, 2015).

2.6.3.3 Police resources in family violence

One of the crucial roles of the Victoria Police was to respond to family violence incidents appropriately to ensure the victims were protected (Victoria Police, 2017). Because family violence incidents often escalated into criminal behaviour, family violence required disproportionate police resources to address the problems (Cornelius, 2015; Diemer, 2015). For example, 45 to 60% of Victoria's front-line police activities and resources were taken up in responding to family violence incidents (Cornelius, 2015). However, this often occurred in chaotic circumstances, and consideration had to be given to the scale of the violence. The police resources were required to respond to all the harm and impact within the family environment and the community (Chung, 2006; Cornelius, 2015; Diemer, 2015).

Due to a marked increase in the number of family violence reports in the SMR over an extended period, there had been an increased demand for police resources (CSA, 2015, 2019). The added pressure on police resources was the ever-increasing family violence reported in the Local Government Area of the City of Casey in the SMR (CSA, 2019). The City of Casey constantly recorded the highest number of family violence incidents in any municipality in the State of Victoria (CSA, 2015, 2019). Because the Victorian Government had a strong focus on female and child victims of family violence within the FVRAP, police members were often required to spend longer at family violence incidents to manage a safe outcome for the victims. In addition, the added requirements of addressing serious family violence often reduced the available resources required to respond to other community needs (Yates, 2015, 2020; Zimmermann, 2017).

2.6.4 Southern Metropolitan Police Region issues

The SMR, where this research was focused, had a population of over 1.5 million people and was one of four police regions in Victoria. The City of Casey in the SMR was the fastest-growing municipality in Victoria and one of Australia's top five fastest-growing locations (ABS, 2017, 2019, 2020; Victoria Police, 2016). The impact of family violence has been an ongoing concern for the State of Victoria, especially for the SMR, as the number of reported family violence incidents continued to increase yearly (Coghlan and Millstead, 2017; Sutherland et al., 2016). The SMR Assistant Commissioner (Cornelius, 2015) previously stated that responding to family violence by police members impacted the availability of regional police resources.

Therefore, how police responded to family violence was crucial. However, he added that up to 60% of the SMR front-line police resources had been taken up by attending to reported family violence harm in homes (Victoria Police, 2017). Prudent management, tasking and rostering of all police resources within the SMR were required to ensure the community needs were met and police could respond to all threats emanating from family violence (ABS 2017, 2019; Victoria Police 2020). In addition, further demand for police resources, planning, management and response to family violence in the SMR was required due to the marked increase recorded across the region.

2.7 Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence

Commissions of inquiry have been used by statutory authorities to gather evidence for many years. The most powerful and prestigious commissions of inquiry are Royal Commissions, which have been used in most British Commonwealth countries (Prasser and Tracey, 2014; Yates, 2018). A Royal Commission is an independent authority appointed by a government under legislation to investigate a specific issue of public concern. The legislation allows a Royal Commission to explore alternative viewpoints on issues of public concern with the authority to compel and cross-examine witnesses (Orsini, 2014; Wright et al., 2017; Yates, 2018). It also allowed witnesses the opportunity to provide information and evidence from their lived experiences. The Royal Commission had the additional power to protect witnesses who gave evidence, and the legislation ensured no reprisals (Satyen et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2017).

The VRCIFV was officially established by ‘Letters Patent’ issued by the Governor of Victoria in 2015, and it concluded in 2016 (State of Victoria, 2016). The Victorian VRCIFV was the first to be established anywhere in the world to specifically investigate the issue of family violence (Satyen et al., 2020; Yates, 2020). To enable this Royal Commission to explore the harm of family violence in Victoria, the terms of reference were broad and covered all aspects of family violence. The VRCIFV had the mandate to examine all elements of family violence, including the systems, processes, responses, management process, and victims' lived experiences. It also indicated that the Commission was required to provide recommendations to improve the family violence response processes (State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

However, the focus of this research in relation to the VRCIFV was the findings and recommendations made by the commission that directly impacted Victoria Police. This is

because the outcome of the issues and drivers examined and the recommendations made by the Commission had a strong gender focus and, therefore, influenced how Victoria Police responded to family violence. The Commission also made practical recommendations that provided guidance and direction to enable Victoria Police to improve the management systems, policy development, practice and service delivery to help break the cycle of harm (Prasser and Tracey, 2014; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

2.7.1 The need for a Royal Commission

When the VRCIFV commenced in 2015, there had been considerable frustration and public debate in Victoria and elsewhere in Australia regarding increasing violence in the home (Alcorn, 2016; Dragiewicz and Burgess, 2016; McKenzie-Murray, 2015). The number and frequency of deaths arising from family violence were of particular concern to the community, governments and police (Satyen et al., 2020; Wright et al., 2017). For many years Victoria had led the development of family violence policies and reform in Australia and there had been improvements in responses to family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). However, the existing policies utilised by the Victorian Government, Victoria Police, and other stakeholders had not reduced the prevalence and severity of family violence. Importantly, the policies had not addressed issues such as gender symmetry (Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

The establishment of the VRCIFV recognized the seriousness with which the community of Victoria regarded the impact of family violence and the consequences for families and individuals (Satyen et al., 2020; Yates, 2020). However, there were gaps in the knowledge and understanding of the perpetrator's characteristics, impact on victims, regardless of gender, and the drivers of family violence. Therefore, the community wanted to understand the approach to family violence taken by the Victorian Government and how Victoria Police responded to the harm. The existing policy responses of the Victorian Government and Victoria Police had not reduced the extent and harm of family violence. The government requested the Royal Commission to provide practical recommendations that improved the system to reduce this harm (Prasser and Tracey, 2014; Yates, 2018, 2020). The Terms of Reference required the Commission to do the following (The State of Victoria 2016 Vol 1 p. 1):

- “examine and evaluate strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services and establish best practice for four areas—the prevention of family violence; early intervention to identify and protect those at risk of family violence and

prevent the escalation of family violence; support for victims of family violence and measures to redress the impacts on victims, particularly on women and children; and accountability for perpetrators of family violence;

- investigate means of ensuring systemic responses to family violence, particularly in the legal system and by police, corrections, child protection, legal and family violence support services—including reducing re-offending and changing violent and controlling behaviours;
- investigate how government agencies and community organisations can better integrate and coordinate their efforts;
- make recommendations on how best to evaluate and measure the success of strategies and programs put in place to stop family violence”.

2.7.2 Royal Commission focus

The Victorian State Premier, Mr Andrews (2014b), stated that protecting women and children was the Royal Commission's focus. The RCIFV was established to examine the Victorian approach to family violence and identify how the government could improve the process (Satyen et al., 2020). The Commission was chaired by Justice Marcia Neave, AO, who was well regarded and qualified and was a founding Chair of the Victorian Law Reform Commission. Her appointment to the Royal Commission was seen as adding legitimacy, especially in the view of the women’s family violence sector in Victoria (Fitz-Gibbon, 2015; Hunter, 2013).

Due to the focus of the RCIFV on the harm perpetrated against women and children, Yates (2020) expressed concerns about the gender focus and the fact that it only examined men’s violence against female victims and did not consider the impact of gender symmetry. However, the State of Victoria (2016) explained that males committed most of the family violence against a current or former female partner, so the Commission needed to shape appropriate prevention strategies to address the harmful attitudes towards women (State of Victoria, 2016). Because the VRCIFV only focused on the harm perpetrated against females and children, the limited approach detracted from the opportunity of providing a balanced approach to reduce the harm for all victims of family violence (Yates, 2020; Zimmerman, 2017, 2019).

2.7.3 The task of the Royal Commission

The task of the VRCIFV was to provide the Victorian Government with comprehensive advice on how to prevent harm and respond to family violence (State of

Victoria, 2016). The Commission reviewed various sources of evidence, including international protocols and policies, to guide the inquiry. It also considered policies and services provided by the state government, police and other stakeholders (State of Victoria, 2016).

To enable the VRCIFV to provide the most comprehensive information for the government, the Royal Commission into Family Violence Summary and recommendations (2016) described the tasks of the Commission. The Commission had to identify the most effective ways to (VRCIFV 2016, p.1):

- “prevent family violence;
- improve early intervention so as to identify and protect those at risk;
- support victims—particularly women and children—and address the impacts of violence on them;
- make perpetrators accountable;
- develop and refine systemic responses to family violence—including in the legal system and by police, corrections, child protection, legal and family violence support services;
- better coordinate community and government responses to family violence;
- evaluate and measure the success of strategies, frameworks, policies, programs and services introduced to put a stop family violence”.

2.7.3.1 Royal Commission - Written submissions

The Commission sought written submissions from a wide range of individuals and organisations that had experience in the family violence environment. The submissions included victims of family violence, government agencies, relevant experts, community and business organisations (Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016). Due to the request for written submissions, nine hundred and sixty-eight submissions were received. Four hundred and ninety-one submissions were from individuals, and four hundred and seventy-seven were from relevant support organisations. Victoria Police also provided a written submission. However, this submission did not address the issue of female violence (Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016). The written submissions received by the Commission covered wide-ranging topics and provided valuable information about the complexity of the drivers, issues and the diversity of family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). After examining each submission, those not subjected to special consideration were placed on the Commission’s website for public access and scrutiny (State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.3.2 Royal Commission - Community consultations

To enable the Commission to add to the existing knowledge of family violence and provide strategies that reformed the approach, forty-four community consultations were conducted in twenty-one locations in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). Eight hundred and fifty participants, including victims and representatives from organisations who worked within the family violence environment, attended community consultations (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). The participants included, but were not limited to, Aboriginal groups, ethnic minorities, children and youth service providers, victims and perpetrators (VRCIFV, 2017; Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016). Due to the nature of family violence and consideration for the participants' safety, the Commission did not provide public information about the community consultation sessions. Only those who had previously expressed a desire to attend were informed.

2.7.3.3 Royal Commission - Public policy hearings

The Commission decided against conducting a forensic investigation into family violence but conducted public hearings that allowed witnesses to highlight the debates that guided the family violence policies. As a result of not conducting a forensic investigation into family violence, the Commission did not maximise the opportunity to explore all family violence and the existence of gender symmetry (VRCIFV, 2016; State of Victoria, 2016). The public hearings also allowed witnesses to explore the various approaches to developing the relevant policies that dealt with family violence. The public policy hearings provided two hundred and twenty witnesses with the opportunity to give evidence about the twenty-three specifically determined modules identified by specific topics. As some of the issues identified were extremely sensitive, the Commission did not include them in the public hearings. However, as the focus of the Commission was the harm perpetrated against women and children, there was limited opportunity to examine the lived experiences of male victims of family violence (State of Victoria, 2016; Zimmermann, 2019).

2.7.3.4 Royal Commission - Professional consultations

An important part of the investigation into family violence by the Commission was the six professional or 'round table' consultations with professional representatives and particular organisations to investigate specific topics identified in the public hearings. Due

to the nature of these consultations, the sessions remained confidential and were not open to public scrutiny. However, the professional participants and stakeholders included Victoria Police, Judges, Magistrates, academics and policymakers. This enabled candid and robust exchanges of views and ideas (VRCIFV, 2016; State of Victoria, 2016). Other professional participants included current and former government representatives, family violence service providers, child protection agencies and victim and perpetrator service providers. Also included were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives and advocates from drug, alcohol and mental health services (VRCIFV, 2016; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4 Royal Commission - Impact of the Royal Commission on police

After wide-ranging consultations, briefings and investigations, the VRCIFV submitted a comprehensive report with 227 recommendations. The recommendations provided specific guidelines for the government, police and service providers on addressing family violence and reducing harm (Satyen et al., 2020; VRCIFV, 2016; State of Victoria, 2016). In addition, VRCIFV made eleven recommendations in two areas that impacted how Victoria Police managed the family violence process. Recommendations 41 – 51 provided advice about “Police: front-line operations and workforce” and “Police: leadership, resourcing and organisational systems” (VRCIFV, 2016). A direct result of the recommendations emanating from the VRCIFV was that the Victorian Government introduced reforms to address the impact of family violence. One of the most significant reforms was introducing the FVRAP 2017-2020. The Action Plan became the new blueprint that guided Victoria Police and the other service providers concerning the management, processes, policies, procedures and service delivery when responding to family violence (Victorian Government, 2017).

The Commission found that Victoria Police had made enormous improvements in the family violence management process over the previous fifteen years. However, it indicated that the police response to family violence was inconsistent in several areas. Issues of concern for the Commission were charging perpetrators for violations of existing intervention orders, recording and sharing data, and the risk assessment and management of family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4.1 Royal Commission - Police management of family violence

The Commission indicated that family violence was a core business function of Victoria Police, and there was a requirement for a specialised approach. It acknowledged the improvements made by Victoria Police over many years, but it also indicated that victims did not have confidence in the organisation's ability to respond to family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). The Commission stated that there needed to be a stronger focus on family violence management, prioritising allocating resources and members' training.

Nevertheless, the Commission missed the opportunity in the recommendations to encourage Victoria Police include male victims in the amended focus. In addition, Victoria Police needed to enhance police tasking and coordination committees and investigative and intelligence units to gather and analyse the family violence data (VRCIFV, 2017).

The Commission found that front-line police members had the most responsibility when responding to family violence. However, many police members who responded to family violence were often young and relatively inexperienced. Therefore, effective leadership and support for the members were required to ensure compliance with the Victoria Police Code of Practice (VPCP) (2019). It also recommended that some of the administrative tasks of the front-line police members be reduced by utilising and adapting mobile technology (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4.2 Royal Commission - Education and training for police members

Despite the complexity of family violence, the Commission found that police supervisors understood the dynamics and drivers of the harm and were well-positioned to guide the general duties of police members. Therefore, to enable Victoria Police to enhance their skills, they revised the approach to the education and training of supervisors. However, members of Victoria Police indicated that improvements in police education and training were required to enable an efficient and effective response to the complexity and changing dynamics of family violence. Victoria Police had introduced family violence training to all recruits at the police academy; however, many longer-serving police members had not received similar training. To overcome the gap in knowledge for longer serving police members, family violence training became a priority within the promotion system for all ranks (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

To address the concerns identified by the VRCIFV, the Commission accepted the recommendation of Victoria Police to establish the Centre of Learning for Family Violence

under the umbrella of the People Development Command (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). To ensure the success of Victoria Police family violence training, the Commission stated that the Centre for Learning and Family Violence Command were to be guided by the following principles (State of Victoria, 2016 Vol. III p. 39):

- “Victoria Police members need comprehensive education and training in the nature and dynamics of family violence, in addition to legal and procedural requirements;
- Victoria Police members need comprehensive education and training in how to deal sensitively with family violence affecting marginalised population groups within the community;
- Training should be tailored to the role of particular police members for example, the training needs of those performing specialist family violence roles differ from those of general duties police;
- The family violence sector should be closely engaged in developing education and training curriculums for Victoria Police. Police members should be given regular refresher training on family violence;
- (Member) Promotional training programs should include material on family violence;
- Additional education and training should be provided to members and/or stations where problematic service responses have been identified”.

2.7.4.3 Royal Commission - Perpetrators of family violence

The issues in family violence were complicated and often challenging and confronting for police. However, when police responded to family violence, they were required to identify and support the victims and prosecute the perpetrators. The Commission found that existing family violence laws and relevant policies enabled police to prosecute the perpetrators for the harm caused (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

When police responded to family violence, they were expected to adopt a balanced approach to all victims and perpetrators. For example, Yates (2020) examined the report and recommendations of the VRCIFV and found that 77% of family violence perpetrators were male. Thus, the Commission found that 23% of the perpetrators were female, but implied that women perpetrators were a low priority (VRCIFV 2017; State of Victoria 2016; Yates 2020). The Magistrates’ Court recorded similar data. Furthermore, 75% of perpetrators in family violence intervention order applications were male, and 22% were female (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

Due to police members constantly attending reported family violence incidents; they had direct evidence available to examine. They were skilled in interrogating the information and identifying the perpetrators of the harm. However, submissions to the VRCIFV suggested police members could not identify the perpetrators when they attended family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016; Tucker, 2015). The submission made by Tucker (2015) to the Commission indicated that if police identified a female in circumstances that would lead them to identify her as the perpetrator, she should not have been identified as the perpetrator.

The difficulty for police members who responded to reported family violence was the information emanating from the VRCIFV not to nominate a female as the perpetrator of family violence. In the analysis of the VRCIFV, Yates (2020) found that the violence perpetrated by females was explicitly positioned as being different to that perpetrated by males. This then impacted how police reported and responded to family violence. The State of Victoria (2016) indicated that most women did not use violence in the home for intimidation or control. Instead, it was essential to recognise that most women who used violence in the home usually only used it for self-defence or retaliation for previous harm or other factors (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020). The view that most women only used violence as self-defence in family violence had previously been disputed by Pearson (1997) and McKeown et al. (2022) and such an opinion had the potential to influence how police responded to the harm.

The Commission noted that there had been very little research and data about perpetrators of family violence. More research needs to be completed to understand its characteristics (State of Victoria, 2016). The Commission indicated that Victoria Police needed to focus on recidivism and high-risk perpetrators to provide the best response to family violence. There was also the requirement to increase the organisational capacity to improve criminal investigations into family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4.4 Royal Commission - Victims of family violence

The Commission indicated significant gaps in the research data and understanding of the victims of family violence. The gaps restricted the ability of the Victorian Government and Victoria Police to fully understand the inclusive processes required to assist all victims of family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). The gaps also impacted how

the Victorian Government and police developed the appropriate intervention initiatives and strategies to support all victims of the harm. During the inquiry, the Commission received submissions about victims of family violence in Victoria. Several male and female victims of family violence gave evidence about the abuse and harm they suffered in their relationships. The Commission noted that the causes of family violence were complicated, but a significant factor was gender inequality and attitudes toward women (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

Submissions informed the Commission that even though males had been victims of female-perpetrated violence, the Commission suggested the harm they suffered was not the same, or as severe, as that of female victims. So, the focus and framing of the VRCIFV were only on male perpetrated violence on female victims (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020). Therefore, the report and recommendations from the Commission only prioritised the needs of all female victims (Yates, 2020). As a result of the various recommendations emanating from the VRCIFV, police members who managed the family violence process were faced with difficulties when it came to supporting all victims of harm. The Commission acknowledged that all victims of family violence suffered trauma but found that most family violence services were only provided for females and children (State of Victoria, 2016).

Historically, the government and support agencies provided specific crisis accommodation, support facilities, and services primarily focused on female victims and their children (RCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). However, evidence provided to the Commission indicated that the government and other service providers did not offer refuges or shelters for males and their children who had previously tried to escape violence in a family home. The Commission further indicated that male victims of family violence who required support and accommodation could utilise general homelessness services accommodation (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4.5 Royal Commission - Drugs, alcohol and family violence

The Commission indicated that various drivers such as alcohol consumption, drug use, and mental health issues contributed to family violence. The WHO (2013) had previously noted that drugs and alcohol were a common factor in family violence and contributed to recidivist offending; however, these were not a primary focus of the Commission (VRCIFV, 2017; McKeown et al., 2022; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

The difficulty for police members who managed the family violence process was the potential for drugs and alcohol to increase the relationship stressors. Therefore, it increased the likelihood and severity of physical and psychological harm suffered by the victims of family violence. Also, many perpetrators blamed the consumption of drugs and binge drinking of alcohol within the family environment for their offending and the harm caused (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

An important part of the ongoing family violence risk assessments for Victoria Police was the collection of information and data about drugs and alcohol in the family environment. Police who attended family violence incidents recorded drugs and alcohol as 'possible' or 'definite' on Victoria Police Form L17 (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). However, the Commission found that the reliability and quality of the drug and alcohol data collected by police during the family violence incidents were subject to the police member's opinion and ability to identify who used the drug or consumed the alcohol (State of Victoria, 2016). The Commission found that if the consumption of drugs and alcohol in the community and family environment could be reduced, it would significantly impact the trauma suffered by victims of family violence. In addition, with a reduction in drug use and alcohol consumption, police, the government and other service providers could have provided better support for the victims (State of Victoria, 2016).

2.7.4.6 Royal Commission - Mental health and family violence

The enquiries by the VRCIFV found that Victoria Police data indicated there was an association between mental health issues and family violence. The data revealed that mental health issues in family violence attended by police had increased over five years and had been present in one in five incidents (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). However, the Commission was informed that there were some limitations in the data that police had collected. That was due to their ability to identify if the victim's perpetrator had mental health issues (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

Because mental health was a factor investigated by the Commission, it found that mental health issues only contributed to a small component of the violence perpetrated in the community and the family environment (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). The Commission was informed that having a mental health issue did not indicate a person would be violent. People who did have a mental illness and were being treated for the affliction were no more violent or dangerous than anyone else in the general population. However, the

Commission did receive evidence indicating that a very small group of people with mental health issues may have been more violent than the general population. For example, there have been several murder-suicides (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

Experts advised the Commission that victims of family violence may have developed mental health issues due to the trauma suffered (McKeown et al., 2022). People with mental health issues were far more likely to be victims of family violence or inflict self-harm (Yates, 2020). Furthermore, the Commission found that many Victorian forensic patients who suffered from serious mental health issues had perpetrated family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). Because there had been limited studies focussing on mental health and family violence, the Commission found that there was a requirement for more research to investigate the link between antisocial personality disorders and the perpetration of family violence (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016).

2.8 Family Violence reporting

Police receive reports of family violence in several ways. Police detected family violence while performing other tasks in the ordinary course of their duties. They also received reports directly from victims, a family member, neighbour, friend or anonymously, or from another agency (Mouzos and Makkai, 2004; Victoria Police, 2017; Voce and Boxall, 2018). When family violence was reported to police, they were responsible for assessing all the reports they received, and if required, a brief of evidence was compiled and submitted, setting out the circumstances of the violence (Victoria Police, 2019). There was also an expectation that police would provide practical assistance, ensure the safety of the victims, and identify the perpetrator (Morley and Mullender, 1994; Mouzos and Makkai, 2004; Victoria Police, 2019).

The ABS (2013) reported a reluctance by many victims to report family violence, and the extent was highlighted in the PPS (2012). The survey estimated that 80% of female victims and 95% of male victims of family violence did not report the harm to the police (ABS 2013). However, when police attended family violence, many victims did not want the matter to proceed and did not want further action by the police (Phillips and Vandebroek, 2014). Therefore, some victims were reluctant to proceed due to embarrassment or thought that the issue was trivial, but police were responsible for taking further action as required (Dowling et al., 2018; Victoria Police, 2019; Voce and Boxall, 2018). In addition, Phillips and Vandebroek (2014) found that some victims were reluctant

to report family violence to the police due to the lack of real support for victims following a report.

The impact of victims reporting family violence was often emotional and traumatic for them, which added to the reluctance of the victims and family members to report the matter to the police (ABS, 2016; Boxall, Rosevear and Payne, 2015; Phillips et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2017). The VRCIFV articulated the importance of police involvement in addressing family violence was dependent on reports being made (Voce and Boxall, 2018). If police had received more family violence reports, there would have been a much richer understanding of the issues and drivers of family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). However, recent Australian statistics indicated that family violence reporting to police may have increased over the preceding five years (Voce and Boxall, 2018).

2.8.1 Victim reporting

Family violence could happen to anyone, and most victims suffered from the emotional impact. Due to the trauma of family violence, many victims had reported the matter to the police. However, although there had been a significant increase in the number of family violence incidents reported, police were concerned that most victims did not report the harm (Birdsey and Snowball, 2013; Papamichail, 2019; Phillips et al., 2015; Voce and Boxall, 2018; Victoria Police, 2017). Adding to the complexity of family violence reporting, Lysova and Dim (2020) found that male victims were much less likely to report the harm than female victims due to the potential shame of having been assaulted by a female (Ansara and Hindin, 2010b; McCarrick et al., 2016). Zimmermann (2019) considered that many male victims of family violence received a less sympathetic response from the police, which may explain why males may have been reluctant to report the harm.

When victims reported family violence, police were expected to support them with a balanced approach for all victims (Victoria Police, 2019). Therefore, the police were required to apply the law and support concerning family violence equally, without fear or favour and not discriminate against any victims, regardless of gender (Papamichail, 2019). However, the literature indicated that when victims reported family violence, there had not been a balanced police response for all victims (Barber, 2008; Corbally, 2015; Hines and Douglas, 2010; Machado et al., 2017; Morgan and Wells, 2016; Tsui, 2014). A significant issue for male victims who reported family violence to police was that many experienced indifference and did not receive the same positive and supportive attitude from police as

female victims (Tsui, 2014; Walker et al., 2019; Zimmermann, 2019). To enable police to measure and improve their response to all victims of family violence, victims needed to feel safe and respected when making reports to the police (Lysova and Dim, 2020; Walker et al., 2019; Zimmermann, 2019).

2.8.2 Police response

Police have a role in preventing family violence. The initial response provided by police when victims reported family violence could influence any future reporting of the harm by those victims (Harne and Radford, 2008; Stanko, 2008; Victoria Police, 2017; Voce and Boxall, 2018). The research identified several organisational and operational challenges associated with the police response to family violence and meeting community expectations. Voce and Boxall (2018) recognised the requirement to examine how police responded to family violence, as there was a need to provide a balanced approach under all circumstances (Jung and Wielinga, 2019). The difficulty for police in providing a balanced approach to reported family violence included the organisational and operational challenges. The existing gender paradigm of victims and perpetrators influenced how police responded to family violence (Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, 2019; Tsui, 2014; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019). The government, police and the courts required comprehensive and relevant training, policies, procedures and protocols to help guide them in the response to family violence and the management process to ensure balanced outcomes were achieved for all victims, regardless of gender (Anderson, 2013; Dutton, 2012; Malbon et al., 2018; McKeown et al., 2022; Straus, 2007, 2010; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019; Victoria Police, 2019).

The difficulty for police when they responded to reported family violence and managed the process was understanding the influence and complexity of the drivers and issues of family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). Understanding the dynamics of family relationships could help the police response, governments and other stakeholders to identify all victims and perpetrators of family violence. If police had a deeper understanding of family dynamics, it may encourage more victims, regardless of gender, to report the harm to police as there had been extensive criticism of the police response to the harm (Ansara and Hindin, 2010b; Coliandris and Rogers, 2013; Holder, 2011; Lysova and Dim, 2020; McCarrick et al., 2016; Morley and Mullender, 1994; Voce and Boxall, 2018; Wallace et al., 2019). In addition, it was also important for police to understand the impact of illicit drug

use, alcohol consumption and mental health and how these influence their response to, and management of, family violence (Lee et al., 2015; Mayshak et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2016; Zealberg et al., 1992). Furthermore, the use of FVIO's by victims and perpetrators of family violence for reasons other than the applicant's safety also influenced the police response to family violence (Parkinson et al., 2010; Zimmermann, 2017).

To enable Victoria Police to provide a balanced response to family violence, the organisation required a structured approach (Hearn, 1996; Victoria Police, 2019). Subsequently, the VPCP was introduced and provided a balanced approach to the organisational response to family violence. The structure was outlined in the Code of Practice (2019; pp 15) and stated:

“Police will respond to and take action on any family violence incident reported to them, regardless of who made the report and how it was made. The action taken is based on risk assessment and risk management, regardless of whether the AFM makes a verbal complaint or written statement”.

“In meeting this policy of compulsory action, police will:

Take immediate action to protect and support AFMs and any children;

Be aware and sensitive to the individual circumstances of each incident;

Undertake a family violence risk assessment which incorporates but is not limited to the background and identification of the recent pattern of violence, recognition of risk and vulnerability factors and the victim's own assessment of their level of fear;

Identify the primary aggressor, and where physical violence has occurred, assess if it is likely that someone has been acting in self-defence;

Using professional judgement, assess the likelihood of future risk to determine the most appropriate risk management strategy (Options Model);

Investigate all family violence incidents coming to their notice by gathering background information and physical evidence, including photographs, clothing and statements from direct and indirect witnesses;

Make perpetrators accountable by pursuing criminal and/or civil options where there is sufficient evidence to do so and regardless of whether an arrest has been made and/or whether the AFM is reluctant;

Refer all parties involved to appropriate services;

Comply with obligations pursuant to the *Victims' Charter Act 2006* for victims of crime”.

2.9 Types of family violence

One of the core functions of the police has been preventing harm in family violence. However, the inclusion of various types of violence in the family environment created difficulties for the police members who responded to the harm (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Spivak, McEwan, Luebbers and Ogloff, 2021; Yates, 2020). Many of the offences in the reported family violence police attend may not be obvious to the members, and therefore, may go undetected (Maple and Kebbell, 2021). When considering that all family violence can be traumatic, this research focused on the types of family violence that is within the scope of the police training and understanding of the police members who respond to that harm. This study also examined ‘secondary abuse’ in family violence as that impacted the police response and management of the family violence process (Corbally, 2015; Morgan and Wells, 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2019).

2.9.1 Violence types – International

The WHO (2012) reported that family violence was a global health problem occurring in most countries and was an inhumane and multifaceted form of violence. Violence and trauma were not restricted to social, economic, religious or cultural groups (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2012). Furthermore, males and females were both victims of family violence, but women and girls were overwhelmingly the victims of violence perpetrated by males (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2012). Hence, the international focus of the WHO was on the harm perpetrated by males on women and girls in family violence (Krug et al., 2002; WHO, 2012).

The WHO (2006, 2012) identified the most prevalent types of family violence globally as physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, controlling and economic abuse. However, in several countries, abusive relationships and family violence have escalated to torture and sexual slavery (De, 2020; WHO, 2006, 2012). Unfortunately, the brutality of family violence has also escalated to the murder of victims by a spouse, partner or ex-partner (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019; De, 2020; WHO, 2006, 2012).

2.9.2 Violence types – Australia

The Australian Federal Government has taken a similar position to the WHO (2006, 2012) in recognising the different types of violence perpetrated in the family environment and acknowledged the complexity of the types of family violence in Australia. Police must

respond to all reported family violence and to assist them and the courts, the Australian Government (1985) provided clarification of what family violence is. The research conducted by Walker et al. (2019) found that psychological family violence was the most common form of abuse in Australia. However, this type of violence may be difficult for front-line police members as they were not trained to be psychology professionals. Examples of behaviour that may be considered family violence by the Australian Government, and suitable for police to respond to, include physical and sexual assaults, stalking, repeated derogatory taunts, damaging property, financial abuse, isolation from friends and family and depriving a family member of their liberty (Australian Government, 1975). A comprehensive breakdown of the Australian Government updated Family Law Act (1975) sections relevant to this research are contained in 'Appendix I'.

When the Australian Government drafted the Family Law Act (1975) and the subsequent updates of the Act, it acknowledged that the type of family violence suffered by women and children ranged from 'minor' to 'severe' physical and sexual assaults. Also, the Australian Government implied that the types of violence suffered by male and female victims in Australia differed significantly. Accordingly, in 2019, it updated the Family Law Act (1975) description to capture various behaviours (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). This then had an impact on how police responded to, and reported the harm (COAG, 2016). Many female and male victims of family violence have been murdered by a current or ex-partner (COAG, 2016; Kelly, 1997).

2.9.3 Violence types – Victoria

To enable the government, police, courts and the community to respond to, and manage the impact of, family violence in Victoria, the Victorian Government introduced the Victorian Family Violence Act (2008). The Victorian Government used similar definitions of family violence described in the Australian Family Law Act (1975). The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008) included, but was not limited to, the behaviour towards a family member and the type of violence it represents that includes physical or sexual violence, threatening or coercive behaviour, and emotional, psychological and economical abuse. A comprehensive breakdown of the elements of family violence in Victoria relevant to this research are contained in the Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008), 'Appendix I'.

The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008) provides guidance for Victoria Police in the way the government and the community expect family violence to be reported and managed. As previously mentioned, police have the investigative skills to respond to family violence and readily identify violence such as physical violence, as well as threatening, emotional or coercive behaviour (Walker et al., 2019). The difficulty for police in the family environment was identifying psychological abuse because the effects were not readily visible. Therefore, members of Victoria Police required an approach to family violence that was structured to ensure the front-line members could provide a balanced response and support for all victims of the harm, regardless of gender (Berger, Douglas, and Hines, 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010).

2.9.4 Violence types – Victoria Police

Victoria Police was a major stakeholder and contributor to the state-wide strategies to reduce family violence, and the approach was influenced by the Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008). The ‘Act’ also helped develop the VPCP Victoria Police Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence (Victorian Government, 2008; Victoria Police, 2017). Hence, Victoria Police adopted a similar approach to family violence to that of Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008) but included a specific definition of the types of harm (Victoria Police, 2017, p.11):

“Family violence is any behaviour that in any way controls or dominates a family member and causes them to feel fear for their own, or other family member’s safety or well-being. It can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic abuse and any behaviour that causes a child to hear, witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of that behaviour”.

The Australian Federal Government, Victorian Government, and Victoria Police recognised the traumatic impact of family violence on victims and identified the danger of high-risk repeat family violence. High-risk repeat family violence was harm experienced in the family environment that escalated above controlling or dominating behaviour (Victoria Police, 2019).

2.9.5 Secondary Abuse

The various types of family violence have been well documented by the WHO (2006; 2012), the Australian Federal Government (2019) and the Victoria Government (2008). However, one type of family violence that was a significant part of the family violence

process that impacted the police response in Victoria was ‘secondary abuse’ (Corbally, 2015; Morgan and Wells, 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010; Walker et al., 2019). Tilbrook et al. (2010) described secondary abuse in family violence as ‘legal and administrative abuse’. However, Corbally (2015) and Morgan and Wells (2016) found that secondary abuse manipulated the legal system to make false allegations against one party. They also identified that false allegations were made in the family violence process to help gain sole custody of a child, obtain restraining orders and have other parties arrested (Corbally, 2015; Morgan and Wells, 2016). Walker et al. (2019) confirmed the previous research of Corbally (2015), Douglas and Hines (2011) and Machado, Santos, Graham-Kevan and Matos (2017) that secondary abuse had frequently been perpetrated by one person trying to get a specific advantage from the police, courts and health-care providers. Walker et al. (2019) also found that, in the context of family violence, people used secondary abuse to restrict the ability of a parent to see their children. Due to police being responsible for responding to all forms of family violence, this research adopted a non-gendered approach to the harm caused by secondary abuse (Berger, Douglas, and Hines, 2016; Tilbrook et al., 2010).

2.10 Victim and Perpetrator demographics

Family violence has been a controversial issue for many years and became a public concern in the 1970s (Younger, 2011). However, Carmody, Robinson, Salter, Bansel and Ovenden (2016) identified there had been extensive progress over the last 40 years in addressing the issues of victim and perpetrator dynamics and the impact of family violence. However, to enable police to provide the most appropriate response to family violence, they required a better understanding of the victim and perpetrator demographics as the concept of family has been changing for many years (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2020; Walsh, 2012; Wells et al., 2016). Research identified that only a small sub-group of the male population had assaulted their female partners; however, the gender focus of victims and perpetrators of family violence has influenced research and policy for decades (Archer, 2006; Dobash and Dobash, 1979; Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Hine et al., 2022; Laroche, 2005; Reeves, 2020). Also, victim and perpetrator demographics were not restricted to age, gender, cultural background or religious groups and the WHO (2002) reported males and females could be victims and perpetrators (Vincent, 2005). However, more work was needed to develop strategies to reduce the harm of family violence, regardless of the gender and social demographic of the victims (Breiding, Chen and Black, 2014).

The Australian Government (2019) indicated the importance of reducing the impact of family violence in all social demographics within the community. As a result, family violence has been a political priority for all governments across Australia (Mazerolle, Eggins, Sydes, Hine, McEwan, Norrie and Somerville, 2018). In Victoria, the Family Violence Protection Act (2008) ensured all types of family violence were recognised in Victoria, and all victims protected (Victoria Police, 2019). However, although there was a conflict in the research that detailed the demographics of victims and perpetrators, McKeown et al. (2022) suggested police had not always taken a balanced approach to the harm caused to all victims as they had been influenced by a gender focus in the family violence.

2.10.1 Gender of victims and perpetrators

After four decades of research identified gender symmetry in family violence where females and males were victims and perpetrators, the approach to the harm has still been a complicated issue for governments, police and the courts as they had not embraced the concept of gender symmetry in family violence (Anderson, 2013; Dutton, 2012; Malbon et al., 2018; McKeown et al., 2022; Straus, 2007, 2010; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019). The complexity within the gender paradigm of victims and perpetrators increased the difficulty for police members who responded to family violence as they were still encouraged to view females as the victims and males as the perpetrators. Therefore, the concept of victims and perpetrators within the context of family violence by the government and community remained a gendered approach that had been influenced by the Duluth Model philosophy (Calgary Domestic Violence Collective, 2019; Tsui, 2014; Zimmermann, 2016, 2019).

The international, Australian and Victorian view of victims and perpetrators of family violence used a gendered approach based on the philosophy and guidelines of the Duluth Model. The difficulty for police who responded to the harm was that the Australian Government, Victorian Government and Victoria Police developed family violence policies and strategies influenced by the Duluth Model and, therefore, did not provide a balanced platform for all victims and perpetrators (Brotto, 2019; Pence and Paymar, 1993, 2003; Seelau et al., 2003; Zimmermann, 2019). The difficulty for police who responded to family violence was the conflict between the philosophies of the Duluth and Straus Models and the approach to victims and perpetrators.

As Victoria Police had adopted the Duluth Model to guide the response to, and management of, family violence, this did not give the police members the discretion to consider females and males as victims and perpetrators. Consequently, in many instances, police were not able to provide a balanced response to all victims of the harm (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1984, 2000; Pence and Paymar, 1993, 2003).

Victoria Police had the opportunity to reduce the complexity if they had considered the revelation made by Pence (1999). She indicated that flaws in the Duluth Model did not reflect a balanced approach to all victims and perpetrators. The issues were clearly articulated by Pence (1999, pp. 29–30) when she stated:

“By determining that the need or desire for power was the motivating force behind battering, we created a conceptual framework that, in fact, did not fit the lived experience of any of the men and women we were working with”.

After Pence revealed that the conceptual framework of the Duluth Model did not fit the lived experiences of the men and women they worked with, the government and police had the opportunity to introduce a balanced approach to all victims and perpetrators of family violence. Pence (1999) further indicated that many male interviewees did not display or express any desire to control or have power over their female partners (Pence, 1999). When considering all victims and perpetrators of family violence, Pence (1999) indicated that the conception of the Duluth Model was developed by only identifying male perpetrators and did not consider females. The flaw in the model for police was that it did not identify males as victims, and Pence went further to state:

“Although I relentlessly took every opportunity to point out to men in the group that they were so motivated and merely went unnoticed by me and many of my co-workers. Eventually, we realised that we were finding what we already predetermined to find (pp. 29-30).

2.10.2 Relationships between Victims and Perpetrators

The relationship demographics of victims and perpetrators in family violence has been an intricate issue for police, governments and other stakeholders as many organisations considered patriarchal relationships as the cause of family violence (Douglas and Hines, 2011; Pence, 1983; Walker et al., 2019; Yates, 2020). To help police understand the family dynamics of family violence, the family relationships had to be considered in their entirety and not just focus on the patriarchy. The relationships included current and previous partners, children, grandparents and other close members of the family (Victoria Government, 2008; Victoria Police, 2019). Until recently, the literature neglected elder

abuse and child-to-parent violence, so further research was required (Loinaz and de Sousa, 2020; Prifiti, 2020; Simmons, McEwan, Purcell and Ogloff, 2018; Victorian Government, 2008; Walsh and Krienert, 2007).

The added complications for police in identifying the relationships between victims and perpetrators extended beyond spouse, child, parent, partner or previous partner and interpersonal relationships. It also extended to specific kinship, cultural recognition and religious connections (ABS, 2009; Pink, 2009; Victorian Government, 2008). Police, the government, and relevant stakeholders also had to consider the nature of the social and emotional relationships between the victims and perpetrators (Victorian Government, 2008). Although most police members understood the complexity and diversity of the relationship between victims and perpetrators, they still faced daily challenges in their service provision (Gill et al., 2019; Jung and Wielinga, 2019; Victoria Police, 2019).

Part Three – The impact of the drivers of family violence

2.11 Issuing of Intervention Orders, contraventions and misuse

The purpose of the Victorian Courts issuing a Family Violence Intervention Order (Intervention Order) was to protect those victims who had experienced violent, threatening or abusive behaviour (VRCIFV, 2016, Lauritsen, 2015). It also enabled any required sanctions against family violence perpetrators (Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). Although intervention orders were an essential part of the Victoria Police's response to family violence, this research did not aim to examine the judicial process of the intervention orders critically. Instead, the focus was to examine how intervention orders enabled police to support the victims of family violence and the impact of misuse of the process (Victoria Police, 2015; VRCIFV, 2016).

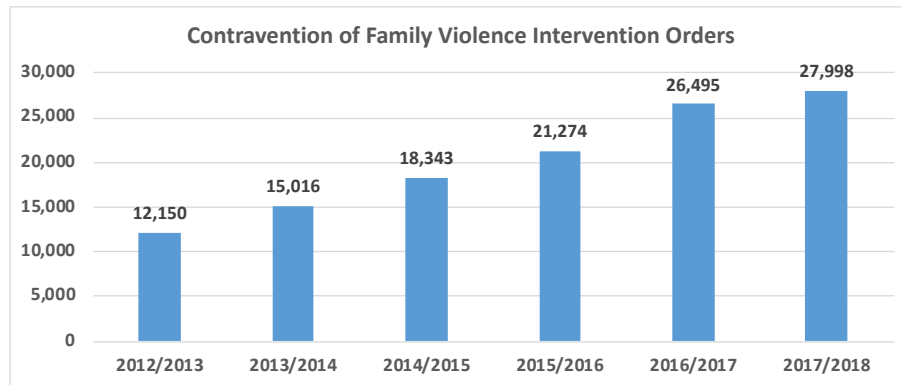
Family violence impacted the community and was often dangerous for the victims and the police members who intervened (Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Walby, 2009; Watkins, 2005). Police were often required to apply for an intervention order on behalf of the victim for their protection and safety, which was often against the victim's wishes (Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). The application for an intervention order also provided a legal process that held the perpetrators accountable for the harm they caused (Victoria Police, 2015; VRCIFV, 2016; Lauritsen, 2015).

People who needed protection against family violence could apply for an intervention order. They included the AFM (Victim), a police officer or a person with the written consent of an adult victim (Victoria Police, 2019). Because police obtained intervention orders on behalf of some victims during their initial response, many victims reported subsequent violence to the police (Birdsey and Snowball, 2013; Victoria Police, 2019). Police also needed to ensure the ongoing safety of the victims from repeat perpetrators, and the intervention order process helped in that respect (Victoria Police, 2019).

2.11.1 Intervention order contraventions

The intervention order process effectively protected the victims, but they often caused operational issues for police and the courts and concerns for the victims because they had been contravened regularly by the perpetrators and victims (Napier et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). For example, Trimboli (2015) found that, after a contravention of an intervention order as the principal offence that proceeded to prosecution, only about 12% of offenders received a prison sentence for the contravention (Napier et al., 2015).

Although police informed victims of the benefits of complying with the framework of intervention orders and not contravening them, many expressed a desire to withdraw from the process (Frost, 2009). Moreover, many contraventions of the intervention orders took place in the victim's home, where the perpetrator was invited into the house or had confronted the victim. The contravention of the intervention orders became one of the fastest-growing criminal offences in Victoria, and the police and the government did not understand the nature of the breaches and why they occurred. Therefore, more research was required to help understand why the breaches happened (Bytheway, 2015; Napier et al., 2015; Oum and Schwebel, 2016). The Magistrates' Court of Victoria recorded increased contraventions of intervention orders in the Annual Reports (2020). **Graph 2.1** indicates the increasing number of contraventions of intervention orders in Victoria from 2012/2013 to 2017/2018. Unfortunately, later data was unavailable in the annual reports (Magistrates Court of Victoria, 2020).



(Source: Magistrates Court of Victoria Reports – 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18)

2.11.2 Intervention order misuse

Although intervention orders were used to protect victims; the integrity of the process was often compromised. For example, Zimmermann (2017), a former Law Reform Commissioner in the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia, found that ‘the overwhelming majority’ of Magistrates in Australia were of the view that many of the applications for intervention orders were for reasons other than for personal safety or protection from a perpetrator (Carpenter, Currie and Field, 2001; Parkinson et al., 2010). Furthermore, research indicated that thirty-eight Magistrates in Queensland, Australia, participated in a survey regarding intervention orders. Of the Magistrates surveyed, about three-quarters stated that some applicants used intervention orders to gain a tactical advantage in court proceedings (Carpenter et al., 2001; Parkinson, Cashmore and Webster, 2010; Zimmermann, 2017).

This added to the complexity for police members as Zimmermann (2017) indicated that clients had been advised to apply for intervention orders, even when a legitimate concern for the applicant's safety did not warrant such an application. Parkinson et al. (2010) suggested that many applicants who received legal advice in family law cases were encouraged to use any excuse to gain an intervention order as the evidentiary standard required to gain the order was extremely low (Zimmermann, 2017). Previous observations by Blanch (2014) also indicated that intervention orders issued on unsubstantiated evidence were a process that some people used to gain primary custody and restricted access to their children and parental alienation from them. In addition, many applicants also received more generous financial support from the government by utilising the intervention order process in a way that was not intended (Blanch, 2014).

There was a growing concern in the community and among police members that the intervention order process was being used unethically and purely for collateral reasons (Zimmermann, 2017). A survey of over 12,000 respondents found that more than half of the participants agreed that the intervention order process was used for malicious purposes. For example, it improved the applicant's position and case in subsequent court hearings (Blanch, 2014; Parkinson, 2011; Zimmermann, 2017). In addition, the research suggested that many respondents named in intervention orders felt disadvantaged due to the original application's lack of evidence (Blanch, 2014; Felson, Ackerman and Gallagher, 2005; Sherman, 1992).

2.12 Mental Health and family violence

For many decades, police have responded to and managed family violence while Fisher et al. (2022) indicated there was a high rate of mental health issues in family violence. The Commonwealth of Australia (2016) suggested that approximately 30% of the perpetrators of family violence had had a mental illness, and this remained a concern for the Australian community (Chhikara, Jakhar, Malik, Singla and Dhattarwal, 2013; Fisher et al., 2022; Siemieniuk, Krentz, Gish and Gill, 2010; Worell, 2001). The mental health issues included psychiatric disorders, personality disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, paranoia and passive-aggressive behaviour (Hester et al., 2015; Taft, 1980; Smith et al., 2012). Because the discipline of mental health is a complex field of study and front-line police members are not suitably trained, this research only examined the impact of mental health issues on the police response and not the management of the illness (Hester, Ferrari, Jones, Williamson, Bacchus, Peters, and Feder, 2015; Janik, 1992; Panzarella and Alicea, 1997; Smith, Osbourne, Lau and Britton, 2012).

The link between mental health issues and family violence created a risk for the family members and added to the potentially dangerous situations police members faced when responding to family violence (Ellsberg, Jansen, Heise, Watts and Garcia-Moreno, 2008; Finn and Stalans, 2002; Garcia-Moreno et al., 2006; Satyen et al., 2020; Trevillion, Corker, Capron and Oram, 2016). However, regardless of the dangers and complexity, police members had to resolve situations that involved people with mental health issues (Cotton and Coleman, 2013). Fisher et al. (2022) indicated that many mental health services and professionals had not previously detected the extent that mental health contributed to family violence and that added to the complexity of the police response. In addition, Zealberg, Christie, Puckett, McAlhany and Durham (1992) and Lee, Thomas, Doulis,

Bowles, Henderson, Keppich-Arnold, Perez and Stafrace (2015) indicated that the mental health issues' complexity in family violence was far too significant for police to address, so a multi-discipline approach was required.

2.12.1 The impact of mental health on the police response

As previously mentioned, research suggested a strong link between family violence and mental health issues which experts confirmed at the VRCIFV (Bytheway, 2015; Millsteed and Coghlan, 2016; Taft, 1980; Smith et al., 2012). However, they also emphasised real difficulties faced by Victoria Police when they tried to implement mental health interventions to manage family violence and reduce the cycle of harm (Hegarty, 2011; Kulkarni, 2015). For example, when members of Victoria Police received a report of mental health issues in family violence, under Section 10 of the Mental Health Act (1986), they were lawfully entitled to detain a person and transport them to an appropriate authority for a specialist mental health assessment. For many years, front-line police members did not believe it was their responsibility to play a significant role in managing people who had mental health issues and transporting them to the relevant authority (Cotton and Coleman, 2013). Nevertheless, Hollander, Lee, Tahtalian, Young and Kulkarni (2012) found that over 20% of Victoria Police members had transported people with mental health issues to emergency care each week.

As a result, police inadvertently became an integral part of the mental health system and this diverted significant police resources and time from operational police work and restricted the opportunity of deploying the police to other core functions (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Janik, 1992; DHHS, 2005; Victorian Government, 1986, 2014). Even after Victoria Police members transported people with mental health issues for emergency care, most of those people were released back into the community shortly afterwards. However, as medical staff had not placed the mental health patients into care, they remained a risk to themselves and the community and this was a source of frustration for police members (Huppert and Griffiths, 2015; McKenna, Furness, Brown, Tacey, Hiam and Wise, 2015).

2.12.2 Mental health and police management

The management of, and response to, mental health issues in the community and family violence presented difficulties for Victoria Police, such as legal, social and liability considerations (Furness Maguire, Brown and McKenna, 2016; Janik, 1992; Kulkarni, 2015).

The Queensland Police Service (2013) indicated that police had an essential role in ensuring appropriate help, care and treatment for people in the community who suffered from mental illness. Cotton and Coleman (2013) indicated that Victoria Police needed to enhance their management of mental health cases and reduce the harm to the community. Therefore, it was important that Victoria Police also managed the impact of mental illness in the community and family violence cases as suggested by the Queensland Police Service (2013) (Furness et al., 2016).

Cotton and Coleman (2013) indicated concerns in the community about some police members' perceived insensitivity when responding to mental illness issues. They needed to improve their initial response, and the quality of care they provided had to be more efficient and effective (Furness et al., 2016). In addition, Janik (1992) indicated that police members had not been adequately trained in dealing with mental health issues, which caused concern for the community (Cotton and Coleman, 2013, 2017). To help address the gap in understanding community-based mental health, Victoria Police introduced specific mental health education for new police recruits and enhance the response and management of people who suffered with mental illness by the front-line police members (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Furness et al., 2016; Watson, Angell, Schaefer Morabito and Robinson, 2008). In addition, Mental Health First Aid (2015) helped experienced police members expand their knowledge of mental health issues (Furness et al., 2016). Thus, the expansion of the Emergency Department mental health services and the enhanced mental health education and police training placed Victoria Police in a better position to help manage the mental health related family violence crisis in Victoria (Huppert and Griffiths, 2015).

2.13 Drugs and family violence

Miller, Cox, Costa, Mayshak, Walker, Hyder, Tonner and Day (2016) and Yates (2019) identified that family violence was one of the community's most complex types of harm and drugs added to the complexity. On the other hand, Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, and McAuslan (2004) and Humphreys, Thiara and Regan (2005) suggested that drugs were not the actual cause of family violence but acted as an activator of violent behaviour. Even though illicit drug use in family violence is a public health issue and a social problem worldwide, this research will only explore the impact of illicit drug use in the context of family violence and how that influences the police response and management process. It will not delve into the legal implications of drug use (Abidemi and Akanni,

2022). Due to the results of the VRCIFV (2016), the available literature and interview data provided evidence that drugs were an issue in family violence. For example, the Victoria Police (2015) submission to the VRCIFV estimated that drugs had been present in one-third of family violence incidents attended by police (Yates, 2019).

2.13.1 Drug type used in family violence

To enable police to respond appropriately to family violence, it was important to understand the extent drugs contributed to the harm and who used them in the family environment (Rivera, Phillips, Warshaw, Lyon, Bland, and Kaewken, 2015). The complication for police and the response they provided was as Nicholas, White, Roche, Gruenert, and Lee (2012) suggested, there was limited evidence linking specific drugs and family violence. However, the recent research of McKeown et al. (2022) suggested that there were drugs in family violence and cocaine was associated with the harm. Shorey, Febres, Brasfield and Stuart (2012) indicated that illicit drugs such as marijuana and cocaine were present in family violence and had the potential to add to the risk for police and amplify the violence in the family environment (Yates, 2019).

2.13.2 Who used the drugs?

The VRCIFV (2016) indicated that the use of drugs by the perpetrators was not always the cause of family violence (Abbey et al., 2004; Braaf, 2012; Humphreys et al., 2005; Noonan, Taylor and Burke, 2017). However, a substantial number of studies suggested that drug use by the perpetrators and not the victims contributed to family violence, but the substance abuse was not always the cause of the harm (Rivera et al., 2015; Yates 2019). In addition, Budd (2003) indicated that 12% of family violence offenders were affected by drugs, but not all perpetrators used drugs in acts of family violence (Yates 2019). Where drugs had been detected in family violence, Miller et al. (2016) found that the police were more inclined to remove the perpetrator from the home environment. The perpetrator and not the victim was more likely to have been presented to the court in an intervention order application by police when drugs had been used during family violence (Miller et al., 2016).

2.13.3 Drugs – Impact on police

Over the last decade, illicit drugs in family violence have been a concern and an increasingly problematic issue for police and the government (Clough, Robertson, Fitts, Lawson, Bird, Hunter, Gynther and Obrecht, 2015; Dowling and Morgan, 2019; Yates, 2019). Victoria Police recognised the hidden nature of drugs and the risks of physical harm and injury for police where illicit drugs had contributed to family violence (Fals-Stewart, Golden, and Schumacher, 2003; Miller et al., 2016; Salom, Williams, Najman, and Alati, 2015).

The impact of drugs in family violence required the implementation of a complex, targeted and systematic response by police to address the harm (Miller et al., 2016). To help police address the drug issues in family violence identified by the VRCIFV, Victoria Police enhanced the police response to drugs in family violence and implemented the Family Violence Response Model (2019) (McWhirter, 2019; Victoria Police, 2019). The Family Violence Response Model (2019) and the new Family Violence Report (VP-L17) launch helped guide the police response to family violence. It also provided a comprehensive risk management process that helped mitigate future harm within the home environment (Victoria Police 2019). The Family Violence Report (2019) also offered pertinent questions for the police members responding to family violence to ask the victims and perpetrators that enabled the appropriate criminal, civil and referral options to be actioned (Victoria Police, 2019). To help Victoria Police gain a greater understanding of the extent of drugs in family violence, McWhirter (2019) indicated that Victoria Police wanted more of the victims of family violence to report the harm. More comprehensive data could help keep victims safer in their homes and the perpetrators of family violence could be held accountable for the harm that they had caused.

2.13.4 Drugs – Data collection

Because drugs play a significant role in family violence, Victoria Police required a more informative and comprehensive data collection process to help understand the extent of the problem (Smith, Homish, Leonard and Cornelius, 2012; Yates, 2019). The analysis of the VP-L17 by Miller et al. (2016) provided an insightful understanding of the Victoria Police drug data recording process. Miller et al. (2016) indicated that when police members attended reported family violence incidents, they made subjective assessments of the potential use of drugs and also identified the perpetrators or victims they believed had been

affected by drugs. Miller et al. (2016) also found that the Victoria Police recording of apparent drug use in family violence appeared to have been based on the attending police members' opinions, observations, and subjective views. Hence, the VP-L17 only recorded 'possible' affected by drugs or 'definite' drug users and reflected the police members' opinion (Miller et al., 2016).

To address the data gap, Victoria Police made substantial changes to the family violence response by introducing the Family Violence Response Model and implementing the new Family Violence Report. However, there were still significant gaps in collecting drug-related data in family violence (Miller et al., 2016; Yates, 2019). The new version of the VP-L17 did not capture more comprehensive information about drugs in family violence that could add value to the existing information. As presented, the latest version of the VP-L17 did not provide relevant questions to enable the attending police members to delve deeper into the contribution of drugs to family violence. In addition, the new VP-L17 still only recorded drugs 'possible' or 'definite' (Yates, 2019). Even after the findings of the VRCIFV (2016) and the analysis of Miller et al. (2016), the new Family Violence Report failed to introduce more comprehensive questions in the data collection process concerning the harm caused by drugs in family violence. As a result, Victoria Police was unable to capitalise on the opportunity to enhance the knowledge of the type of drugs used in family violence and who used them (Neave et al., 2016; Yates, 2019).

2.14 Family violence and alcohol

International research indicated there was a strong relationship between alcohol consumption and the violence perpetrated in the family environment. The consumption of alcohol and the subsequent family violence reported to police in Australia was a major concern for Australian Governments and police (Braaf, 2012; McKeown et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016). The VRCIFV found that the consumption of alcohol was a notable risk factor in Victoria's family violence (State of Victoria, 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016).

Significant research indicated that alcohol consumption in family violence was a driver of the harm, but, it was not usually the cause of the violence (Mayshak et al., 2022). However, there was little research into the consumption of alcohol by the victims or perpetrators of family violence to help inform the police, governments and the courts to enable more comprehensive strategies and policies to be developed to help reduce the cycle

of harm (Braaf, 2012; Mayshak et al., 2022; Miller et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016). The influence of alcohol consumption in family violence was significant and Stuart, Moore, Elkins, O'Farrell, Temple, Ramsey and Shorey (2013) disclosed the extent of the harm caused by alcohol consumption. They suggested that existing police and hospital data revealed that physical harm in family violence was ten times more likely to have been experienced by the victims when alcohol had been consumed by the perpetrator (Braaf, 2012). Due to the significant increase in the harm experienced by the victims when alcohol had been consumed by the perpetrator in reported family violence, there were extra demands made on police and that reduced the available resources and time they needed to respond to other demands for service by the community (Cornelius, 2015; Yates, 2015, 2020; Zimmermann, 2017).

2.14.1 Police response to family violence and alcohol

An essential component of the police core function was to keep the community safe, and respond to all reported incidents, including family violence. In most cases, police were the first responders to attend alcohol-related family violence and as such, often exposed the police members to elevated levels of risk and harm (Grech and Burgess, 2011; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016). To enable the risk of harm for police members and victims of family violence to be minimised, Victoria Police had an obligation to ensure the existing policies, practices and service delivery procedures police used to guide the police response reflected the challenging aspects of family violence and recognised the harm caused by alcohol (Grech and Burgess, 2011; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016). By understanding the complexity of alcohol in family violence, police could help break the cycle of harm and reduce the risk to victims and to police who responded (Klosterman and Fals-Stewart, 2006; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016).

The way police responded to family violence and the impact of alcohol was critical for the safety of victims and police, as family violence often escalated from minor arguments and assaults, to the death of a person (Grech and Burgess, 2011; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016). Dearden and Payne (2009) articulated the extent of the harm caused by alcohol in family violence when they revealed that it had been consumed in 44% of family violence murders over six years. They also indicated that 73% of females who committed murder in family violence had consumed alcohol, whilst 36% of males who also committed

murder in family violence had consumed alcohol (Braaf, 2012). In addition, Mayshak et al. (2020) found that alcohol was involved in almost half of all breaches of existing FVIOs, which often led to violence in the home (Napier et al., 2015). Therefore, it was crucial for police to ensure all policies, practices and service delivery processes provided a safe environment for the police members who responded to family violence and the alcohol-related harm (Grech and Burgess, 2011; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016).

2.14.2 The extent of alcohol in family violence

To enable police and the government to develop appropriate policies and processes to address the harm of alcohol-induced family violence, it was essential to understand the extent to which alcohol contributed to the harm (Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; McKeown et al., 2022). The extent to which alcohol had been identified in Australia that contributed to family violence reported to police ranged from 25% to 50% of incidents. However, extensive research suggested that alcohol may have been present in substantially more cases than first considered (Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE), 2015; Grech and Burgess, 2011; Leonard, 2001).

In Victoria, extensive research conducted by Budd (2003), Miller et al. (2016), and the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (2011) suggested alcohol was involved in 44% of family violence incidents in the state. Due to the extent to which alcohol had been found in family violence incidents, it was also essential to understand where the alcohol was purchased to understand further how alcohol contributed to the harm within the family environment (Frost, 2012; Livingston, 2012; VicHealth, 2013).

2.14.3 Alcohol outlets and family violence

For an extended period, scholars have examined the contribution of alcohol sales outlet density to crime and assaults within the community. However, Livingston (2012, 2017) found that there was a gap in the literature and understanding of the association between alcohol outlet availability and family violence (Leonard, 2001; O'Campo, Geilen, Faden, Xue, Kass and Wang, 1995; Pearlman, Zierler, Gjelsvik and Verhoek-Ofstedahl, 2003; Roman and Reid, 2012). In addition, Frost (2012) added to the concerns of Livingston (2012) by suggesting that very little research examined the impact of alcohol sold from packaged liquor outlets and its connection to family violence. There had been extensive research into the density of alcohol outlets, therefore, the purpose of the research reported in

this thesis was not to add to alcohol outlet density literature. Instead, this study hoped to identify the type of alcohol outlet that had the most impact on family violence. By understanding which alcohol outlets contributed to family violence, police and the government could have developed suitable strategies to address alcohol harm and family violence (Livingston, 2012).

2.14.4 Types of alcohol outlets

The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulations (VCGLR) (2021) indicated there were fourteen liquor license types within Victoria. The liquor licenses that were most applicable to this research were Full Club, General, On-Premises and Packaged Liquor Licenses (VCGLR, 2021). In addition, the study focused on liquor licenses where alcohol could be purchased and consumed on the premises or purchased then consumed in a location other than the place of purchase (Braaf, 2012; Livingston, 2012; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016). The on-premises licenses are for alcohol consumed in hotels, clubs, restaurants, and bars. Off-premises alcohol sales where the alcohol was not consumed on the premises include supermarkets, hotel bottle shops, and businesses specifically selling packaged liquor (Braaf, 2012; Livingston, 2012).

2.14.5 The alcohol outlets that impacted family violence

VicHealth (2013) and Livingston (2011a, 2011b) found that alcohol outlets, such as clubs and hotels, had a negligible impact on family violence (Gilmore, Liang, Catalano, Pascal, Broyd, Lensvelt, Kirby and Chikritzhs, 2015; Miller et al., 2016; Roman and Reid, 2012). Due to off-premises alcohol outlets having a far greater reach into the community, supermarkets and speciality packaged liquor bottle shops contributed significantly to family violence because the alcohol sold was predominantly consumed in the home (Livingston, 2012; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016; Roman and Reid, 2012; Victoria Police, 2012). Makela (2002) found that when grocery stores began selling alcohol, there was a sharp increase in the instances of alcohol-related family violence. VicHealth (2013) also suggested that packaged liquor outlets increased the chance of family violence in Victoria.

The risk of alcohol harm in family violence emanating from packaged liquor outlets was highlighted by Euromonitor International (2012) and Frost (2012). Although packaged liquor outlets were only 10% of all alcohol sales outlets, they accounted for 78% of all

alcohol sold in Australia for off premises consumption. VicHealth (2013) found that at least 75% of all alcohol sold in Victoria was from packaged liquor outlets (Livingston, 2011, Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016). Due to the extent alcohol was purchased from packaged liquor outlets in Victoria, police were concerned about alcohol consumption in the home as approximately one-third of all assaults occurred in residential properties (Miller et al., 2016).

2.14.6 Alcohol consumption and the impact

A comprehensive study in thirteen countries found that alcohol consumption in family violence was more severe if one or both partners in the home consumed the alcohol (ABS, 2013; Holder, 2007). The ABS (2013) and Holder (2007) also identified an increase in the severity of harm in family violence when one or both partners had consumed alcohol. The alcohol consumption by the victims or perpetrators also created a greater risk for the police members who responded to the family violence. The consumption by both parties in family violence complicated the management strategies police implemented to reduce the harm (Graham, Bernards, Wilsnack and Gmel, 2011; Laslett, Catalano, Chikritzhs, Dale, Doran, Ferris, Jainullabudeen, Livingston, Matthews, Mugavin, Room, Schlotterlein and Wilkinson, 2010).

To add to the complexity of the family violence management process for police, Miller et al. (2016) found that the alcohol consumed in family environment violence was frequently consumed in the perpetrators' homes. Furthermore, the alcohol was often consumed in contravention of an existing family violence intervention order (Napier et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). Sutherland et al. (2016) also found that when the perpetrator and victim consumed alcohol together, the perpetrator was most likely known to the police as a repeat offender.

2.14.7 Police recording of alcohol in family violence

When police members attended family violence incidents, they were responsible for recording if alcohol had been involved in the harm. However, the recording was the police member's subjective view of the incident (Livingston, 2012; Miller et al., 2016; McEwan, Shea and Ogloff, 2019). The Victoria Police family violence data analysis by Miller et al. (2016) found that police had recorded 22% of people involved in family violence were assessed as 'Alcohol use Definite'. They also found a further 6% of people involved as

‘Alcohol use Possible’. Miller et al. (2016) further found that the Victoria Police VP-L17 process failed to record essential alcohol data in family violence.

After considering that alcohol harm recorded in Victoria’s family violence was high, the new VP-L17 did not include more probing questions about alcohol involvement. The failure to include more extensive alcohol questions in the VP-L17 did not allow the opportunity to develop a richer understanding of the impact of alcohol on family violence (Millar et al., 2016; Yates, 2019). Thus, the chance to add alcohol-related information in family violence to academic knowledge and enhance police practice, policies, and service delivery were not maximised.

2.14.8 Alcohol and family violence research

An examination of existing literature revealed that there was still little research into the contribution of alcohol in family violence and the impact of the harm it caused (Braaf, 2012; Livingston, 2012; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022). The police, government and relevant support agencies needed to improve the response to family violence. However, the VRCIFV (2016) conceded that the existing gaps in knowledge of family violence and the respective drivers restricted the government and the police’s ability to respond effectively to that harm. Accordingly, the Royal Commission recommended continuing detailed national research into family violence (Yates, 2020).

As alcohol had been identified as a significant contributor to the harm in family violence and serious gaps in knowledge existed, further research about alcohol-related harm was necessary (Mayshak et al., 2020; VRCIFV, 2016; Victoria Police, 2016). In addition, more robust data collection processes should have been implemented to understand the impact of alcohol-related harm in family violence. That information could enhance the existing policies, practices and responses in collaboration with other partner agencies (Menéndez, Tusell and Weatherburn, 2015; Yates, 2020).

2.15 Conclusion

Due to the changes in society, the literature has revealed an expectation of the community that police policy, practice, procedures and management processes evolve to meet significant social changes. One of the issues that has faced governments, police and communities was the harm emanating from family violence. Family violence was not a new problem; it was identified as a global phenomenon with widespread harmful effects in many

communities (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; McKeown et al., 2022; Morse, 2018; Wells et al., 2016). However, it presented various challenges for police, courts and other stakeholders who responded to the harm it caused.

This chapter reflected on the literature that examined international, Australian and Victorian family violence drivers and issues to understand better the harmful effects of high-risk repeat family violence and how police addressed that harm. The literature identified the importance of police improving their response to ensure an unbiased approach was taken to reduce the frequency and severity of harm experienced by all victims (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). The chapter also revealed that two existing family violence management models were available to Victoria Police to ensure a balanced approach to support all family violence victims (Boxall and Morgan, 2020).

The Duluth and Straus Models were the two models available for the Victorian Government and Victoria Police. However, the Duluth Model only recognised male perpetrators in family violence and introduced male perpetrator change behaviour programs. The focus of the Duluth Model was the 'Power and Control' Wheel. This concept described males using power and control to dominate their female partners in family violence (Emerson, 1979; Pence, 1999, 1983). Therefore, this model was a gender-specific model that did not include all perpetrators. The model did not allow a support mechanism for any male victims of female-perpetrated family violence and, therefore, did not provide a balanced and unbiased response to family violence in Victoria. Brotto (2019) indicated that the Duluth Model approach was the preferred model to address family violence in Australia and Victoria. Victoria Police, Government Departments and the Victorian Judiciary have adopted the Duluth Model and philosophy (Dutton and Corvo, 2006; Dutton, Corvo, and Hamel, 2009).

This literature review also presented and discussed the Straus Model as a second approach to addressing family violence. This model offered Victoria Police the concept of gender symmetry, where males and females could have been equally recognised as victims of high-risk repeat family violence (Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Straus, 2010). The Straus Model provides the option to enable Victoria Police and the Victorian Government to view family violence in a broader context instead of the single-gender perspective (Meier et al., 2001; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). The chapter found that even though males and females were victims, both were equally capable of being the perpetrators of family violence against their partners (Archer, 2000; Chen and Chan, 2019; Dutton, 2006, 2010;

McKeown et al., 2022; Pizzey, 1998; Straus, 2009b). A result of the gendered approach to the family violence management process by Victoria Police may not have reflected the community's concerns about the harm experienced by all victims (Goodman-Delahunty and Crehan, 2015).

The chapter identified numerous issues that contributed to abusive behaviour in family violence. The literature identified various drivers and factors, including financial insecurity, education and social and economic exclusion (AIHW, 2018; State of Victoria, 2014-2016; WHO, 2016). However, the chapter focused on the issues and drivers that directly impacted the management and response to high-risk repeat family violence by Victoria Police. Consequently, it is essential to understand how unreported family violence and FVIOs contribute to managing high-risk repeat family violence by Victoria Police (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008).

One of the research questions was, "What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?" This chapter revealed that drugs, alcohol, and mental health issues contributed significantly to the harm in family violence in Victoria and elsewhere. However, the existing literature indicated that the new VP-L17 did not capture sufficient data to enhance the current knowledge of that contribution (Livingston, 2012; Miller et al., 2016; Yates, 2019).

Due to the significance of the VP-L17 not capturing sufficient data associated with drugs, alcohol and mental health in high-risk repeat family violence, it is essential to understand if the lack of data impacts on the way the police managed the response, practice, procedures, and service delivery when they responded to family violence (Miller et al., 2016; Wells et al., 2016). To help uncover the significance of correct data collection in high-risk repeat family violence, the third research question, "How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?" helped guide this research.

Chapter 3 will provide an overview of the methodology used to gather, interpret, and analyse the data impacting high-risk repeat family violence and police responses regarding service design, development and delivery. The chapter will also outline the issues of family violence that will be investigated, the research design, the research methods, and the ethical considerations. Chapter 3 will also present the most appropriate research model to enhance existing police practice, policy and procedures in high-risk repeat family violence and explain the rationale for stakeholder participation and the contributions that will make. It

will also describe the types of data required and the methods used to collect it. Although the literature review identified the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, it is important to understand the impact from the perspectives of the victims, perpetrators and the police who have responded to family violence.

CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology and methods employed and the justification for the research approach chosen to gather, interpret and analyse the data that influences high-risk repeat family violence. The chapter introduces the research design, methods utilised to undertake the research and ethical considerations. This chapter also explains the types of data required and the methods used to collect it. It also describes the rationale for the data collection, the stakeholders' participation, and how they contributed to this research.

Family violence has been an ongoing concern in Australia for the government, the community and the police. In Victoria, there had been a significant increase in the reported number of family violence incidents in the reporting period from 2015 to 2019 and the severity of the harm perpetrated was a concern for the police and government (CSA, 2020; VRCIFV, 2016). Therefore, it was important that Victoria Police enhanced the existing family violence data collection process to help identify which drivers were a significant factor in high-risk repeat family violence. By understanding the drivers, Victoria Police could utilise the most appropriate strategies and management processes to help mitigate the harm perpetrated and protect the victims (Hickman and Simpson, 2003).

For an extended period, there had been a gap in the data and understanding of the drivers of family violence and the characteristics of perpetrators and victims (Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Neave et al., 2016). The COAG (2016) also identified the requirement in the Third Action Plan 2016–19 to further strengthen the evidence base and data collection processes utilised to record family violence (Nazarewicz, 2020).

3.1.1 Research questions

For an extended period, there has been extensive research that provided conflicting results about the causes of family violence and how it has been managed by the police and the courts (Fisher et al., 2022; Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; McKeown et al., 2022). To enable this research to make a contribution to knowledge in the field, provide an understanding of the issues that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence and the management process of that harm, the following research question guided this study.

“How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”

The following supporting questions provided further structure to identify how the drivers of family violence impacted police process, procedure, and service delivery. The questions were:

“What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

3.2 Research methodology

The methodology used to answer the research questions in this research was a mixed-methods approach. Exploratory research provided the flexibility to gain new insights into the specific drivers and issues impacting police processes, procedures, and service delivery in the family violence management process. Because this research used a mixed-methods approach, a sequential explanatory research design was adopted to underpin and guide the quantitative and qualitative phases (Saunders et al., 2012, 2016). The sequential explanatory design helped guide the quantitative and qualitative approach, and **Figure 3.1** presents the sequence adopted to collect the data required to answer the research questions.



(Figure 3.1: Data collection process)

3.2.1 Rationale for exploratory research

The rationale for utilising an exploratory research approach was the flexibility to adapt to change as new evidence was uncovered. It was also a valuable process to identify what happened, gain new insights, ask relevant questions, and assess the phenomena of high-risk repeat family violence (Robson, 2002). Finally, it provided the opportunity to evaluate the requirements for further investigation (Edgar and Manz, 2017). Exploratory research was considered the most appropriate methodology to better understand and gain more significant insights into high-risk repeat family violence (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, the use of exploratory research provided a starting point to enable a logical sequence of discovery that helped uncover patterns in, and underlying principles of, high-risk repeat family violence (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012).

The emphasis on exploratory research was not to create a new model or design but to evaluate and analyse the data collected. Using exploratory research also provided a

structured process to search the available literature, collect archival and primary data, and use that information to conduct interviews with police experts. It also guided how focus groups were conducted and how the interviews of victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence were planned and carried out (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012). Finally, the exploratory approach provided a valuable process of enabling open-ended questions of the police participants, victims and perpetrators. These helped clarify issues related to high-risk repeat family violence (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Saunders et al., 2012). Each exploratory research phase used a structured approach and provided insights into the specific drivers and issues that impacted police processes, procedures, and service delivery when responding to family violence (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.2.2 Rationale for sequential explanatory research

This research used a mixed-methods process, so a sequential explanatory research design was adopted to explore high-risk repeat family violence. The rationale for utilising the sequential explanatory method was the benefit of two distinct data collection phases. The initial stage collected and analysed the quantitative data and helped inform the interviews and qualitative data collection (Creswell, 2003; Ivankova, Creswell and Stick, 2006; Rossman and Wilson, 1985; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). However, Ivankova et al. (2006) indicated limitations in the sequential explanatory approach as the process required considerable time and resources. The time was needed to collect the quantitative data, analyse it, and design the qualitative interviews.

The qualitative research focus groups and interviews helped explain the issues identified in the quantitative phase. It also helped fill in any gaps identified in the data collection process. An inductive approach was adopted with the interviews to enable the participants' lived experiences to add to the knowledge bank (Saunders et al., 2012). The choice of the sequential explanatory design helped to prioritise the weighting between quantitative and qualitative data collection. The design also helped to develop the content and structure of the planned focus groups, interviews of the victims, perpetrators, police members, and Magistrates (Green and Caracelli, 1997).

3.3 Rationale for mixed methods research

A mixed methods research framework provided the most appropriate design to collect the required data and explore the drivers and issues contributing to high-risk repeat

family violence (Shearson, 2014). The combination of the quantitative and qualitative approaches enabled a blending of the elements of one paradigm into another (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner, 2007). This research model also ensured that the data collection was consistent and provided clarity in the structure (Johnson et al., 2007; Jonker and Pennink, 2010). The mixed-methods approach was beneficial as there were similarities in the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, and shared certain axiomatic elements (Guba and Lincoln, 2005). To enable an enriched understanding of the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, the attributes of the quantitative data were integrated into the qualitative research design (Jonker and Pennink, 2010). Quantitative research provided numerical statistics on high-risk repeat family violence, whilst qualitative research enriched the statistical data with the human experiences (Saunders et al., 2012).

3.3.1 Quantitative research

The importance of conducting quantitative research was the opportunity to measure the issues and drivers that impacted high-risk repeat family violence. Because this research examined high-risk repeat family violence through a police lens, Jonker and Pennink (2010) articulated the advantage of conducting quantitative research through the eyes of an expert. The researcher had a comprehensive understanding of the quantitative data collection process utilised by the Victoria Police. The benefit of this quantitative data collection design was the epistemological position and strength of the systematic process. The structured format of the quantitative model also facilitated replication for future research (Kridel, 2010; Saunders et al., 2012). Saunders et al. (2012) identified that quantitative research was often associated with positivism when predetermined and structured data collection processes were used. The robustness and structure of the model were necessary, as the Victoria Police data required for this research was comprehensive (CSA, 2017; Nazarewicz, 2020).

3.3.2 Qualitative research

Flick (2007) articulated the importance of selecting the most appropriate research design to answer the research questions. The quantitative phase of the research offered Victoria Police an insight into the statistical data that impacted high-risk repeat family violence. However, the flexibility of qualitative research provided Victoria Police and the Government with more depth and meaning with regard to the statistical data (Edgar and Manz, 2017; Flick, 2006, 2007; Jonker and Pennink, 2010).

Flick (2006) also indicated the importance of the researcher utilising their real-life skills and knowledge about their field of research and not just relying on previously published studies. Although the researcher had existing knowledge and a comprehensive understanding of the elements of high-risk repeat family violence, it provided the opportunity to gain new insights and learn about the personal experiences of the victims, perpetrators and police members (Flick, 2006). In addition, Jonker and Pennink (2010) indicated that there were benefits in the qualitative design when the researcher had experience and an established understanding of the organisational settings in which the research would take place.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) and Saunders et al. (2012) indicated that qualitative research had been associated with the interpretive philosophy framework. The qualitative research design allowed the researcher to obtain primary data and expert knowledge directly from the lived experiences and personal interactions with the victims, perpetrators, and members of the police force (Creswell, 2012; Edgar and Manz, 2017; Flick, 2007; Harrell and Bradley, 2009). In addition, this approach provided a relationship between the researcher and the participants, enabling an interpretive paradigm (Jonker and Pennink, 2010).

It also enabled Victoria Police and Government to gain a deeper insight into the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence (Cooper, 2015; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Jonker and Pennink, 2010). Flick (2007) indicated that the qualitative methods approach could help the researcher study the environment of high-risk repeat family violence and how police responded to the harm. This could be achieved by conducting face to face semi-structured interviews with victims, perpetrators and police members. (Creswell, 2012; Padgett, 2008; Racino, 1999; Saunders et al., 2012).

3.4 Research plan

The research design encompassed the most relevant quantitative and qualitative data collection aspects to answer the research questions and contribute to knowledge and practice. Therefore, this research used various methods to obtain the data and participants with the most personal experiences and knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence (Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Kozlowski, 2007; Turner, 2010).

3.4.1 Method 1 – Quantitative - Archival data

At the commencement of this research, the researcher conducted a table-top review of the overarching family violence management process used by Victoria Police that revealed the impact of the police response on the front-line police members. The table-top review and examination of the Victoria Police family violence archival data, which was administered by the Victorian CSA, helped identify the drivers and issues that impacted high-risk repeat family violence. The family violence data obtained from the CSA was collected using the Victoria Police Family Violence Form, VP Form L17 (VP-L17) and was recorded in the Victoria Police LEAP and then distributed to and by the CSA (CSA, 2019).

The CSA archival data was existing statistical information made available to any member of the public making a request as well as to policymakers and researchers (CSA, 2019). Examining a substantial family violence archive data set from the CSA provided the opportunity to identify the issues such as victim and perpetrator identity and the extent drivers such as drugs and alcohol contributed to high-risk repeat family violence (Gill et al., 2019). Also, a comprehensive exploration of the CSA family violence data revealed potential gaps in the existing Victoria Police family violence data collection process. The archival data also examined the Victoria Police family violence process to understand the overarching management and the impact of frontline police responses to the harm.

3.4.2 Method 2 – Quantitative - Survey data

Including surveys as a primary data collection process in this research allowed specific information to be gained from the lived experiences of a large sample of participants (Check and Schutt, 2012; Ponto, 2015). The survey design was straightforward, easy to use and consisted of several themes to help answer the research questions. The themes were identified after the desk-top review was conducted and included the victim's and perpetrator's gender and family relationships. It also examined the extent to which existing FVIOs had been breached and the presence of drivers, such as mental health, drugs and alcohol consumption (State of Victoria, 2016; Victoria Police, 2019). The questions needed to be set out logically to enable sufficient data to be collected to enrich the information already obtained (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2008; Dillman, Smyth and Christian, 2014; Glasow, 2005; Salkind, 2014).

The survey utilised in this research was designed with a fixed set of questions to help capture further data about the drivers and issues that contributed to high-risk repeat family

violence directly from the participants who had experienced the harm (Mayschak et al., 2020, 2022; Glasow, 2005; Harrell and Bradley, 2009). There was one single survey for each participant, no identifying data was recorded on any survey, and all responses were anonymous. However, specialist police members were asked to ask each participant the questions on the survey and then record the answers provided.

The focus of this research was high-risk repeat family violence, so the victims and perpetrators of that harm were identified as the most appropriate sample of participants to provide the specific information to complete the surveys. Glasow (2005) indicated that a balanced study would include an equal number of female and male victims and perpetrators. However, it was not possible to get a representative sample of participants, so this research plan used a convenience sample of at least five hundred responses to the survey phase. The aim was to achieve an approximately equal number of responses from each location in the SMR.

3.4.2.1 Method 2 – Survey testing

After the initial survey design, a broad cross-section of participants was asked to assess and test the effectiveness of the survey instrument. The research plan sought to include male and female sworn police members and unsworn public servants of various ages and ranks from police stations in the SMR of the State of Victoria. The testing plan also sought to include members of the public who attended a police station on existing business. In addition, actual victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence were asked to assess and test the survey and provide comments, despite not being part of the official research process. All volunteers who participated in the survey testing process were anonymous to the researcher, an Inspector in Victoria Police (Glasow, 2005).

Each police member who volunteered to participate in survey testing was asked to provide feedback on the questions' format, themes, and sequence. In addition, an assessor of the rank of Senior Sergeant from the SMR Performance and Audit Unit was appointed to collect feedback from the police members who participated in testing the survey process.

3.4.2.2 Method 2 – Survey time frame

Often, organisational restrictions impact the opportunity to collect data. Due to this research requiring survey data from Victoria Police, it was essential to maximise the time-frames available within the organisation (Saunders et al., 2012). After an extensive

examination of Victoria Police LEAP family violence data and consultations with family violence experts in the SMR, Victoria Police Analysts recommended the most appropriate data collection period for the survey phase. The period recommended by the analysts was from the 1st of March 2016 to the 30th of December 2016. That period provided the most significant data collection opportunities over various seasons and specific events within the region.

3.4.2.3 Method 2 – Surveys – Family Violence Investigation Unit members

Ponto (2015) suggested that data collection using surveys could be completed by the participants or administered by a professional person. The police members in the SMR Family Violence Investigation Units (FVIU) were identified as the most appropriate police members to assist with the survey data collection as they are family violence specialist. These members also had an existing relationship with the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence.

Many of the victims and perpetrators in this research were from cultures where English was not their first language, so the police members asked the questions and recorded the participant's responses. The advice provided by family violence experts suggested that the most appropriate locations for the participants to complete the surveys should be in the FVIU offices. This allowed the survey to be conducted in a safe environment isolated from other family members who may have been part of the high-risk repeat family violence (Ponto, 2015; Salkind, 2014). The FVIU offices were located in Prahran, Moorabbin, Casey, Cardinia, Dandenong and Somerville.

3.4.2.4 Method 2 – Surveys – Data management

All surveys were conveyed to the Dandenong Police Station during the survey data collection phase as part of the survey data management process. To help ensure the validity and reliability of the information, all surveys were entered into two separate electronic databases. The electronic recording of the survey data was on IBM SPSS Statistics 27 and Microsoft Excel.

No personal information was recorded on any survey, so each completed survey was allocated a unique sequential number recorded at the top of the survey. The same sequential number was entered into the IBM SPSS Statistics 27 and Microsoft Excel spreadsheets (Nancarrow, 2016). Each number recorded on the survey was cross-checked with each electronic database entry to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the information entered.

The IBM SPSS Statistics 27 and Microsoft Excel had 55 variables entered on each database to replicate the data on the surveys. The completed surveys were entered into the electronic databases at the end of each month. In addition, regularly planned audits were conducted to ensure the accuracy and consistency of the data recorded. If any potential variations in the data entry were detected in the two electronic databases, any required amendments were made at the time. By implementing two electronic databases and a stringent data audit process, the integrity of data entry was assured.

3.4.3 Method 3 – Qualitative - Focus Groups

The inclusion of focus groups in this research formed an essential part of the data collection plan, guiding the transition from the quantitative survey phase and helping to structure the questions in the one-to-one qualitative interviews (Creswell, 2012; Jackson, Drummond and Camara, 2007; Morgan and Spanish, 1984; O.Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick and Mukherjee, 2018). In addition, the focus groups provided the opportunity to gain a comprehensive insight into the impact of the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence from Victoria Police FVIU experts (Gibbs, 1997; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Salkind, 2013).

Furthermore, the structure of the focus groups enabled the FVIU members to evaluate the survey data collection's strengths, weaknesses, and operational value (Gibbs, 1997; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Salkind, 2013). The focus group participants provided information about the existing response to high-risk repeat family violence by Victoria Police and the support agencies (Douglas et al., 2018; Gibbs, 1997).

To help ensure the most comprehensive and relevant information was extracted from the focus groups to assist in the transition from the quantitative phase to the qualitative phase, it was essential to include an experienced facilitator to lead the discussions in each focus group (Burrows and Kendall, 1997; Krueger 1994; O.Nyumba et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2012).

Each of the FVIUs is located within various socially diverse communities in the four SMR police divisions, so two focus groups were planned to capture the family violence experiences in each of the FVIUs. This research aimed to include up to ten FVIU members of various police ranks to participate in the focus groups. An ideal breakdown of participants was five male and five female participants. However, unit rostering and staff availability determined the number of police members participating.

Because the specialist police members based in the FVIUs were usually Senior Constables, Sergeants and Senior Sergeants, this research sought to include a balanced representation of these ranks. These members were responsible for responding to high-risk family violence and managing the process. This research did not consider police members of the rank of Inspector or above to be part of the focus groups as those ranks did not have day-to-day input into the high-risk repeat family violence management process.

The three focus groups commenced on the 15th of November 2017 and concluded on the 15th of December 2017. **Table 3.1** provides a breakdown of the number of FVIU members who participated in the focus groups and their police ranks.

Southern Metro Region Family Violence Investigation Unit Focus Groups		
Division 1 & 2	Division 3	Division 4
Four police participants	Four police participants	Two police participants
2 Sergeants	2 Sergeants	1 Senior Constable
2 Senior Constable	2 Senior Constables	1 Senior Constable

(Table 3.1: Source: Focus groups attendance lists)

3.4.4 Method 4 – Qualitative - Interviews

The integration of interviews in the exploratory research process of the data collection plan sought to provide the flexibility to obtain valuable information about high-risk repeat family violence (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2003; Saunders et al., 2012; Turner, 2010). The research plan identified that interviews with the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence would help understand the background and contextual information about the issues and the drivers of the harm. In addition, the interviews were intended to contribute to the existing knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence issues and drivers. The information was expected to come directly from the lived experiences of victims and perpetrators. They may also provide detailed descriptions of the harm suffered, police response, and the support provided (Creswell, 2012; Natrall, 2019; Saunders et al., 2016).

The interview process also provided the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge from the lived experiences and personal interactions of the police members who responded to high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, their experience could help to provide an overview of the current police practice and policies that guided their responses and service delivery for those involved in family violence response (Creswell, 2012; Edgar and Manz, 2017; Flick, 2007; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012, 2016).

Several interview strategies that could be used in this research included a formalised and structured approach or semi-structured interviews. Cooper and Schindler (2008) and

Saunders et al. (2016) indicated formalised, and structured interviews were suitable for the research data collection process. However, open-ended semi-structured interviews would be ideal for this research. They were thought to provide a broader in-depth understanding of the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence (Cooper and Schindler, 2008, Saunders et al., 2016).

Utilizing an open-ended semi-structured interview process in this research provided a unique opportunity to delve into the lived experience of the victims and perpetrators and how the harm impacted them. It was also felt that the interviews would give a voice to the police members who dealt with the policies, processes and procedures that guided their responses to high-risk family violence (Cooper and Schindler, 2008, Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4.4.1 Method 4 – Interviews – Participants

High-risk repeat family violence has been a complex issue and an ongoing concern for the government, police and courts. The harm has also had a devastating impact on victims from many different communities and social backgrounds (Hickman and Simpson, 2003). Due to the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence and the extent to which the harm permeated society, comprehensive data collection from the stakeholders was essential.

Creswell (2007) indicated the importance of selecting the most appropriate participants for qualitative interviews. Therefore, to ensure this research explored the most appropriate facets of the high-risk repeat family violence management process, the research planned to interview victims and perpetrators of the harm. Police members who had responded to harm and magistrates who presided over high-risk repeat family violence cases were the subjects to be interviewed on the service delivery side.

3.4.4.2 Method 4 – Interviews – Victims and perpetrators

Creswell (2007) previously suggested that the most appropriate participants should be identified for the interview phase of the research. Due to the victims and perpetrators having been exposed to high-risk repeat family violence, they were identified as the most appropriate participants to take part in the interview phase of this research. Therefore, this research sought a balanced number of female and male victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence, and it was decided to interview twenty participants to achieve this balance (Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Turner, 2010). However, as participants were volunteering to take part in the research, it was difficult to predict the gender distribution of female and male participants.

The members of the FVIUs had an existing relationship with the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence, therefore, they were best placed to identify anyone who might be prepared to contribute to the study. Each participant who expressed a desire to take part in the interview phase of the research was given the researcher's contact details.

All participants were informed that the interview would be held at their chosen location and have a one-to-one semi-structured informal interview with the researcher. The participants were also advised that the interview process would take approximately forty-five minutes and be audiotaped, with their permission.

The interviews of the victims and perpetrators commenced on the 6th of April 2018 and concluded on the 11th of January 2019. At the commencement of each interview, the researcher conducted a risk assessment of the emotional state of each participant to ensure their wellbeing and suitability to take part.

3.4.4.2.1 Method 4 – Questions – Victims and perpetrators

This research provided a significant and unique opportunity to collect vital data directly from the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. Therefore, the format of the questions in the semi-structured interviews was important (Shearson, 2014). In addition, the design of these questions also helped explore the relationship between the victims and perpetrators and offer insights into the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence (Zimmerman, 2019).

This research utilised a sequential explanatory design, so the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence previously identified in the literature review and the archival and primary data collection helped structure the interview questions.

3.4.4.3 Method 4 – Interviews – Police members

Due to this research examining high-risk repeat family violence, recording the experiences of current serving police members in the SMR was essential. The front-line police members could provide extensive insights into the harm caused in the family environment. Also, they could describe the police practice, policy, procedures, and service delivery that guided their response to the management process of high-risk repeat family violence.

Station Commanders from various police stations within the SMR notified the police members under their line of command about the family violence research conducted by an Inspector in Victoria Police. An ideal number of police participants was twenty serving police members. The most appropriate police members who could enrich the understanding of high-risk repeat family violence were the constables, senior constables, and sergeants. These members have varying police experiences and understand the family violence process. So, it was essential to gain information directly from these police members as they had first-hand knowledge of the impact and complexities of high-risk repeat family violence. Sergeants and senior sergeants typically oversee the family violence management process to ensure compliance with all lawful requirements. This research did not seek to interview police members above the rank of Inspector (Superintendent, Commander, Assistant Commissioner, and Deputy Commissioner) as members of those ranks do not have a current direct relationship with the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. Their input into the family violence process would be strategic and procedural. This research sought a representative sample of police members' gender, rank, service and experience to provide a balanced interview response.

Each police member who volunteered to participate in the interview process with the researcher selected the most suitable time and location for their interview. However, most interviews were scheduled to be conducted in the police station where the participant was stationed. The police interviews commenced on the 7th of September 2018 and concluded on the 6th of December 2018. Each police member taking part in this research had previously participated in numerous interviews as part of their regular duties, a risk assessment of the emotional state of each participant was not judged to be required at the commencement or during the interview.

3.4.4.3.1 Method 4 – Questions – Police members

The questions developed for this phase of the semi-structured interviews were designed explicitly for police members who responded to high-risk repeat family violence. The questions were also designed to allow the opportunity to explore the length of service the police members had and the approximate number of times they had responded to family violence. Therefore, it was essential to capture each police member's extensive experience of responding to, and managing, high-risk repeat family violence. This could help understand the management process of high-risk repeat family violence.

The police interview questions were broken down into themes to address the essential aspects of responding to high-risk repeat family violence.

3.4.4.4 Method 4 – Interviews – Magistrates

The Victorian Government (2016) previously recognised the extent to which family violence had impacted the victims and the community in Victoria. To help reduce the harm and introduce an integrated approach to the harm, the Victorian Government (2016) implemented the ‘Family Violence Rolling Action Plan 2017-2020’. Victoria Police played a significant role in the family violence action plan, but one of the most critical roles in the family violence management process was the Magistrates’ Court of Victoria.

One of the recommendations emanating from the VRCIFV (2016) was that all family violence matters should be determined in specialist family violence courts in order to achieve greater consistency in dealing with family violence (Victorian Government, 2020). To help enhance the family violence hearing process, new Specialist Family Violence Courts were created across Victoria (Victorian Government, 2020).

To help understand the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence and the impact of the harm on the Victorian Court system, this research aimed to interview three Magistrates who presided over family violence matters in the Victorian Magistrates’ Courts. The interviews with family violence Magistrates were intended to enhance the understanding of the issues faced by the Courts and their impact on the victims and perpetrators of the harm.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in conjunction with Victoria Police, and a Research Agreement was granted between Victoria Police and the Swinburne University of Technology to undertake the research. The Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) approved the request to undertake research involving Victoria Police, and the research approval reference is RCC 822.

This research was approved by the Swinburne University Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) on the 29th of January 2016. The SHR Project number is 2016/009, and the initially approved duration was from the 1st of February 2016 to the 30th of November 2016 inclusive. All research about the quick response data collection instrument (Survey), focus groups, and interviews were conducted according to the ethics approval requirements and any subsequent modifications. As each phase of the research was

completed, the results were analysed, and the outcomes of the data collection informed the next phase. Often, the preceding data indicated that more in-depth information was required to provide further clarity to help answer the research questions.

All participants in research were informed that taking part in this research was voluntary, and they were not under any obligation to consent to participate. The participants' welfare, mental health and emotional safety was a priority in this research. Therefore, prior to the commencement of each phase of the research, a risk assessment of each participant was conducted by way of discussions, observations and confirmation that the person taking part was emotionally fit to do so and was able to give informed consent. All care was taken to ensure that no other person that may have been involved in the high-risk repeat family violence was present.

This research planned to conduct all victim and perpetrator interviews in locations that provided the participants with the most security and comfort. Those locations included a police station or the participant's home. After the interviews, follow-up telephone calls were made to each participant to ensure they had not had any adverse experiences resulting from the interviews. All police members who participated in the interviews were familiar with the interview process, and all police interviews were conducted at a police station of the participant's choice. To ensure no power imbalance, each senior sergeant in charge of the relevant police stations described the PhD research to the police members under their command. They also informed all volunteers that the researcher was a current Inspector in Victoria Police.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the purpose of the research and examined the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence in the SMR of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. Police were the primary responders to high-risk family violence, so a police lens was considered appropriate when determining the proper methodology. Due to the aims of this research, mixed methods were identified as the best model to help understand the drivers and issues that impacted high-risk repeat family violence (Saunders et al., 2012).

This chapter detailed the mixed methods utilised in this research and provided an overview of the quantitative and qualitative research process. The benefit of exploratory research was the flexibility it offered. This helped gain insights into the specific drivers and issues that impacted police processes, procedures, and service delivery when responding to

family violence. Consequently, a mixed-methods approach was used, and a sequential explanatory research design was adopted to guide the quantitative phase and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the outcomes of the data collection processes described in this Chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: Data Collection

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the data collection process using the research plan and the methodology previously identified as appropriate for this study. Saunders et al. (2012) emphasised ensuring that the plan's design supports the collection of the data required to answer the research questions. This research utilised a sequential explanatory research design, and Salkind (2014) stressed the importance of demonstrating how the data was collected (Ponto, 2015).

This discussion will also provide an insight into who participated in the collection of data and how their experiences added to the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence. The chapter will also explain where the data collection occurred and why some planned data collection processes were unsuccessful. This research examined archival family violence data and then utilised a specifically designed one-page quick response survey with questions that captured the experiences of the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence (Saunders et al., 2012).

The results of the one-page quick response survey, police focus groups, victims, perpetrators and police interviews will also be explored to see how that information has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence (Harrell and Bradley, 2009). Finally, this chapter will also discuss the limitations experienced in this research and the data management process used to secure this research.

4.2 Data collection – Archival data

An essential phase in this research was to obtain existing archival family violence data from Victorian CSA. With the introduction of the Crime Statistics Act (2014), the Chief Statistician and the CSA were able to receive Victoria Police LEAP family violence data from the Chief Commissioner of Victoria Police (CSA, 2017; 2019). The Crime Statistics Act (2014) also authorised the CSA to process, analyse and publish Victorian crime statistics independent of Victoria Police (CSA, 2019). The importance of the archival data collected from the CSA was that it was an independent assessment of the existing family violence data and was an essential step in the sequential explanatory research design for this study. The data also provided an historical overview of the issues and drivers

reported to Victoria Police and helped design the questions in the survey phase of the research.

The archival data provided a comprehensive breakdown of the number of family violence incidents in the SMR over an extended period. The data also identified how the intervention order process impacted family violence. The data helped the researcher to understand the numbers of females and males who were victims of family violence. It also demonstrated the extent to which males and females were the perpetrators of the harm that occurred in the family environment. Another critical issue in understanding the impact of family violence was examining the CSA data on family relationships between the victims and the perpetrators. Notably, the archival data revealed how FVIOs contributed to the cycle of harm.

The CSA archival data revealed the extent to which specific family violence drivers such as mental health, drugs and alcohol contributed to the harm in the family environment. The CSA archival data in this research was existing data available for any member of the public requesting the information. The CSA responded to specific requests for data by providing PDF format and Excel data sets. In addition, the official CSA website was accessed. Agency family violence publications also contributed to the understanding of family violence.

4.3 Data collection - Survey testing

To ensure surveys used in the quantitative phase of the research added to the collection of relevant data that could help answer the research questions, Salkind (2014) suggested that there is value in testing the structure and content of the survey with people who had not used it previously. After the initial survey design, front-line police members from various police stations in the SMR independently checked the survey to ensure that it was clear, easily understood, and visually engaging to the person completing the survey (Dillman et al., 2014; Glasow, 2005; Ponto, 2015).

A broad cross-section of female and male sworn police members with extensive police experience of various ages and police ranks tested the survey. Unsworn (Public Servants) police members also volunteered to test the survey. To ensure the survey was fit for purpose and easy to understand, a cross-section of the community helped test and evaluate the structure, flow, themes, and questions. The public participants included people

who had attended the police station on existing business and accepted the invitation to participate in the testing.

It was crucial that the police members testing the survey identified any potential gaps or weaknesses in the data collection process (Salkind, 2014). Therefore, each police member who participated in survey testing was asked to provide feedback on the themes and sequence of the questions. The themes included the age and gender of the victims and perpetrators. The survey explored the ethnic background, the type of family violence experienced, un-reported family violence and breaches of an existing FVIO. Notably, the survey explored the impact of drivers such as drugs, alcohol and mental health. The police members also evaluated the survey format and how the participants might respond. After survey testing, each police member provided direct feedback to an assessor, a Senior Sergeant from the SMR Performance and Audit Unit.

The police members who tested the survey recommended retaining the existing themes and the use of contrasting colours to separate the relevant questions. They indicated that separating the specific themes and questions with contrasting colours enhanced the flow of the questions and reduced the processing time. The police members who tested the survey found that asking the questions and recording the responses took an average of ten minutes. If English was not a participant's first language, there was no significant increase in the processing time.

The information and feedback provided to the researcher by the Senior Sergeant assessor indicated that the police members were satisfied with the survey and only suggested minor amendments to the design. Consequently, a formal report was not provided to the researcher by the Senior Sergeant. Instead, the recommended amendments were introduced into the survey before the data collection phase commenced.

4.3.1 Data collection - Survey time frame

After the previous examination of the Victoria Police LEAP family violence data and consultation with the SMR family violence experts, Victoria Police analysts suggested the best survey data collection period would be between the 1st of March 2016 to the 30th of December 2016. The survey data collection period suggested by police analysts provided the most significant data collection opportunities over various seasons and specific events within the region.

An application was made to the SMR Leadership Group to conduct the survey data collection based on the recommendation of the police analysts. The Regional Leadership Group indicated that the data collection could proceed but only approved the survey data collection time frame from the 1st of March 2016 and required it to conclude on or before the 30th of November 2016. The data collection complied with the reduced time frame approved by the SMR Leadership Group.

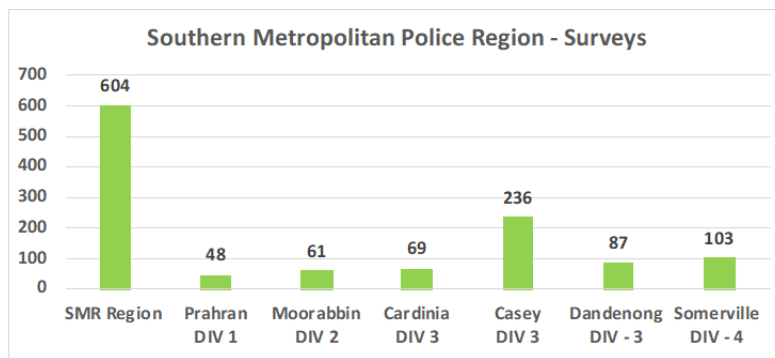
4.3.2 Data collection – Surveys

The FVIU members described the research to the participants and the purpose of the surveys. Each person was asked if they would like to participate in the research so their experiences in high-risk repeat family violence could be captured and help enhance the existing data and knowledge. Each victim and perpetrator who consented to participating in the survey process was informed that they were not obliged to do so and participation was voluntary. The welfare, mental health and emotional safety was a priority, and no participant was required to attend any police facility or location for the sole purpose of completing the survey for this research. Additionally, the survey was conducted in an environment isolated from other family members who may have been part of the high-risk repeat family violence. Finally, a single page survey was used for each participant, and no identifying data were recorded on the survey to ensure that all responses were anonymous. By the police asking the questions then recording the responses of the participants took approximately 5 minutes for each survey.

Previously Glasow (2005) suggested that a balanced study would include an equal number of male and female participants in the survey phase of the research. The research design used in this study methodology recognised it might not be possible to get an equal number of males and females. However, the research plan was for at least five hundred participants in the survey phase of the data collection. After the survey data collection period, an analysis of the responses found that six hundred and four participants had responded to the survey, which was above the anticipated five hundred responses. In addition, an examination of the survey data revealed that four hundred and ninety-five females and one hundred and nine males participated in the survey phase of the research.

Due to environmental and social demographics and the police involvement in high-risk repeat family violence, the number of surveys varied significantly across the FVIUs. A total of 604 surveys were completed within the region, and the Casey FVIU completed two

hundred and thirty-six. The number of surveys conducted by the Casey FVIU represented the high number of victims and perpetrators they manage in the family violence process. The lower number of surveys completed by the remaining FVIU was approximately proportional to the number of victims and perpetrators they managed. The breakdown of the surveys is presented in **Graph 4.1**. It reflects the extent to which participants from each FVIU volunteered to take part in the research.



Graph 4.1. Source: Survey data

4.4 Data collection – Focus Groups

The inclusion of focus groups in this research enabled the researcher to obtain specific information about high-risk repeat family violence issues and drivers. In addition, the focus groups were structured to gather information concerning the operational value and the contribution to police practice of the one-page quick response survey. Finally, the focus groups also helped determine critical steps required for police practice and procedures to move forward, with a view to help break the cycle of violence, based on the information derived from the survey (Jackson et al., 2007; Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Salkind, 2013).

This research planned to utilise two focus groups with SMR Victoria Police FVIU members. However, due to extensive enquiries about the research from regional FVIU members, three focus groups were held with ten FVIU members participating (Jackson et al., 2007; Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Salkind, 2013). Due to the additional focus group, all SMR FVIUs were represented in the focus group research and evaluated the survey data collection's strengths, weaknesses, and operational value (Gibbs, 1997; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Salkind, 2013). They also provided advice about the impact of the data collected compared to existing data collected using the VP-L17.

To enable the focus groups to proceed as planned, the Assistant Commissioner of the SMR instructed that the daily operational functions of the FVIUs were not to be impacted by staff attending the focus groups. Therefore, each focus group was limited by the number of

staff available on the day. As a result, however, ten FVIU members participated in the three focus groups. Those members included seven male and three female members. The ranks were four sergeants and six senior constables from the FVIUs. Notwithstanding the limitation of only ten participants in the focus groups phase of the research, this did not detract from the data collection and information gathered. Each of the police participants was a current member of FVIU's and were experts in high-risk repeat family violence and had extensive exposure and experience managing all aspects of the family violence process.

The participants of the first focus group requested that it be held at the Swinburne University of Technology campus. Four FVIU members from SMR Police Divisions 1 and 2 attended. Each member had extensive experience with the impact of high-risk repeat family violence within their respective divisions. Hence, their contribution to the focus group was highly significant, and the feedback and the specific information they provided reflected the diversity of the divisions they represented. They also provided extensive advice about the one-page survey and its contribution to the Victoria Police family violence data collection process.

The second focus group was held in the Division 3 FVIU office and consisted of four male participants and included two sergeants and two senior constables. Each member had extensive experience within the culturally diverse environment of Division 3. The challenges faced by these members in high-risk repeat family violence were considerable and this enabled them to contribute to the aims of the focus groups.

Due to operational requirements, only two members within Division 4 were available to participate in the third focus group held at their office. That included one male and one female senior constable. Both members had gained extensive experience within their divisions. Their expertise added to the knowledge gained in the previous two focus groups and added further insight into the value and contribution the survey could make to the Victoria Police family violence data collection.

The participants in the focus groups were current serving members of Victoria Police, so they provided their name, police rank, Victoria Police number and their relevant police unit/station as required by police practice. However, the only reference made to these police members in any subsequent non-police report referred to as "A Senior Constable" or "A Sergeant". All identifying information provided by the participants was recorded by the researcher and stored by him as directed by Victoria Police.

4.4.1 Data collection – Focus Groups – Police researcher

The researcher previously mentioned he was a member of Victoria Police and held the rank of Inspector with thirty-eight years of experience and had an in-depth understanding of high-risk repeat family violence (Holder, 2011; Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Saidin and Yaacob, 2017). As an Inspector in Victoria Police, the researcher did not have direct or indirect line-control or supervision of any of the police participants in the focus groups. The researcher did not have any influence in the selection or volunteering of any participant. To ensure the focus groups were free and open and enabled the participants to discuss all aspects of the research, the researcher's participation was limited. The researcher's initial role in the focus groups included an explanation of the process, the introduction of the facilitator and a PowerPoint slide presentation incorporating a sample of the data collected using the survey (Douglas et al., 2018; Salkind, 2013; Saunders et al., 2016). After the introductions, the researcher withdrew from each focus group, and the facilitator continued with the discussions.

4.4.2 Data collection – Focus Groups – Facilitator

To ensure the aims of the focus groups were achieved and to assist in the transition from the quantitative phase to the qualitative phase, an experienced facilitator participated and led the discussions with each of the police focus groups (Burrows and Kendall, 1997; Krueger, 1994, 1998; O.Nyumba et al., 2018; Saunders et al., 2012). As part of this process, the facilitator requested that their identity not be disclosed in this thesis. However, the facilitator is well known to the researcher. The facilitator was not a member of Victoria Police, did not have any professional affiliation or pecuniary interest in the focus presentations or the outcome of the research. However, the facilitator was a company director and had extensive experience as a facilitator and convener of focus groups, research enquiries and large company meetings. The facilitator also possessed the interpersonal skills, personal qualities and knowledge of police procedures relevant to the focus groups. As a result, a relaxed and comfortable environment was created for the police members to participate (Douglas et al., 2018; Gibbs, 1997; O.Nyumba et al., 2018).

Each focus group examined high-risk repeat family violence and the issues and drivers, so a comprehensive understanding of the research process was beneficial (Gibbs, 1997; Douglas et al., 2018). The facilitator was experienced in the requirements of valid and reliable research and held the qualifications of Bachelor of Science (Univ.Melb.), Bachelor

of Business (Monash Univ.) and a Graduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (Swin. Univ). The facilitator successfully guided the police members in the discussions in the focus groups by utilising background teaching qualifications and extensive business experience (Douglas et al., 2018).

4.4.3 Data collection – Focus Groups – Process

The focus groups complied with the requirements of the SHR Ethics Approval, and each police participant was supplied with a Plain Language Statement and was required to read and complete a Consent Form.

Each participant was informed that the focus group would not exceed two hours in duration. All police participants had previously contributed to similar meetings, and, as a result, the allocated time frames were not exceeded. Every participant was informed that the focus group was audio recorded as part of the normal Victoria Police process. After each focus group, the recording was transcribed verbatim; however, no identifying information was transcribed or recorded. In addition, each participant was given a code number and referred to as 'Member 1-2-3 or 4', depending on the number in each focus group (Morgan and Spanish, 1984).

4.4.4 Data collection – Focus Groups – Feedback

The police members in the focus groups were able to provide extensive feedback about the survey design and the data collected and also helped structure the questions in the qualitative interview stage of the data collection plan (Jackson et al., 2007; Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Salkind, 2013; O.Nyumba et al., 2018).

The feedback provided by the focus group participants indicated that the survey content was valuable. However, as the VP-L17 posed similar questions to those at the beginning of the survey, duplication needed to be avoided. Most participants found the survey format was concise, and the questions were easy to follow. However, two participants felt the questions about alcohol were fragmented and needed to be consecutive. In addition, the members found that the option of using a tick or circle to record a response to questions made it easier to complete the survey. They were also satisfied that the survey did not require any significant narrative to gather information from the victims and perpetrators. The participants in the focus groups were able to provide comprehensive advice

on the most appropriate steps required for police practice and procedures to move forward and help break the cycle of violence (Douglas et al., 2018; Gibbs, 1997).

4.5 Data collection – Victim and perpetrator interviews

To ensure this research added to the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence, members of Victoria Police identified various victims and perpetrators exposed to high-risk repeat family violence that the SMR FVIUs managed (Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Turner, 2010). Creswell (2007) and Denzin and Lincoln (2011) stressed the importance of including a balanced number of males and females in the research interview process. The interviews of victims and perpetrators in this data collection process gathered information from various people with different social backgrounds, geographic locations and experiences with family violence. The research aimed to interview twenty high-risk repeat family violence participants. However, due to the complexity of the harm suffered, it was difficult to predict how many victims and perpetrators would volunteer for the interview process.

The interviews of victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence commenced on the 6th of April 2018 and concluded on the 11th of January 2019. As a result of the FVIU members discussing the objectives of this research and the valuable contribution the victims and perpetrators could make to help understanding the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, thirty-one people volunteered to take part in the interview process. Although the FVIU members did not specifically try to recruit an equal number of male and female participants, a balance was achieved. Thirty-one people volunteered to participate in this research, including sixteen females and fifteen males. Fifteen females and fifteen males were the victims of high-risk repeat family violence, and one female participant was a perpetrator of high-risk repeat family violence.

During the data collection phase, this research found that, although police had identified one female and two males as the victims of high-risk repeat family violence, FVIOs had been taken out against them by their current or former spouses.

4.5.1 Data collection – Victim and perpetrator interview process

The interviews of the victims and perpetrators complied with all aspects of the SHR Ethics Approval.

Each of the interviews conducted by the researcher with the participants was a one-to-one semi-structured interview. All participants were able to have a support person present during their interview; only two participants decided to have a support person present; the researcher ensured that this person was not part of the family violence process. Each participant chose the time and location of their interview. Apart from three interviews, all interviews were conducted in the comfort and privacy of the participant's own home. Due to privacy issues, three participants elected to be interviewed at a Police Station nominated by them.

Each participant consented to the interviews being recorded except for one victim who asked the researcher to take extensive notes of the conversation during the interview. After the interview, the participant reviewed the notes and was satisfied with the content. Most interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. However, some interviews lasted over one hour as the participant wanted to contribute more information about their lived experiences and the impact of high-risk repeat family violence. After the interviews, follow-up telephone calls were made to each participant to ensure they had not had any adverse experiences resulting from participation in the interviews.

A significant and unique contribution to this data collection was the interviews with four high-risk repeat family violence victims who were current serving members of Victoria Police. Those members consisted of one female police member and three male police members and their lived experiences helped identify several issues within Victoria Police that impacted the management of high-risk repeat family violence.

In summary, the data collection plan enabled 604 surveys to be completed that expanded on existing knowledge of the drivers and high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, the interviews of victims and perpetrators complemented the data collected in the surveys and helped guide the structure of the interviews of Victoria Police members.

4.6 Data collection – Police member interviews

After the surveys, focus groups, and victim and perpetrator interviews, the data collection plan included interviews with front-line police members and FVIU experts from the SMR. Their expertise provided an overview of the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence and how police practice and policies guided their responses and service delivery to those involved in family violence (Saunders et al., 2012, 2016).

Station Commanders from various police stations within the region notified their respective members about this high-risk repeat family violence research. Subsequently, forty-one serving police members of various ranks ranging from Constable to Inspector volunteered to participate in the interviews. The interviews commenced on the 7th of August 2018 and concluded on the 6th of December 2018. Each police member provided information about their experiences with police practice, policy, procedures and service delivery that guided them when they focussed on high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, each police member who volunteered to participate in this research was familiar with the interview process as they had previously participated in numerous interviews as part of their regular duties.

The research plan found that an ideal number of police participants of various ranks and family violence experience would be twenty serving police members. The most appropriate police members to help enrich the understanding of high-risk repeat family violence and help answer the research questions were constables, senior constables, and sergeants (Creswell, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Turner, 2010). The operational requirements were a priority for Victoria Police during the year and took precedence over this research, therefore, it was impossible to predict the number of police participants who would be able to participate in the interview phase.

Of the police members interviewed in this research, 11 were female, and 30 were male. Thus, this sample provided a representative snapshot of the male/female police ratio within Victoria Police (Ponto, 2015; Salkind, 2014). The Victoria Police Annual Report 2017-2018 (2018) indicated that female members were 28%, and male members were 72% of the total sworn police members. The proportion of female and male police members who participated in this research was 27% females, and 73% were males. Thus, the ratio of police members interviewed was consistent with male and female officers within the police force.

4.6.1 Data collection – Police interview process

The police interviews complied with the SHR Ethics Approval.

Each police interview was semi-structured and was specifically designed to enable the data collection plan to be operationalised in order to obtain rich information about the issues and drivers of high-risk repeat family violence as reported by police experts. It was essential to capture the lived experiences of each police member who had responded to

family violence harm. The interview process also enabled police members to discuss the impact of the policies, processes and procedures that guided their responses to high-risk family violence (Cooper and Schindler, 2008; Saunders et al., 2016). All police interviews were conducted in police stations within the SMR, selected by the participants and were all recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Due to the requirements of Victoria Police's normal police process, the researcher recorded each police member's full name and rank. However, the researcher kept those details and only used the first name of each participant for data-matching purposes. Therefore, no police member could have been identified based on their interviews.

4.7 Data collection – Magistrate interviews

When the research plan was considered in the methodology chapter, the research identified the extent to which Magistrates could enhance the understanding of the issues faced by the Courts. Initial discussions with a representative of the Victorian Magistrates' Court suggested the researcher could interview three Magistrates to gain an insight into their experiences of the family violence judicial process. However, the three Magistrates' permission was withdrawn for reasons beyond the researcher's control. Hence, a comprehensive understanding of the judicial process from a Magistrate's perspective could not be achieved.

4.8 Data collection – Data management

All surveys, recordings of focus groups, interviews, hard copy transcripts and encrypted memory storage devices were secured in the SMR Performance and Audit's combination safe located in the Dandenong Police Station Complex. The approved combination safe was restricted to the SMR Performance and Audit Unit members. All data, 604 survey sheets, three focus groups and seventy-two recorded interviews and an encrypted memory stick will remain secured in the Performance and Audit Unit's combination safe for not less than five years ending in November 2023.

4.9 Data collection - Ethical Considerations

All focus groups and interviews of victims, perpetrators and police members were conducted in compliance with the Victoria Police RCC 822 (RCC) and the SUHREC Ethics approval 2016/009 and any subsequent ethical modifications. Due to all data for this

research having been collected, the SUHREC Ethics Final Report Form was completed and submitted and the submission was acknowledged, as required.

4.10 Data collection - Research limitations

The Victoria Police RCC 822 provided the authorisation to conduct interviews with victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. The RCC 822 also included interviews of current police members in this research. However, after the commencement of the interview phase of the study and due to operational restrictions, limitations were placed on the FVIU's ability to identify enough suitable participants for the interview process. However, a significant sample of the victim and perpetrator participants was required to ensure a representative sample of victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence (Lysova, 2015; Whiteley, 2012). Another research limitation was the unexpected withdrawal of the approval for three Magistrates to participate in this research. Although not critical to the research, it reduced the opportunity to gain a comprehensive understanding of the repeat family violence management process and its impact on the judicial system.

4.11 Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed overview of the data collection process and the flexibility of exploratory research methods. It also discussed the extensive data collection plan used to obtain the quantitative and qualitative data. A sequential explanatory research design was adopted to guide the mixed methods data collection process in each phase of the research (Driscoll Appiah-Yeboah Salib and Rupert, 2007). The data collection plan recognised the different types of information required to understand the impact of the drivers and issues related to high-risk repeat family violence.

This chapter also discussed each phase of the research plan. The plan identified that over 500 surveys would contribute to the quantitative research. The FVIU members completed 604 one-page surveys, which helped guide the qualitative data collection. The qualitative data collection consisted of three focus groups and semi-structured interviews of thirty-one victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. It also included interviews of forty-one serving police members who had responded to numerous family violence incidents. Of note, the chapter also discussed the absence of Magistrates' interviews.

Chapter 5 will discuss the data collected and analyse the surveys' results and the implications of that data. The chapter will also examine the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence data to help identify the issues and drivers that impacted on them. In addition, the results of the focus groups will enable the exploration of the impact of the surveys and how that data collection can contribute to police practice and procedures. Furthermore, the interviews of the victims, perpetrators and police members will be assessed to examine how the data collected will contribute to answering the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the data collected during the data collection stage and the analyses of that data. The issues and factors identified in the literature review guided the structure of the methodology process used to gather the data required to answer the research questions. A sequential explanatory research design guided the data collection. This included the completion of 604 surveys by the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence, 3 focus groups consisting of a total of 10 FVIU police experts with each SMR Police Division represented, the interviews of 30 victims of high-risk repeat family violence and 1 perpetrator of the harm. The data collection also utilised the experience of 41 front-line police members who had extensive experience in responding to, and managing, high-risk repeat family violence. The quantitative data analysis from the survey phase contained questions structured around the review of the Victoria Police LEAP data collection and the literature review. The literature review identified various issues and drivers contributing to the harm of high-risk repeat family violence to victims. Therefore, although this research collected data from each police division in the SMR, a regional approach was only taken in the analysis if a particular issue was identified that required a divisional-level discussion.

The data analysis explored the extent to which the issues and drivers impacted the victims of the harm and how police responded to the violence. After each issue and driver was explored, surveys and interviews were incorporated to help illustrate the issues and drivers. The narratives from the lived experiences of the victims, perpetrators and police members added to the description of the research analysis. Multiple factors also impacted the way police managed and responded to family violence. Therefore, this chapter explores the themes and outcomes that emerged naturally from the lived experiences of the victims, perpetrators and police members (Dunne, 2011; Morse, 2008; Munhall and Chenail, 2008). In analysing the data in this chapter, charts, tables, and text will be utilised to present the information obtained from the surveys, focus groups and interviews (Saunders et al., 2012). In addition, this chapter will explain the broader context of high-risk repeat family violence.

5.2 Analysis – Profile of high-risk repeat family violence victims

An essential factor in managing, and responding to, high-risk repeat family violence was identifying the AFMs (Victims) within the SMR. By understanding the gender profile

of the victims, this research had the opportunity to determine if police had provided a balanced response to all victims of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, the research identified valuable information that helped enrich the understanding of the gender profile of the victims.

The CSA (2019) data highlighted family violence victims' profiles. The reporting periods of 2013-14 to 2017-18 (CSA, 2019) found that females were 75% of all victims whilst males were 25% of family violence victims. The analysis of the six hundred and four surveys revealed that the regional victim profile of high-risk repeat family violence was 82% female, while 18% were male. However, as not all participants' ages were captured during the survey phase, it was not prudent to provide an analysis on partial data. Some police interviews reflected similar views of the profile of victims of high-risk repeat family violence as the CSA (2019) found. For example, Senior Constable 1, a male police member, said:

“There have been quite a few males [victims] but less than 5%... I know a lot of [police] members will just brush males [victims] off”.

On the other hand, Constable 4, a male police member with one and half years of experience, said: “I would say between 20 and 30% of AFM's [victims] are male”.

Even though the survey data provided an overview of the gender profile of the victims, the victim interviews in this research provided more in-depth and comprehensive information about the victim profile. Therefore, the victim interviews did not reflect the CSA (2019) results or the survey data analysis results. Of the thirty-one participants interviewed, thirty were identified as high-risk repeat family violence victims, and one was a perpetrator. The breakdown of that data revealed that fifteen females and fifteen males were the victims of high-risk repeat family violence who participated in this research.

Each of the participants in this research was self-selecting, therefore, the analysis of the victim interviews may reflect the extent male victims were in the high-risk repeat family violence environment. This view was echoed by Sergeant 8 when she stated:

“Once you hit reality and you're out on the streets, you very quickly become aware there are male AFMs [victims]”.

The extent of males being part of the victim profile was articulated by Constable 10 when she said, “the balance of male and female AFMs is 50/50. They are equal”.

An analysis of the victim and perpetrator interviews provided comprehensive information that can add to the knowledge of the gender profile of victims of high-risk repeat family violence. For example, the average age of the female victims in the interview phase

of the research was 37 years. The youngest female victim was 23 years of age, and the oldest was 66. The average age of the male victims of high-risk repeat family violence was higher at 49 years. The youngest male victim was 34 years old, and the oldest male was a 79-year-old.

Table 5.1 contains a breakdown of the profile of the high-risk repeat family violence victims who participated in the interview phase of this research.

Victims of High-Risk Repeat Family Violence Profiles			
Number	Gender	Age	Victim - Perpetrator
1	Female	33	Victim
2	Female	40	Victim
3	Male	40	Victim
4	Male	38	Victim – Perpetrator
5	Female	23	Victim – Perpetrator
6	Male	47	Victim
7	Female	51	Victim
8	Female	37	Victim
9	Female	26	Victim
10	Female	48	Victim
11	Male	51	Victim
12	Female	45	Victim
13	Male	50	Victim
14	Female	66	Victim
15	Male	79	Victim
16	Male	54	Victim
17	Male	43	Victim
18	Female	38	Victim
19	Female	32	Victim
20	Male	46	Victim
21	Male	60	Victim
22	Male	46	Victim
23	Female	33	Victim
24	Female	46	Victim
25	Male	47	Victim
26	Male	58	Victim
27	Female	43	Victim
28	Female	39	Victim
29	Male	51	Victim – Perpetrator
30	Male	34	Victim - Perpetrator

(Table 5.1: Source: Analysis of victim interview data)

5.3 Analysis – Profile of high-risk repeat family violence perpetrators

When the survey data were analysed, the results presented an understanding of the gender profile of perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence in the survey phase of the research. The analysis of the 604 surveys revealed that 82% of all perpetrators were males, and 18% were females. Some police members who participated in the interview phase also indicated that males were predominantly the perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. For example, Constable 4 stated that “females as respondent [of family violence] would be

30%”. Sergeant 7 said, “Women are probably the same; 10-15% are respondents [perpetrators]”.

The analysis of the victim and perpetrator interviews did not replicate the perpetrator gender profile of the surveys. Instead, the interviews indicated that five participants had been identified as perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, three males and two females had been identified as the perpetrators of the harm. However, further analysis of the interview data revealed that only one female, aged 36, and was the actual perpetrator of high-risk repeat family violence in this research. In addition, one female and three males who had been recorded as perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence indicated that they had false reports of violence made against them to the police.

In each instance, after the attending police members had made the female and two males the victims of high-risk repeat family violence, their current or former partners had subsequently made applications for an FVIO. The interview analysis indicated that the application for the FVIO against the victims was to negate any police charges resulting from the family violence. For example, Victim 4 indicated that his wife, the perpetrator, applied for an intervention order to gain free accommodation at a women’s family violence refuge centre after the police charged her. He then said that if his wife “reported that she had suffered from family violence, she was informed that she had a chance of not being charged with any criminal charges”.

5.4 Analysis - Focus in high-risk repeat family violence

To help this research answer the research questions, it was important to explore the extent of a gender focus in high-risk repeat family violence by the police, courts and the government. This was because the impact of family violence and the gender focus had been an ongoing issue for a considerable time. In addition, there was an ongoing scholarly debate about who the victims of family violence were, and that had influenced how assistance and support was provided to all victims of high-risk repeat family violence by police and the government (Bates, 2019; Trotter, 2019; Wallace et al., 2019). If there was a specific gender focus in the response to high-risk repeat family violence by police then all victims, regardless of gender, may not be protected and supported by the police, courts and the relevant agencies.

The qualitative data analysis in this research found that high-risk repeat family violence proved to be very complex. In many cases, the response by police to the reported

family violence had not supported all victims of the harm, therefore, they had not been balanced (Machado et al., 2017; Zimmermann, 2019). Victim 27 revealed the gender focus in high-risk repeat family violence when he said:

“I had thirty-five pages of evidence about what she did...I kept everything. The police only believed her and the lies she told”.

Victim 24 also highlighted the existing gender focus by police in high-risk repeat family violence when she said:

“My father called me and said that my mother had ripped his shirt off and was scratching him and just losing it, and he was trying to get away. The police members attended...they refused to put a Safety Notice in place because they didn’t want to put her [Mother perpetrator] in the system”.

The police response to high-risk repeat family violence must, by law, be balanced, and all circumstances of each event considered to enable a fair outcome. Therefore, failing to take the appropriate action to protect the male victim of family violence when it was reported, demonstrated that Victoria Police did not have a balanced approach high-risk repeat family violence in all cases. Previous research by Machado et al. (2017) also indicated police did have a gender focus on family violence (Bohall et al., 2016). Constable 3 highlighted the gender focus identified by Machado et al. (2017) when she stated that

“I’d be more inclined to have the male as the aggressor and the female as not ... because in all honesty, getting a brief through here with the male as the AFM is not easy”.

The extent of an existing gender focus in family violence by police in their response to high-risk repeat family violence was evident in the analysis of the police interview data. Constable 10 stated:

“It’s been plenty of times where I’ve gone to an incident I have seen it [Gender focus], I have witnessed it”.

The extent of the organisational gender focus in high-risk repeat family violence by Victoria Police was expanded upon by several police members in the interview phase of this research. From a police supervisory perspective, Sergeant 6 articulated the existence of a gender focus in the family violence process when he said, “the preferential treatment that sometimes is clearly evident through the [family violence] process”. The extent of the gender focus in the police approach to family violence was revealed when Senior Constable

6 stated: “I was told by an [Police] instructor that females are always the AFM, no matter what”.

The issue of the gender focus in high-risk repeat family violence was highlighted in the police interviews when twenty-eight of the forty-one police participants indicated that there was a gender focus in family violence in the police area where the research was located. The extent of the gender focus identified by the police participants was articulated by an Inspector when he stated:

“I believe it’s an organisation perception [gender focus], yes. It’s clearly oriented towards having the male as the respondent”.

5.5 Analysis – Family violence relationships

Due to the harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence, it was essential to understand the relationships in the family environment that posed the most significant risk to victims of that harm. Police should help remove the victims from violent relationships (Brillon et al., 1996; Dziewa and Glowacz, 2021; Woods, 2000). To help police provide the most appropriate response to family violence, it was essential to understand the relationships in the family environment.

The current Victoria Police (2019) VP-L17 family violence data collection document contained various family relationships. However, the survey extended the possible relationships in the family environment. The analysis of the survey data provided clarity about the family relationships that presented the most significant risk of harm to the victims in the SMR. Because the Victoria Police (2019) VP-L17 combined several family relationships with a similar meaning, this research also combined them as part of the analysis and recording process. For example, the terms wife and husband had a similar meaning to a spouse, so the analysis combined the data from each relationship.

Table 5.2 contains the types of family relationships that were nominated in the surveys by the victims as part of the family violence process. In this table, ‘other’ has been used by some victims as a relationship other than one previously nominated.

Relationships of Victims and Perpetrators							
Wife	Husband	Spouse	Ex-partner	Parent	Child	Brother	Sister
Grandparent	Grandchild	Aunt	Uncle	Niece	Nephew	Cousin	Other

(Table 5.2: Source: Analysis of survey data)

The analysis of the 604 surveys revealed that 224 ex-partners were at the most significant risk of being victims of harm from the perpetrators. Current spouses also presented considerable harm to victims with 215 of the relationships. The survey analysis

identified that parents were at risk of family violence from their children, with 75 parent/child relationships recorded. Even though 13 child-on-child incidents were recorded, the analysis indicated sisters (n=12) were at risk from either a brother or sister within their family group. Grandparents (n=6) of perpetrators were also at risk of harm from a grandchild group.

Table 5.3 comprehensively summarises the victims’ (AFM’s) relationship to the perpetrator in high-risk repeat family violence across the SMR.

AFM’s Relationship to the Respondent – Survey Data									
	Spouse	Ex-partner	Parent	Child	Brother	Sister	Uncle	Grand parent	Other
SMR Region	215	224	75	13	3	12	6	6	42

(Table 5.3: Source: Analysis of survey data)

An essential part of the victim interview process was to identify which relationships in family violence caused victims the most harm. The survey data provided a list of the family relationships in family violence. Therefore, it was important to explore the lived experiences of each victim in the interview process to ascertain their family relationships with the perpetrators.

The Victoria Police (2019) VP-L17 nominated several family relationships that were part of the family violence environment; however, an analysis of the thirty victim interviews identified five types of relationships. Analysis of the thirty-one interviews indicated the perpetrator’s wife was at the most significant risk of harm in high-risk repeat family violence. **Table 5.4** contains the list of family relationships nominated by the victims.

Relationship of Victims to the Perpetrators				
Wife	Husband	Partner	Parent	Child
13	9	6	2	1

(Table 5.4: Source: Analysis of survey interview data)

5.6 Analysis – Family violence types

The Australian Federal Government indicated various types of harm perpetrated on the victims of family violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). Due to the complexity of the harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence, it was important for this research to identify the harm perpetrated. The government also discussed the need to identify the actual type of family violence suffered by the victim. Therefore, it was essential for this research to understand the participants’ experience of the kind of violence the victims had been exposed to in the home environment. The data collection process and the analysis in

this research provided comprehensive information to inform the Victorian Courts, Police, the Government and family violence support services.

The focus group and interview data analysis indicated that physical violence was not always present in reported family violence. Often, when police attended family violence, difficulties arose trying to identify the type of violence the victims had suffered. The police members found that due to the approach taken to family violence by Victoria Police and the training the members had received, police perceptions of family violence were often different to that of the victims. So, it was important for police to understand what victims of high-risk repeat family violence felt the violence was.

In the survey data collection phase and the victim interviews, each participant could nominate all types of harm they had suffered during their experience of high-risk repeat family violence.

Analysing the surveys, focus groups, and interview data enabled this research to understand the type of harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence. The survey data provided a significant statistical return for the study. In addition, these data helped to provide insights into how each type of harm impacted the victims of high-risk repeat family violence. The types of family violence harm used in each phase of this research were the existing definitions used by Victoria Police. They included physical, sexual, psychological, emotional, economic and behavioural abuse. The analysis of the surveys and the victim interviews revealed different results for each type of family violence.

5.6.1 Analysis – Violence types - Surveys

The analysis of the 604 surveys provided a comprehensive insight into the type of family violence perpetrated on the victims. Emotional family violence was the most significant harm and constituted over a quarter of the recorded violence in the survey phase. Physical family violence made up a quarter of the harm perpetrated in the family environment. Behavioural violence made up just over 20% of the harm, whilst psychological violence was around 15%. Surprisingly, sexual and economic abuse in family violence were both very low in the survey data. Sexual violence was 3%. It is unknown if participants were too afraid or embarrassed to report this information. Further research should be conducted to explore the extent to which this harm has occurred. Economic violence was just over 5% of the reported harm.

5.6.2 Analysis – Violence types – Victim interviews

An analysis of the interview data provided insight into the lived experiences of the harm suffered by the victims of high-risk repeat family violence. Even though the victim interview data used the same types of family violence as the survey data, the results differed. As each participant was encouraged to report all types of family violence, the numbers provided in the interview data analysis reflect how often each type of violence had been nominated. The analysis found that physical and psychological violence had each been reported twenty-two times by victims. Emotional violence had been reported twenty-one times.

Victim 11 described the hidden aspects of the types of family violence when he said his wife was very controlling and the harm was also economic. He explained:

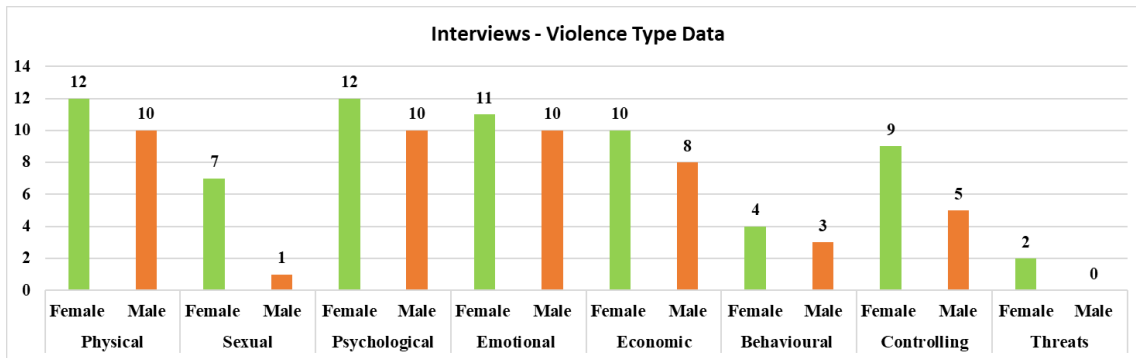
“I always felt like she owned me, really. Like I had no control in the relationship at all. She took my money. She controlled where everything went...she transferred my money out of my bank straight into her account every week”.

Victim 1 provided insight into the types of violence when she said, "It was sexual, emotional and controlling as well". However, Victim 1 further revealed that he had stated that “he will kill me and would kill my parents”. The seriousness of that was reiterated by Victim 2 when she said that the abuse was “physical, economic, controlling and threats to kill”. Therefore, due to the revelation of the grave ‘Threats to kill’ family violence, it was included in the types of family violence. **Table 5.5** contains a comprehensive breakdown of the types of violence nominated by the thirty victims in the interview phase of the research. For example, twenty-two of the thirty victims interviewed indicated they had suffered physical violence.

Types of Family Violence – Victim Interview Data							
Physical	Sexual	Psychological	Emotional	Economic	Behavioural	Controlling	Threats
22	8	22	21	18	7	14	2

(Table 5.5: Source: Analysis of victim interview data)

The analysis of the victim interview data revealed how each type of family violence impacted the victims of that harm. This research had the opportunity to examine the lived experience of the victims of high-risk repeat family violence. The interview data provided a comprehensive breakdown of the violence suffered by females and males. **Graph 5.1** contains an analysis of the gender impact of each family violence type recorded in the interviews of high-risk repeat family violence victims.



(Graph 5.1: Source: Analysis of interview data)

5.7 Analysis – Intervention orders

Victoria Police utilised FVIOs to help break the cycle of harm in high-risk repeat family violence (Victoria Police 2015, 2019). The intervention order process was a valuable legal process that helped protect vulnerable victims and identify the perpetrators of harm in the family environment (Victoria Police 2015, 2019). FVIOs were issued by the Victorian Courts to protect those victims who had experienced violent, threatening or abusive behaviour (VRCIFV, 2016; Lauritsen, 2015).

The analysis of the interview data found that the application for an FVIO by police provided security and safety for some victims. However, others were often not happy with the process. Victim 3 indicated the benefit of an FVIO when he said:

“When I went to the Dandenong Court and received the intervention order, the violence stopped for one year”.

Victim 12 also indicated the benefits when she said:

“I would not be sitting here without it...our lives would have been totally different with it [Intervention Order]”.

However, Victim 5 indicated the FVIO process was an inconvenience when she said:

“That the Intervention Order has actually caused a lot of trouble in my Relationship with my partner”.

Victim 6 was unhappy that the police had applied for an FVIO as the victim did not believe it was necessary, and he said, “I didn’t know it was in place. Why didn’t they tell me?”

Even though the FVIO is intended to protect the victims of family violence, the analysis also found that the application for an intervention order by police was process driven. Sergeant 3 added to that view when he stated:

“When I apply for the Intervention Order, make an application, it doesn’t reflect what I want; it reflects what the Family Violence Code of Practice states as required, and the Victoria Police policy”.

Senior Constable 2 also added to the issue of the FVIO being used to satisfy a process, not the victims. He said:

“So, by ticking all of those [FVIO] boxes, we’re covering our backsides and then the magistrate makes that decision”.

The analysis of the victim interview data revealed that over 80% of all victims of high-risk repeat family violence participating in this research had an FVIO order issued by the Courts. In addition, participants interviewed said the intervention order process had helped stop the harm for extended periods.

5.7.1 Analysis – Family Violence Intervention Order contraventions

As previously discussed, the FVIOs have been an effective way to protect the victims of family violence. Unfortunately, the contravention of existing FVIOs had been an issue for victims, police and the courts. In addition, the regular contraventions of the FVIO process have caused serious operational issues for police members (Napier et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019; Zimmermann, 2017). Constable 2 confirmed this by stating:

“You find many people breaching Intervention Orders especially when there’s two parents involved, and they have kids between them”.

Constable 6 added to the concern of the contravention of the FVIOs when she said:

“We might put Orders [FVIO] in place, and then both of them breach Orders or the AFM invites the respondent to breach the Order”.

The contravention of existing FVIOs had become one of the fastest-growing criminal offences in Victoria (Bytheway, 2015; Oum and Schwebel, 2016). Sergeant 5 indicated he had charged one female perpetrator with thirty offences of contravening an existing FVIO. Oum and Schwebel (2016) also found that contraventions of existing FVIOs were quite common.

The survey data revealed that almost 60% of the participants across the SMR had experienced the contravention of an existing FVIO. In addition, the analysis of the high-risk repeat family violence victim interview data found that 80% (n=25) of the participants indicated their existing FVIO had been contravened.

The data analysis in this research found that the FVIOs had been contravened by the perpetrators and, on occasion, by victims (Zimmermann, 2017). In addition, the analysis of the interviews indicated intervention orders had been contravened to enable the perpetrator to contact a family member, assist a family member, and harass the victims.

5.7.2 Analysis – Family Violence Intervention Orders used to gain an advantage

The focus groups and police interviews analysis revealed that, in the participants' experience, the FVIO process had been used by victims and perpetrators to gain an advantage, especially in the Family Court. Sergeant 8 confirmed that the FVIO process was used for a specific gain when she said:

“100% it [FVIO] is used to manipulate male respondents into losing their parental rights, because they know that it's too expensive for the bloke to go to Family Law Court”.

The interview data suggested that often the victims encouraged the intentional breaching of the FVIO process by the perpetrator to help the victim gain full custody of children and possession of the family home and finances. Parkinson et al. (2010) stated that when a person faced a family law case in Court, some people had been advised to look for any excuse to gain an intervention order before the court case (Zimmermann, 2017). An analysis of the victim interview data found that almost 40% of participants in this research had experienced the FVIO process having been used by a partner to gain an advantage in Court.

The experience of Zimmermann (2017) as a former Law Reform Commissioner in the Law Reform Commission of Western Australia provided professional insight into the abuse of FVIOs. He stated the FVIO application process was often used to gain an advantage in the Court system and not for personal safety or protection (Carpenter et al., 2001; Parkinson et al., 2010). He also articulated that the ‘overwhelming majority’ of Magistrates in Australia were also of that view (Zimmermann, 2017).

Previous research indicated that thirty-eight Magistrates in Queensland, Australia, participated in a survey regarding the FVIO process. Of the thirty-eight participants, over 70% of the Magistrates surveyed stated that, often, the applicant used intervention orders to gain a tactical advantage in court proceedings (Carpenter et al., 2001; Parkinson et al., 2010; Zimmermann, 2017).

Analysis of the interview data suggested that the misuse of the FVIO process was not difficult to do, as police were required to implement the FVIO process, even without any

evidence of any harm in the reported family violence (Parkinson et al., 2010; Zimmermann, 2017). Another issue surrounding the lack of evidence necessary for the FVIO was how false allegations had been made in intervention order applications. Senior Constable 3 mentioned that ‘you cannot be charged with lying to police unless it starts a criminal investigation that turns out to be false’. The member further said, ‘you can say whatever you want to say’ when alleging family violence.

The police participants in the focus groups and interviews indicated that it had been used to gain an advantage in Court due to the frequency and ease of the FVIO process. They advocated that the integrity of the process should be protected. The consensus of the participants' professional view was that legal sanctions and processes should be in place to prosecute any victim or perpetrator who used the FVIO for personal advantage in any legal process.

5.8 Analysis – Drivers of high-risk repeat family violence

The literature review in this research identified that many drivers exacerbated, and contributed to, the harm in high-risk repeat family violence. This research analysed the data that examined the drivers, which directly impacted the ability of Victoria Police to provide a suitable response to the harm in the family environment. Those drivers included mental health, drugs and alcohol. By understanding the data gathered in this research, police and the government should be able to understand the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence better (Anderson, 2013; Malbon et al., 2018; State of Victoria, 2016).

5.8.1 Analysis – Drivers - Mental health

One of the most significant drivers of high-risk repeat family violence identified in this research was mental health. It has been a serious issue in family violence for decades. In addition, mental health added to the complexity of the police response and the risks faced by victims and family members (Smith et al., 2012; Taft 1990). The discipline of mental health is a complex field of study and includes psychiatric disorders, personality disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, paranoia and passive-aggressive behaviour (Hester et al., 2015; Smith et al., 2012; Taft, 1980).

Due to the complexity of mental health and the strong association with family violence, this research only examined the impact of mental health issues on police responses. This research found that the complexity of family violence was too large for police to

address by themselves as an organisation. Zealberg, Christie, Puckett, McAlhany and Durham (1992) also had a similar view of the complexity of mental health issues.

As Zealberg et al. (1992) revealed the complexity of family violence, this research only asked the participants in the interviews if mental health or mental illness issues had contributed to their experiences of high-risk repeat family violence. This research did not explore the various mental health issues that may have been present.

The analysis of the interview data found that Victoria Police had previously introduced mental health education for new police recruits, however, many participants did not feel they had the skills to manage mental health in family violence. The expectation of police members trying to manage mental health issues at reported family violence incidents directly impacted those members. Sergeant 10 expressed concerns about trying to manage mental health in family violence when he stated:

“We have no training whatsoever in relation to mental health and that sort of stuff. But we are expected to know how to deal with it and how to apply it within the family violence field. That is a difficult ask”.

Constable 6 added to the concern of police members about the impact of mental health when she said:

“I don’t think the police force know a lot about mental health: I don’t think so. We lack that knowledge around mental health”.

Conversely, Leading Senior Constable 8 had confidence in addressing mental health issues in family violence. He said:

“I’m confident in dealing with mental health myself, because I’ve probably had more training in regard to than other OR’s”.

The tasks required of police when they responded to family violence did not enable them to evaluate the impact of mental health issues in the family environment. Leading Senior Constable 5 articulated the frustration of operational pressure on police members and their response to mental health issues. He stated:

“If we didn’t have so much shit to do, we could spend time sitting down with someone... five minutes, or ten minutes of sitting them down, but no, there’s another job on the plate”.

An analysis of the focus group and police interviews revealed that many participants felt that the current mental health system was seriously flawed. They felt that Victoria Police and the relevant government departments had not handled mental health well or

correctly. The police members also stated that they were not mental health practitioners and not experts in dealing with mental health issues, especially in the case of family violence. They also indicated that the police members who attended the family violence incident had no idea if a person involved had been diagnosed with a mental health issue or not.

5.8.2 Analysis – Mental health – The extent

The survey analysis, victims and police interviews provided insight into how mental health contributed to high-risk repeat family violence in the research location. The survey analysis revealed that almost 40% of the participants felt mental health contributed to their family violence. However, twenty-seven of the thirty-one victims who participated in the interview phase indicated that mental health contributed to their experiences of violence in the home environment.

The analysis of the police interviews revealed the degree to which the participants felt that mental health issues contributed to family violence. The opinions of the members who felt mental health issues contributed to family violence they responded to varied.

Sergeant 2 discussed the complexity of the problem when he stated:

“I think it’s difficult to gauge because a lot of times it’s not identified.... I think there’s so many different types of mental health issues, personality disorders and what not, that are unidentified so, it’s difficult to say”.

Many focus group members felt that mental health significantly contributed to the harm caused by high-risk repeat family violence. However, they did not estimate the extent they felt that it contributed. The analysis of the police interview data revealed that thirty-five of the participants found that mental health issues contributed to family violence. Senior Constable 4 felt that police were “looking at 80 to 90%” of family violence involved mental health issues. Constable 6 indicated a similar view when she said, “Yeah, mental health is 80-90%”. Sergeant 12 added a supervisor’s perspective when he said:

“I reckon 90% of the people we deal with have got some form of mental health issues”.

Furthermore, of the police members who indicated mental health issues had contributed to high-risk repeat family violence, only 14 members believed the issue was significant. Eighteen police participants did not think mental health issues presented a considerable risk in the family environment.

Although mental health issues in family violence had been identified as a serious matter for the police and the victims, the analysis of the interviews found that drugs and alcohol added to the complexity. A few police participants felt that poor mental health alone was not a significant problem in family violence. However, almost 20% of the participants believed drugs and alcohol added to the complexity of mental health concerns in family violence.

Also, some police members in the research believed drugs and alcohol were linked with family violence's mental health. Some police participants indicated that, in their experience, drugs were overwhelmingly the major contributor to mental health issues in family violence.

5.8.3 Analysis – Drivers - Drugs

Previous research highlighted the connection between illicit drug use and reported family violence in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia 2016; Cox, 2015; Laslett, Mugavin, Jiang, Callinan, MacLean and Room, 2015; Taylor, 2012). In addition, the use and impact of illicit drugs in family violence added to the complexity of the harm experienced by the victims in the family environment (Victoria Police, 2019; Yates, 2018a, 2018b, 2019). Yates (2019) and Miller et al. (2016) also suggested that illicit drugs in family violence were increasingly problematic for police who responded to the harm. For example, Sergeant 2 stated that “drugs of some sorts are in every house I go to”.

The analysis of the survey data in this research provided an initial insight into the impact of drugs in high-risk repeat family violence. The survey analysis also revealed the extent drugs had permeated family violence. Almost 45% of the participants indicated drugs had been present in their experience of high-risk repeat family violence.

An analysis of the victim interview data revealed that over 50% of the participants indicated drugs had been present in their high-risk repeat family violence instances across the SMR. In addition, the analysis of the police interview data showed that thirty-five of the forty-one police participants identified that drugs had been present in the reported family violence they had attended.

The extent that each police member felt drugs contributed to high-risk repeat family violence varied. Senior Constable 7 felt that drugs had only been present in five to 10% of the family violence he had attended. Senior Constable 4 said “I would say that it definitely contributes.... maybe 30-40%”. Quite a few police participants felt drugs were present in

about 50% of the family violence they attended. However, fifteen police members indicated that between 50 and 95% of high-risk repeat family violence had drugs involved in the harm perpetrated against the victims.

Additionally, of the police participants who identified drugs as having been involved in family violence, twenty-nine indicated that they thought drugs were very significant in the harm caused in the family environment. However, only six of the forty-one police members interviewed for this research believed drugs did not significantly contribute to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence.

5.8.3.1 Analysis – Drug type

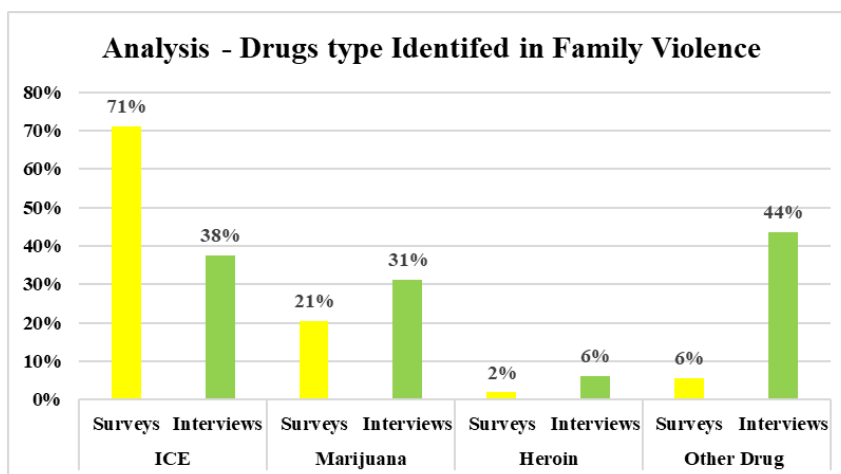
Previous research indicated that illicit drugs amplified the potential for violence in the family environment and added more significant risks for the responding police members (Shorey et al., 2012; Yates, 2019). Police participants in the focus groups and police interviews stressed the importance of knowing the types of illicit drugs that had contributed to family violence.

Researchers suggested that marijuana and cocaine presented a significant risk of harm in family violence; however, this research's survey and interview data analysis revealed that ICE created the most significant risk for victims and police members. In addition, the analysis results demonstrated that marijuana was frequently present in high-risk repeat family violence. However, cocaine was only recorded at less than 1% in the survey results. Therefore, it was not considered a significant risk based on this research.

The police participants in this research indicated that, in their experience, ICE was the most common contributing drug in family violence. Even though the police participants acknowledged that ICE was the most used drug in high-risk repeat family violence, a growing concern for the participants was the harm caused by synthetic marijuana. Police members indicated paramedics had informed them that synthetic marijuana had an adverse effect, and its use had increased the aggression in family violence and in the community at large.

From a regional perspective, the survey analysis revealed that participants did not nominate heroin or cocaine as having much impact on high-risk repeat family violence. Instead, the survey and interview data analysis demonstrated that ICE was the most significant concern across the SMR at the time of the research.

Due to the impact of illicit drugs in high-risk repeat family violence and the community, this research combined the analysis of the surveys and the victim interviews to compare the percentages of the results identified. As can be seen in **Graph 5.2**, ICE was the highest recorded illicit drug in the survey phase. However, ‘Other drug’ was almost 45% of drugs nominated in the victim interview phase. In addition, ‘Other drug’ included synthetic marijuana as a significant source of harm.



(Graph 5.2: Source: Analysis of survey and victim interview data)

As ICE has been a scourge within the community, for police and the victims of high-risk repeat family violence across the SMR, it is prudent to show the extent of the use of ICE in high-risk repeat family violence in each of the police divisions within the SMR (Mayshak et al., 2017; Young, 2019). Even though the analysis of the survey data indicated that ICE was just over 70% across the region, it was much higher in Division 1 (Pahran) and Division 4 (Somerville).

All drugs detected in this research in Division 1 (Pahran) ICE accounted for 82% of the nominated drugs. Division 1 is in the City of Stonnington, an inner suburb of Melbourne, with a population of approximately 119,000. Division 1 had a diverse population with an extensive night-time entertainment precinct and a 95% employment rate (City of Stonnington 2020).

The analysis found that 86% of the drugs detected in Division 4 (Somerville) were ICE. Division 4 encompasses the City of Frankston and the Mornington Peninsula Shire. Division 4 had an estimated population of just over 312,000 people. Division 4 is in the outer southern suburbs of Melbourne and incorporates the Mornington Peninsula, which extends eighty kilometres from Melbourne CBD (City of Frankston 2020; Mornington Peninsula Shire 2020). The City of Frankston had 93% of the population employed, whilst

the Mornington Peninsula had 85% employed. That could be due to an older population and a concentration of unemployed younger people within the shire (City of Frankston 2020; Mornington Peninsula Shire 2020).

As the analysis of the survey data indicated that ICE was the greatest threat to the victims of high-risk repeat family violence, **Table 5.6** shows the extent it is present in each Police Division within the SMR.

ICE and High-Risk Repeat Family Violence – Survey Data						
SMR	Prahran DIV 1	Moorabbin DIV 2	Cardinia DIV 3	Casey DIV 3	Dandenong DIV 3	Somerville DIV 4
71%	82%	50%	64%	66%	74%	86%

(Table 5.6: Source: Analysis of survey data)

5.8.3.2 Analysis – Drug users

The analysis of the focus groups and police interviews revealed that police members stressed the importance of identifying who used the drugs in high-risk repeat family violence. Often, the police members found that when they had attended reported family violence, victims would usually only disclose the drug use of the perpetrators, but not the victim’s own use.

The data analysis in this research revealed that drugs were not restricted to particular socio-economic groups within the community. Senior Constable 10 said:

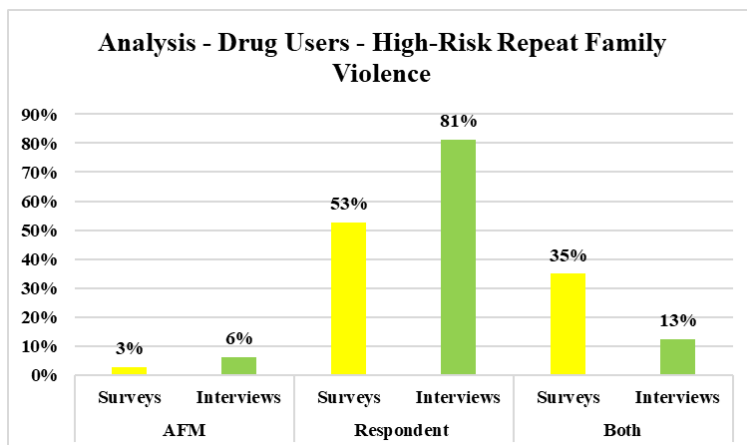
“I have seen drugs have an impact in million-dollar townhouses in Albert Park as much as flats in towers”.

Yates (2019) indicated that not all high-risk repeat family violence perpetrators used drugs (Noonan et al., 2017). Senior Constable 2 said that “some AFM’s obviously use drugs themselves”. The analysis of the victim interview data supported that observation. Victim 2 supported that when she said, “I have tried it [drugs] three or four times”. Victim 14 also said she smoked marijuana, whilst Victim 11 indicated he smoked synthetic marijuana.

Senior Constable 3 and Leading Senior Constable 5 indicated that the victim and the perpetrator had used drugs together in the family environment. The data analysis revealed that many victims and perpetrators used illicit drugs together in the same location. The use of illicit drugs by the perpetrators and victims in the same house concerned the police who responded to family violence (Braaf, 2012; Noonan et al., 2017). Yates (2019) found that use of illicit drugs by perpetrators and victims together in high-risk repeat family violence was an increasingly difficult trend for police and the government (Victoria Police, 2019).

An analysis of the survey and victim interview data revealed that illicit drug use by perpetrators alone was the most significant threat found in this research. However, 35% of participants in the survey phase indicated that the victims and perpetrators had used illicit drugs together. That added to the risk faced by police when they responded to high-risk repeat family violence (Victoria Police, 2019; Yates, 2019).

A breakdown of the drug user analysis from the surveys and victim interviews is contained in **Graph 5.3**.



(Graph 5.3: Source: Analysis of survey and victim interview data)

5.8.4 Analysis – Drivers - Alcohol

The consumption of alcohol in Australia has been a significant social and public health issue for governments, police and society (ABS, 2013; Braaf, 2012; Mayshak et al., 2020). Previous research by Sutherland et al. (2016) indicated that alcohol had been a significant factor in family violence reported to police in Australia. In addition, alcohol consumption increased the risk of harm to the police who responded to family violence (Duncan, Keane, Moore, Ekendahl and Graham, 2020; Morgan and McAtamney, 2009; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VADA), 2011; Yates, 2019). Due to the added risk of alcohol-fuelled family violence, it was essential to understand the extent to which alcohol had been present in high-risk repeat family violence (Grech and Burgess, 2011; Mayshak et al., 2020).

Therefore, it was essential to understand the impact of alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence by exploring the experiences of the victims and the police members who had responded to the reported harm in the SMR (Mayshak et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016). The focus groups and police interview data analysis revealed the extent to which participants had observed alcohol in family violence where they had responded. Members suggested alcohol ‘did not discriminate’ in family violence, and it

impacted all areas of society. The analysis also found that the police participants indicated alcohol was common in the harm caused by family violence. It was ‘readily and legally available’ and added ‘to the stress of families’ in violent circumstances. Constable 4 confirmed the extent of alcohol in family violence when he said:

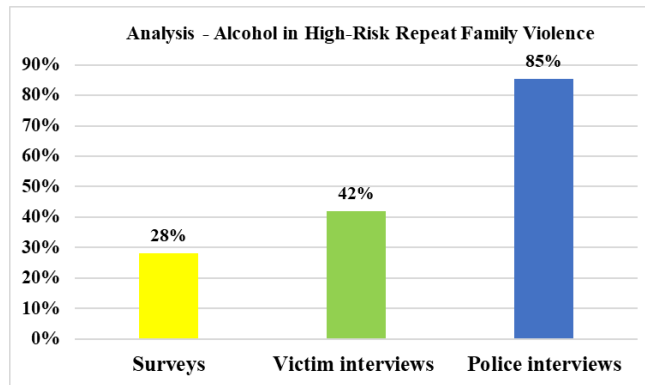
“It is very rare to go to a family violence incident where there is not an alcoholic drink somewhere or (on) one of their breaths”.

The analysis of the police interview data provided an insight into the impact of alcohol on family violence from the perspective of the first responders. Police participants revealed they had observed behavioural changes in perpetrators after they had consumed alcohol. In addition, the data suggested that police members found that family gatherings had turned violent following the consumption of alcohol. The interview analysis further indicated that almost all the assaults reported to police in the home were due to alcohol consumption by one or more people in the house.

Research across Australia suggested alcohol had been present in 25% to 50% of all family violence reported to the police. However, Miller et al. (2016) and the VADA (2011) suggested alcohol had been implicated in over 40% of family violence reported in Victoria. In addition, an analysis of the police interview data revealed a broad range of how police members had detected alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence.

The analysis of the police interview data revealed that over 85% (n=35) of the police participants acknowledged alcohol had contributed to the family violence they had previously responded to. For example, leading Constables 5 and 7 indicated that, in their family violence experience, alcohol had been present from 20 to 50% of the family violence they had attended. However, other police members found that alcohol had a much more significant impact in the family violence they had responded to. For example, senior Constable 1 said, “percentage-wise, 99 to 100%”, whilst Senior Constable 12 said, “Alcohol, I would say 90% of it [in family violence]”.

An analysis of the survey, victim and police interview data provided an insight into the extent alcohol had been identified as a contributor to high-risk repeat family violence by the participants in each phase of this research. In addition, **Graph 5.4** provides a comparison of the presence of alcohol identified in the research.



(Graph 5.4: Source: Analysis of survey and victim interview data)

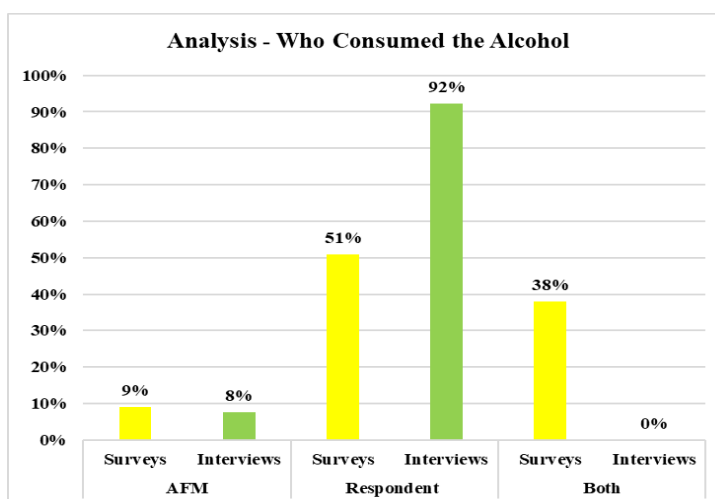
5.8.4.1 Analysis – Who consumed the alcohol?

Recent research suggested that if alcohol had been consumed in the family environment, the severity of harm suffered by the victims increased (Choenni et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2021). For example, Dostanic, Djikanovic, Jovanovic, Stamenkovic and Deric (2021) indicated that there had been a negative effect when males (perpetrators) consumed too much alcohol in the family environment. Stuart et al. (2013) also found that the probability of family violence occurring in the home was higher if the perpetrators had consumed alcohol.

However, more recent studies found that if the victims of harm had consumed alcohol in family violence, the severity of that harm increased (Choenni et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2021). The analysis of the focus groups and police interview data suggested a mixed response to the view of who consumed alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence. The data analysis found that often the perpetrator consumed alcohol when violence had occurred in the family home.

The survey and victim interview data analysis indicated that less than 10% of victims alone had contributed to the consumption of alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence. The victim interviews confirmed the observations of Stuart et al. (2013), as of the thirteen participants who indicated alcohol had contributed to their family violence, twelve (92%) had been the perpetrator. Of concern for the police participants in this research was when the victims and perpetrators consumed the alcohol together in the same location. This added to the risk of harm for the victims and the police members who responded to the reported family violence (Scott et al., 2021).

Graph 5.5 provides a breakdown of the survey and victim interview data on who consumed the alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence in this research.



(Graph 5.5: Source: Analysis of survey and victim interview data)

5.8.4.2 Analysis – Type of alcohol purchased

To help understand the type of alcohol present in high-risk repeat family violence, this research included beer, spirits, liqueurs and wine in the survey for participants to consider. The AIHW (2021) found that of the alcohol available for purchase in the 2017/18 period, beer was the largest, with 39%, and wine was 38.6% of sales. The analysis of the six hundred and four surveys indicated that beer represented just over 20% of the alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence across the SMR, however, it was not as high as the AIHW (2021) found in their research.

The survey analysis revealed that the alcohol category of ‘spirits’ was 16% of the alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, **table 5.7** showed that the survey data indicated multiple types of alcohol had been consumed in high-risk repeat family violence.

Alcohol in High-Risk Repeat Family Violence Survey Data				
Beer	Spirits	Liqueurs	Wine	Multiple types
23%	16%	2%	12%	20%

(Table 5.7: Source: Analysis of survey data)

5.8.4.3 Analysis – Where alcohol was purchased

An analysis of the existing literature revealed that alcohol purchased from bottle shops (take-away sales outlets in other countries) had previously been associated with higher incidences of family violence for the victims and the perpetrators (Euromonitor International, 2012; Frost, 2012; Livingston, 2012, Miller et al., 2016; Scott, 2021).

As the sale of alcohol from high-volume packaged liquor outlets (bottle shops) had previously been identified as a significant risk to the harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat

family violence, it was important to include them in the survey data collection (Livingston, 2012; Scott, 2021). Therefore, to help explore the impact of alcohol consumption in high-risk repeat family violence, various alcohol outlets were included in the survey questions for the participants to consider. The alcohol outlets in the survey data collection included bottle shops, hotels, clubs, and supermarkets.

The analysis of the survey data found that the participants identified bottle shops as the alcohol outlets where most of the alcohol had been purchased and associated with high-risk repeat family violence in the research location. The participants indicated that almost 60% of the alcohol had been purchased from bottle shops. The survey analysis also showed that supermarkets played a significant role in the supply of alcohol in high-risk family violence. This source accounted for over 30% of alcohol sales.

Even though the survey analysis found that hotels and clubs did record sales of alcohol that contributed to family violence, the participants indicated that hotels and clubs only contributed to less than 10% of alcohol in family violence.

5.8.4.4 Analysis – Where alcohol was consumed

To enable this research to explore where alcohol had been consumed that had contributed to high-risk repeat family violence, several locations were included in the survey data collection for the participants to consider. The sites included their home, a friend's home, a hotel or club, a public or social event or another location.

The analysis of the survey data indicated that over 70% of the alcohol present in high-risk repeat family violence across the SMR was consumed in the home. The survey also suggested that the alcohol consumption was at the perpetrator's home, the victim's home or another family member's home.

The survey data also indicated a friend's house where the perpetrator or victims consumed the alcohol; however, that was less than 10% of the alcohol consumption. Hotels and clubs did not feature as a preferred location where alcohol was consumed, as less than 3% across the region had been nominated. The participants did not designate social events as a location where alcohol had been consumed. However, just under 7% of the places where alcohol had been consumed had been nominated as an 'other' location.

A breakdown of the locations where alcohol had been consumed in high-risk repeat family violence is contained in **Table 5.8**.

Where Alcohol Consumed in Family Violence – Survey Data					
Home	Friend's House	Hotel or Club	Public location	Social event	Other location
74.2%	9.2%	2.8%	6.4%	0.7%	6.4%

(Table 5.8: Source: Analysis of survey data)

5.9 Analysis – Police Interviews – Police participants

When family violence was reported, police supported the victims and took the most appropriate action against the perpetrators (Holder, 2011; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). Therefore, considering the police members' responsibility when they attended high-risk repeat family violence, this research sought to explore the extent of their experience in dealing with the complexity of the harm they responded to. As a result, this research examined several factors relevant to the police response to family violence. The issues examined included the rank of the police member, their years of service and the experience they had with responding to family violence.

An analysis of the police interview data indicated that forty-one serving police members of various ranks participated in the interview phase of this research. The police members who volunteered to participate in the interviews included eleven females and thirty males.

To achieve a balanced approach to the data collection from the police members, it was essential to ensure there had been a fair representation of a particular police rank in the interview phase. Consequently, the researcher divided the police members who participated in this research into their respective ranks. There were eleven Constables, fifteen Senior/Leading Constables, fourteen Sergeants/Senior Sergeants and one Inspector. With the balanced number of participants from each rank, this research explored how family violence was managed from the Constables to the Senior Constables. The number of Sergeants and Senior Sergeants provided a perspective on how the family violence process was managed from an organisational perspective. The Victoria Police Annual Report 2017-2018 (2018) provided an insight into the proportion of each police rank within Victoria Police relevant to this research. The report includes Constables (18.5%), Senior Constables (54.7%), Sergeants - Senior Sergeants (23.5%) and Inspectors (2.3%).

Further analysis of the police interview data provided insight into the average front-line police service for each of the police ranks. **Table 5.9** summarises the average police service of each police rank.

Average of Police Service by Rank		
	Rank	Service years
1	Constable – 1 st Constable	3.4 Years
2	Senior – Leading Senior Constable	10.5 Years
3	Sergeant – Senior Sergeant	17.1 Years
4	Inspector	39 Years

(Table 5.9: Source: Analysis of police interview data)

5.9.1 Analysis – Police participants – family violence experience

As police members were responsible for responding to family violence, it was essential to gain an insight into the experiences of the participating members and the extent to which they had investigated family violence. Previous comments by the VRCIFV (2017) suggested that many members of Victoria Police were quite young or relatively inexperienced (State of Victoria, 2016). Further research by Ulbrick and Jago (2018) also suggested that members of the Victoria Police who responded to family violence did not understand how to determine the primary aggressor when an application for FVIO was made. They further indicated that members of Victoria Police who did respond to family violence had a ‘lack of familiarity’ with the sensible guidance in the CPIOFV (Ulbrick and Jago, 2018).

After considering the views of Ulbrick and Jago (2018), it was important to determine the extent to which police members in this research had attended and managed family violence incidents. Moreover, it was important to explore the length of operational service each participant had within Victoria Police and the number of family violence incidents they had attended, investigated and managed. Understanding the length of police service each member had and the number of times they had attended family violence helped establish the police members' expertise and credibility in responding to family violence and participating in this research.

Further analysis of the interview data also indicated the extent to which the participants had responded to family violence. Due to each police member's various locations in the SMR, their exposure and experience with family violence varied. For example, some Constables with only a few years' service estimated they had attended almost one thousand instances of family violence. Other Constables had attended several hundred cases of family violence.

Many Senior Constables estimated that they had attended thousands of family violence occurrences over their extensive careers. Similarly, many Sergeants indicated that they had responded to and managed thousands of separate family violence incidents. Therefore, after exploring the analysis of the police interview data, it was concluded that the

police members in this research had extensive exposure and lived experiences in managing the family violence process and had the required skills to provide a balanced approach to family violence.

Table 5.10 provides a breakdown of each of the police participants in the interview phase of this research. It contains information about gender, age, police rank and service and the estimated number of incidents each police member has personally attended and managed.

Police Participants					
Number	Gender	Age	Rank	Police service	Family violence incidents attended
Const 1	Female	27	Constable	1.5 Years	70 - 80
Const 2	Male	26	Constable	4 Years	200 - 500
Const 3	Male	21	Constable	3.5 Years	70
Const 4	Male	41	Constable	5 Years	45
Const 5	Female	39	1st Constable	3 Years	Hundreds
Const 6	Female	25	1st Constable	3 Years	More than 1,000
Const 7	Male	24	1st Constable	3 Years	2,000
Const 8	Female	33	1st Constable	3 Years	20+
Const 9	Male	52	1st Constable	4 Years	20+
Const 10	Male	26	1st Constable	4 Years	Uncountable
Const 11	Female	38	1st Constable	6 Years	Thousands
S/C 1	Male	39	S/Constable	7 Years	Hundreds
S/C 2	Male	30	S/Constable	20 Years	Thousands
S/C 3	Male	39	S/Constable	4 Years	50 - 100
S/C 4	Female	28	S/Constable	5 Years	120
S/C 5	Male	30	S/Constable	4.5 Years	400
S/C 6	Male	38	S/Constable	4.5 Years	50 - 100
S/C 7	Male	38	S/Constable	7.5 Years	800 - 1,000
S/C 8	Female	43	S/Constable	7 Years	1,000+
S/C 9	Male	31	S/Constable	4 Years	1,500+
S/C 10	Male	39	S/Constable	5 Years	240
S/C 11	Male	47	D/S/Constable	24 Years	Thousands
L/S/C 1	Male	54	L/S/Constable	13 Years	2,000
L/S/C 2	Male	57	L/S/Constable	15 Years	Hundreds
L/S/C 3	Male	43	L/S/Constable	18 Years	Quite a bit.
L/S/C 4	Male	41	L/S/Constable	19 Years	500
Sgt 1	Female	48	A/Sergeant	8 Years	1,600 - 2,000
Sgt 2	Male	36	A/Sergeant	8 Years	Hundreds
Sgt 3	Male	29	A/Sergeant	6.5 Years	Ten per day
Sgt 4	Male	49	A/Sergeant	7 Years	300
Sgt 5	Female	36	A/Sergeant	9 Years	3,000
Sgt 6	Male	47	A/Sergeant	17 Years	1,500
Sgt 7	Male	53	Sergeant	29 Years	Thousands
Sgt 8	Male	53	Sergeant	18 Years	Innumerable
Sgt 9	Male	54	Sergeant	31 Years	Hundreds
Sgt 10	Female	47	Sergeant	17 Years	I could not estimate
Sgt 11	Male	58	Sergeant	40 Years	Thousands
Sgt 12	Male	43	Sergeant	17 Years	Hundreds
Sgt 13	Female	45	Sergeant	17 Years	4,000+
S/Sgt 1	Male	47	S/Sergeant	15 Years	2,000+
Insp 1	Male	56	A/Inspector	39 Years	Thousands

(Table 5.10: Source: Analysis of police interview data)

When considering the police members' experience of responding to family violence, this research provides an average of the number of family violence incidents each police

rank has managed. An approximate average of the police member's responses to family violence is contained in **Table 5.11**.

Police attendance at family violence		
	Rank	Average family violence incidents
1	Constable – 1 st Constable	533 events
2	Senior – Leading Senior Constable	824 events
3	Sergeant – Senior Sergeant	1,314 events
4	Inspector	Thousands

(Table 5.11: Source: Analysis of police interview data)

5.10 Analysis – Police interviews – Issues facing police in family violence

The analysis of the police interview data revealed several issues that impacted how the police participants responded to, and managed, the high-risk repeat family violence process. For example, the analysis found that issues such as the FVIO process and the gender focus within family violence caused considerable concern for the police participants. Also, the Victoria Police family violence training impacted how the police participants approached family violence. This caused the police members to elaborate on their concerns about the support provided for police members who had constant contact with victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, the police participants in this research expressed concern about the Victoria Police family violence data collection process.

5.11 Analysis – Issues - The intervention order process

For an extended period, Victoria Police has utilised the FVIO process to protect victims of family violence (Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). However, an analysis of the focus groups and police interview data suggested that many participants did not feel the process had been applied to reflect what the members had faced in the family environment. Often, the process did not achieve a satisfactory outcome for victims, the police and even the courts (Napier et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019). Sergeant 3 said that the FVIO process

“Doesn’t reflect what I want; it reflects what the Family Violence Code of Practice states, as required, and the Victoria Police policy”.

The analysis of the police interview data revealed that the participants had mixed views about the Intervention Order process used by Victoria Police. Even though some police participants thought the FVIO was easy to complete, twenty-six police members in the interview phase believed that the process was complicated or time-consuming. Adding to the issues faced by police members, twenty-six participants also felt compelled to complete

the FVIOs even after victims indicated they had not wanted any action taken by police due to a minor incident in the family home. Senior Constable 4 confirmed this when she said:

“You pretty much do everything by the book because there’s no scope for, even if it’s something quite minor, and you could, perhaps, use your discretion”.

The analysis of the focus groups and the police interview data revealed that many participants felt the FVIO requirements had removed any discretion they had in the process. For example, senior Constable 6 indicated, “I think maybe 50%, maybe more, intervention orders that we take out, should not be taken out”.

The analysis found that many police participants used the FVIO process to protect themselves against any potential legal action resulting from their actions in the family violence process. This view was confirmed when Sergeant 10 said there was a

“Belief you have got to cover your own backside in respect of the process, you’ve put in place”.

After exploring the police interview data, a real fear of the consequences of managing family violence became evident. A culture of ‘self-protection’ emerged, and members felt the need to protect themselves. Senior Constable 3 indicated the FVIO process was used as self-protection when he said:

“You know, there’s cover your bum side of it, do what’s got to be done in case it turns pear-shaped down the path”.

The analysis of the police interview data revealed the extent to which police members felt that the FVIO process was used to help protect the members and not necessarily to help the family violence process. Constable 4 expressed the view that had reflected the concerns of many members about the FVIO process. He said:

“it is an arse covering exercise to ensure that by chance, if you were the one that got called into a witness box [Court proceedings], whatever, you had all your T’s crossed and your I’s dotted”.

5.11.1 Analysis - The intervention order process used for a benefit

The focus group and police interview data analysis revealed that the police participants were genuinely concerned about victims and perpetrators manipulating the FVIO process to gain an advantage in the court system. The FVIO process was meant to protect the victims of family violence. However, the process had been manipulated for

personal gain, which caused concern for the police and the courts (Napier et al., 2015; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019).

The extent to which the FVIO process had been manipulated and contravened in Victoria had been reported in the Magistrates' Court of Victoria Annual Report (2020). The Annual Report (2020) indicated that the contravention of intervention orders was one of the fastest-growing criminal offences in Victoria (Bytheway, 2015, Oum and Schwebel, 2016). Further analysis of the police interview data indicated that twenty-seven police participants had experienced victims and perpetrators manipulating the FVIO process to gain an advantage in the court system. Constable 4 indicated how the FVIO process had been used for gain. He said:

“The general public are in the know, and there are these petty relationships that exist, and these petty people that abuse our system to get a knife into the back of their partner. It is playground tactics”.

Blanch (2014) previously expressed similar views to those raised by the participants in this research. Blanch (2014) advised that the applicants received more generous support from the government when the FVIO process had been used to gain an advantage in the court. Blanch's (2014) view were confirmed when the Inspector in the interview phase of this research said:

“It is a very effective tool [FVIO]. In my experience in the Family Court and child protection issues, it's unusual to have family Court matter that is contested not to have an intervention order in the background”.

Sergeant 7 added to the conversation about using the FVIO process for gain when he said:

“Absolutely it is [FV used as a tool]. Many instances, where you can just tell, this is just to stitch up the ex, whether it be a male or female. It's to stitch them up for their Family law Court hearing, and you just see it time and time again”.

Many police participants indicated that the FVIO process had been used when custody and property issues were before the courts. However, the data analysis also suggested a greater chance of gaining full custody of the children and securing most family assets after obtaining an intervention order. Constable 10 said:

“There are plenty of people that they use the justice system to get back at their partners, or to do it on purpose to, so take an advantage of it”.

5.11.2 Analysis - The intervention order – Lack of evidence

The research of Blanch (2014) previously indicated that FVIOs had been issued for applicants on unsubstantiated, and often, no evidence. One of the critical issues identified in the analysis of the police interviews reflected the concerns of Blanch (2014). Many of the participants in the police interviews were very concerned about the lack of evidence and the very low ‘Standard of Proof’ required to obtain an FVIO.

The analysis of the police interview data revealed that police were required to implement the FVIO process, even without any evidence of the reported family violence. Another issue surrounding the lack of evidence necessary for intervention orders was the extent to which false allegations had been made in FVIO applications. Constable 10 said:

“You cannot be charged with lying to police unless it starts a criminal Investigation that turns out to be false...you can say whatever you want to say when alleging family violence”.

5.12 Analysis – Issues - The gender focus in family violence

Research revealed that a gender focus in family violence had been an ongoing issue for an extended period (Bates, 2019; Trotter, 2019; Wallace et al., 2019). In addition, an analysis of the police interview data found that twenty-eight of the police participants indicated that there had been a gender focus in the approach to family violence by Victoria Police. The analysis of the police interview data suggested that the participants had been frustrated by the gender focus and that it had created complexities for them when they responded to reports of family violence.

Sergeant 6 referred to the gender focus in family violence when he said, “the lack of consistency and the preferential treatment that is sometimes clearly evident through the process”. Senior Constable 11 suggested that the media helped influence the gender focus debate in family violence when she said:

“I think that is the history that the media has given out, and we tend to Just follow along with that”.

An analysis of the police interview data suggested that many participants felt that there had been a gender focus in the way police supervisors approached the family violence process. Due to the supervisory gender focus in family violence, participants indicated they became defensive in their decision making when selecting who the victims and perpetrators were. Sergeant 1 reflected the concept of gender focus when selecting the victim of high-risk repeat family violence. She said:

“I get quite defensive. Defensive, not just in my own decision making, but for the perceived male victim as well”.

The analysis of the focus groups and police interview data suggested that the management process of high-risk repeat family violence was viewed through a gender-focused lens. The data revealed that the gender focus in the family violence process was experienced by police supervisors, Victoria Police and the Judiciary when dealing with family violence. The police participants in the interview phase expressed the expectation that Courts adjudicating family violence matters should not be guided by a gender focus but be impartial in all family violence matters.

A review of the police interview data suggested that the community had also adopted a gender focus in the family violence process. The police interview data indicated that the gender focus in the family violence referral process had been identified in the relevant support agencies. For example, the data analysis suggested that when police had attempted to present a male as a victim of family violence, the support agencies exerted very strong ‘pushback’. The data proposed that the services provided by the relevant support agencies were provided with a gender focus.

5.13 Analysis – Issues - Police family violence training

An analysis of the police interviews revealed that participants nominated three predominant ways to receive family violence training in Victoria Police. First, the participants indicated they received training at the Victoria Police Academy, on the job, as well as online training. One of the significant issues identified early in the analysis of the police interview data was that most participants felt that the police family violence approach was too gender focused. They felt the training needed to be more open and inclusive and embrace all victims of the harm perpetrated in the family violence.

5.13.1 Analysis – Police Academy family violence training

For many police members, family violence training had been undertaken at the police academy as part of the various levels of police training. The analysis of the police interview data suggested family violence training commenced in the initial Foundation Training and then progressed through to police promotional and management courses. Participants suggested they only received sixteen hours of family violence training at the Police Academy with further one-hour e-learning on academy computers.

Numerous police participants indicated that the family violence training at the police academy was quite good, especially with the limited time allocated to the staff for teaching. They suggested that the training concerning the specific powers within the FVPA (2008) gave them basic knowledge of the legislation. In addition, the family violence legislation gave the participants a basic understanding of interacting with victims and perpetrators of family violence. The family violence training included legislation-specific role-plays to help develop the participant's situational awareness in the family violence environment. Participants also mentioned that the lessons concerning family violence law and the legal requirements of police who responded to family violence were excellent and helped them feel confident in their knowledge.

Although some participants believed the family violence training at the police academy helped them respond to family violence, others were not so confident. Some participants did not feel the family violence training at the police academy was sufficient and did not respond to the harm's operational requirements. Analysis of the interview data indicated that some participants suggested insufficient practical training.

Participants in the interview phase suggested that more family violence training was required due to the complexity of the harm and the varying factors contributing to the violence. The analysis also suggested that the family violence training at the police academy was too short and needed to be more intensive to meet the complex situations police found themselves in when they responded to the harm.

5.13.2 Analysis – On the job family violence training

The VRCIFV (2017) acknowledged the classroom-based family violence training but indicated that on-the-job training was also required (State of Victoria 2016). Some participants indicated that the police academy training had not equipped them sufficiently to respond to family violence. They noted that most of their family violence training and learning had been gained while responding to the harm.

The analysis indicated that the learning process of family violence was enhanced by junior members learning from senior police members in real-life situations. In addition, the senior members had extensive experience and knowledge of responding to family violence.

5.13.3 Analysis – On-line family violence training

Even though family violence training had been provided to all recruits whilst at the police academy, many longer-serving police members had not received the level of training offered to new recruits (RCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). Therefore, Victoria Police introduced online training to address the gap in family violence knowledge and training.

The analysis of the police interview data indicated that the family violence online training was mandatory and consisted of the VP Learning Hub and videos. In addition, the participants suggested that the training encompassed general family violence instructions and supervisor's training and courses. The analysis also indicated that the training was necessary, as it helped develop the investigation skills and the management of family violence Briefs of Evidence.

The analysis indicated that online learning also provided a suitable platform for Victoria Police to train members in family violence processes, procedures and legislation changes. In addition, the participants suggested that the online family violence training focussed on specific issues within family violence and particular groups within the family environment.

Even though Victoria Police had introduced extensive e-learning family violence packages to enhance the knowledge of all members, some participants suggested the online training was not very helpful. They indicated that the training could have been more effective and covered more information. It was to get through it as quickly as possible to tick the required training box. However, some police participants indicated that the online training did help when combined with the on-the-job learning component.

5.13.4 Analysis – Benefits of family violence training

An analysis of the police interview data indicated a mixed response to the benefit of the family violence training provided by Victoria Police. Due to the participants having had varying lengths of police service, their responses to family violence training varied. The data analysis revealed that seventeen police members thought that the training helped them, and another seventeen indicated they felt that it did not. In addition, six police participants were not sure about the benefit of the family violence training.

The analysis of the interview data revealed that the participants who did find the family violence training helped, indicated that the training enhanced their understanding of the processes, procedures, legislative requirements, and powers of the Victorian Family

Violence Protection Act (2008). For example, they found the training provided clarity concerning issuing FVIOs and the Complaint and Warrant and Complaint and Summons processes. The interview data analysis also suggested that the family violence training provided the participants with the skills to identify the risks within family violence where the harm had been experienced.

In addition, some participants indicated that the training enabled them to respond to family violence with renewed confidence in their approach when dealing with victims and perpetrators. The analysis also indicated that many participants believed the family violence training was comprehensive and equipped them with specialist skills. However, they also suggested they required on-the-job experience and training to gain the full benefit of the theoretical training.

Although many participants indicated that the family violence training helped them understand the dynamics of the harm, the interview data analysis also found that some members did not feel that the training adequately prepared them to respond to family violence. The data also indicated that some police participants did not think the training reflected real-life family violence. The analysis suggested that the training was too gender focussed and did not allow for all types of family violence encountered by the members when they responded to the harm.

5.14 Analysis – Issues - Support for police members

The analysis of the police interview data provided an insight into the participants' perception of support they received from Victoria Police concerning family violence. The data analysis indicated that thirteen police members felt Victoria Police had provided sufficient support, especially regarding family violence. Sergeant 3 said, "I think in regard to our own people, we are getting better at it". Constable 1 said, "For an organisation...I think it is pretty good". Sergeant 5 added to the positive attitudes of other members and said, "I think we do it well [support members]".

5.14.1 Issues – Family violence - Support for police members

Conversely, seventeen police participants indicated that they felt Victoria Police did not provide any support to help the police members who had responded to family violence on an ongoing basis. The interview data revealed a frustration that suggested that the participants experienced a real fear of organisational repercussions if mistakes were made in

responding to family violence. The sentiment of some participants indicated that there had not been allowances for police discretion when they responded to family violence.

If the police had not obtained an FVIO due to an operational decision, members suggested they felt 'drilled' by supervisors and Victoria Police. Senior Constable 1 expressed the frustrations when he said:

"We should be backed by the Department if we don't [obtain a FVIO], rather than thrown under the bus if we don't, and something happens. It's not worth it".

Senior Constable 4 added to the feeling of frustration in the family violence environment when she said:

"There's so much responsibility placed on us, with little support. I feel like they'll [Victoria Police] just hang us out to dry if we do the wrong thing... there is no support for us when it comes to this sort of stuff".

The data also revealed how many members felt about family violence and policing. Constable 4 stated:

"I do not think we [Victoria Police] are an accommodating, safe Organisation to come to. I think we are used and abused".

Sergeant 7 explained the frustration of police members he had supervised in the family violence environment. He said:

"All Victoria Police cares about is their brand name. The Department that Looks after welfare, it is just about ticking boxes. I have experienced it, many others have experienced it, where we've been to nasty scenes where we have dealt with you know, could be in the nasty family violence incident where it has had a bad outcome. We don't get any support. They say we do, all the reports say, yep, welfare, nothing happens".

The data also indicated that participants suggested that after they had responded to dreadful instances of family violence with traumatic outcomes, Victoria Police had not supported them. For example, sergeant 4 expressed the frustration of supervising police members when there is no emotional support for his members. He said:

"No not from what I have seen [Support from Victoria Police]. The effects that this had on some of the members because it's just relentless. You know, and you can see it. You see it in their face".

Sergeant 4 added to the understanding of the support provided by Victoria Police for the members who constantly respond to family violence. She said:

“No [Victoria Police support for members]. They constantly live-in fear. That’s what it’s all about. Protecting their job. When they attend family violence, regardless of what the AFM wants. I just do not think there’s sufficient support for decision-making”.

5.14.2 Issues – Family violence – Administration support

The analysis of the police interview data revealed that the police participants felt that there was excessive paperwork required to complete each family violence incident report. The police interview data also indicated that most participants felt that Victoria Police had not supported them in managing the family violence process. The data revealed that participants felt Victoria Police had not supported them as there were extreme time limitations placed on the participants. The Inspector confirmed the difficulties faced by participants and the emotional impact of time constraints in family violence reporting. He said:

“There is absolute time pressure on them’, which created an extra strain on the existing complexity of police work”.

The analysis of the police interview data suggested that administrative support could assist the members who respond to family violence. To help with the family violence management process, Sergeant 4 said:

“I think some of the family violence stuff that gets reported at Police Stations could be handled outside of sworn police. I believe unsworn members could deal with simple breaches of Intervention Orders”.

Constable 5 added to the concept of administrative support when he said,

“There should be someone else who will later deal with the incident, the same incident and do the paperwork, or counselling, or whatever needs to be done”.

To help with the administrative support of the family violence management process, Constable 1 said:

“I would say something they [Victoria Police] could look at is a family violence processing unit... We get the initial stuff, the statement and whatnot, come back in, pass it over to a family violence processing unit so that we can get back out on the road”.

Sergeant 10 also considered the value of incorporating external organisations in a specialist administrative support team assistance when he said:

“A trained processing team...who has the contacts, who has the Ability to have the collaboration with the outside organisations.

Have them trained to a level where they can deal with this better than what we currently do, and then put the processes in place, and then release your response crews back on the road”.

5.14.3 Issues – Family violence – External support

The analysis of the police interview data found that thirty-six participants expressed a desire for external agencies with specialist skills to assist police members in the family violence management process. However, the police interview data did indicate that police members felt specific government departments had an existing responsibility in the family violence process but had not contributed as required.

The police interview data revealed that twenty-nine police participants felt that the Victoria Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) had an organisational responsibility to assist police members in the family violence process. However, many participants indicated that the DHHS failed to assist police members in their official capacity as they were required to do.

The data revealed that participants had identified that DHHS had regularly failed to provide family violence reports to the Courts, which they are required to do. The DHHS could not provide the reports to inform the Courts about family violence circumstances, so the task fell on the police members to obtain the information. This added to the existing pressure that the police were under in the family violence process.

Senior Constable 4 expressed the frustration of managing the family violence process alone. She said:

“We are just completely overloaded with the amount of stuff we have to deal with, and we’re not utilising other areas that we could perhaps utilise to help us. I think we need to spread the load a bit, and I think ... we tend to take sole responsibility for the issue, whereas it’s really not entirely our issue to fix”.

Senior Constable 12 further indicated the lack of support from the DHHS by stating: ‘I feel like other organisations need to stand up and start supporting Victoria Police’. Many police participants felt that Victoria Police had willingly assumed total responsibility for the whole family violence process and relieved other organisations such as the DHHS of their obligation. However, another member expressed that the DHHS seemed to want the police to take responsibility for the family violence process. Sergeant 7 said:

“They [DHHS] want us to be social workers, they want us to do referrals, they want us to do all these things, but we are not trained to do it. We are

not social workers. We are cops”.

Leading Senior Constable 9 added to the concerns of Sergeant 7 when he said, “We need to be able to have a situation where it is not just on the Police to do things”.

The analysis of the police interview data indicated that the police members would like to have a family violence processing team of professional support staff. The analysis revealed that the family violence processing team could consist of DHHS members with expert knowledge of the drivers of family violence to attend with police members. In addition, to add to the value of the family violence processing team, mental health clinicians could be included to collaborate with police at the scene of family violence. Leading Senior Constable 9 added to the concept of the family violence processing team when he said:

“Having clinicians or professionals working with police members and they are both making joint decisions...Having somebody as an external professional working, they would be the ones that are best to then decide where things should head from here. Whether it is down the path of an Intervention Order, whether it is simply marriage counselling because it’s a very, very minor incident”.

The police interview data revealed that some participants wanted family violence divided into criminal activity and civil disputes. The participants suggested that police should be primarily responsible for the criminal aspects of family violence, whilst the DHHS and other specialist agencies should focus on the civil disputes in the family environment. The participants also indicated that other agencies could have provided support after the police had responded to the family violence. By utilising the expertise and training of external support agencies in family violence, the participants believed there was an opportunity to reach more victims within the community.

5.15 Analysis – Family violence data collection

The focus group and police interview data analysis suggested that many police members found the current VP-L17 used by Victoria Police to collect family violence data had improved from the previous document. For example, Senior Constable 2 said that the VP-L17 “Is helpful in letting police know that there had been previous (Family violence) incidents”. Senior Constable 3 said, “I don’t find the VP-L17 process too bad”.

However, Sergeant 7 said, “There is a lot of statistics in them [VP-L17]. They are complicated and time-consuming”. Sergeant 6 commented on the difficulty of the VP-L17 data collection process. He said:

“They are just too difficult; there’s too much information required on the form, it is doubled up. We’re collecting data for the sake of collecting data, the forms are not user friendly”.

The focus group participants considered the current VP-L17 and the family violence data it collected. They also thought that the data collected on the survey used in this research could assist Victoria Police and other agencies. In addition, the focus group members indicated that having other mental health, drug and alcohol information like the information contained in the survey that the researcher gave them would be beneficial if it was included in the VP-L17. The extra data could help the government provide additional funding to the DHHS for mental health issues and drug and alcohol support.

In addition, the focus group participants indicated that including the survey questions within the VP-L17 could also assist in changing current policy, procedures and family violence law. Furthermore, they suggested that the survey data could have provided extensive information to organisations external to Victoria Police to help address the family violence process.

However, focus group participants indicated that the police members who had responded to family violence were unhappy about duplicating data in the family violence process. They revealed that they recorded the same personal data up to three times for the same incident. They suggested that if the survey data could be incorporated into the VP-L17 and developed into an electronic document, it would assist members who would require less writing by using an electronic family violence form.

5.16 Analysis – Themes and outcomes

It was important in this research to investigate the themes and outcomes of high-risk repeat family violence in the SMR. The literature review highlighted the existing themes in family violence identified in previous research. In addition, the surveys and interviews allowed the victims and perpetrators to discuss the extent of the impact the themes and drivers had on them.

The analysis of the focus groups, victim and police interviews revealed the extent the expected themes impacted high-risk repeat family violence. However, the police interviews also identified the emerging themes that influenced how the participants responded to family

violence. The analysis of the police interviews revealed the outcomes of the way police responded to family violence. The outcomes demonstrated the influence the emerging themes had on a balanced approach to managing high-risk repeat family violence by the participants and Victoria Police.

5.16.1 Analysis - Expected themes

After an extensive exploration of the family violence literature, numerous organisations, such as the WHO (2010), COAG (2009), AIHW (2018) the Australian Government (2019) and the State of Victoria (2016) articulated which drivers and issues impacted high-risk repeat family violence (Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Mayshak, et al., 2020, 2022). The research indicated gender of the victims, perpetrators and family relationships and the types of family violence were ongoing issues. The drivers identified by these organisations also included drugs, alcohol and mental health in family violence. These drivers and issues were already known and accepted by governments, courts and police in the existing literature. Therefore, the term ‘expected themes’ was used in this research to clarify the issues and drivers previously identified and accepted in the family violence literature. The expected themes were known to have significantly impacted the harm caused by family violence and influenced how Victoria Police responded to the harm and managed the family violence process.

Analysing the literature review, survey data, focus groups, and the interviews of victims, perpetrators, and police members helped identify which of the expected themes and drivers directly impacted the victims and the response provided by the participants and Victoria Police. The themes and drivers were examined in Chapters 2 and 5. First, however, this section identified seven expected themes and drivers that directly impacted the victims in the SMR. **Table 5.12** contains the data and the impact of each expected theme and driver had on the cycle of high-risk repeat family violence.

Expected Themes and Drivers of High-Risk Repeat Family Violence	Impact of the Expected Themes and Drivers
Gender of victims and perpetrators	It was essential to detect the proportion of the gender of the victims to identify if Victoria Police provided a balanced response to family violence.
Relationships of victims and perpetrators	Identifying the relationships that presented the most significant risk in family violence enabled strategies to have been considered to help break the cycle of harm.
Types of family violence	Identifying the type of harm in family violence helped to guide the response of Victoria Police.
Intervention orders	The intervention orders and the breaching of those orders impacted the response of police to the harm.
Drugs in family violence	Understanding the extent of drugs use had in family violence helped guide the response by police.
Alcohol in family violence	The extent to which alcohol was present in family violence was important to understand.
Mental health in family violence	The mental health issues added complexity to the response by police in family violence.

(Table 5.12: Source: Chapters 2 & 5)

5.16.2 Analysis – Emerging themes

The analysis of the focus groups and police interview data provided rich insights into the emerging themes that had guided the response to, and the management of, the high-risk repeat family violence process by Victoria Police. The expected themes demonstrated how the harm impacted the victims, but the emerging themes showed how police responded to that harm.

The data revealed nine emerging themes directly impacting police practice, policy, procedures, and service delivery concerning family violence. The analysis of the police interviews highlighted the extent to which the emerging themes had impacted the way they responded to the harm and the emotional impact of those emerging themes. The emerging themes were previously examined, so this section will provide an overview of the impact of those themes.

Table 5.13 summarises the nine emerging themes identified and explains each theme's impact on the participants.

Emerging Themes Identified	Impact of the Emerging Themes
Police training for family violence	The Victoria Police training influenced participants in how they responded to family violence.
Gender focus	The analysis identified that Organisational and Judicial gender focus guided how police identified victims of family violence.
Lack of discretion and empathy	Due to the complexity of family violence and the training the participants received, participants felt they did not have discretion and lost empathy with victims of family violence.
Support for police members	Participants felt that Victoria Police did not support them in the trauma they faced or in the decisions they made in family violence.
The emotional impact on police	The complexity and volume of family violence incidents each participant dealt with emotionally impacted most members.
Process and policy-driven.	Many participants believed that family violence was process-driven and did not seek the best outcome for the victims.
Administrative support	Due to the volume of work required to complete family violence reporting, participants believed there needed to be more administrative support to help reduce the exhausting workload.
Agency support (DHHS)	Most participants believed external agencies, such as the DHHS, were required to support the police in the family violence process.
Use of family violence for advantage	The participants identified that the family violence process had been complicated because many victims and perpetrators used the family violence process for personal advantage.

(Table 5.13: Source: Chapters 2 & 5)

5.16.3 Analysis – Family violence reporting outcomes

The analysis of the victim, perpetrator and police member interviews helped identify three reporting outcome themes in high-risk repeat family violence. The three reporting outcomes could impact police policy, procedures, practice, service delivery, the Judicial system, and service providers. The information provided in the interviews shows the three emerging reporting outcomes have directly impacted Victoria Police's training and approach to family violence. The police interview data revealed the three family violence reporting outcomes: Required outcomes, Actual outcomes, and Desired outcomes.

5.16.4 Analysis – Reporting outcomes - Required outcome

The analysis of the police interview data suggested that the Victoria Police family violence training focussed on the doctrines of the Duluth Model. The Duluth Model stressed

that males were the perpetrators of family violence (Pence, 1983; Pence and Paymar, 2003). Consequently, many participants felt that the Victoria Police family violence training and the concepts of the Duluth Model compelled them to record a 'Required Outcome' when responding to family violence. Due to the influence of the Duluth Model in the family violence training, participants constantly recorded females as the victims and males as the perpetrators, regardless of the evidence provided. Many participants in this research stated that even though the evidence demonstrated a male was the actual victim of family violence, they reversed the roles and recorded the male as the perpetrator and the female as the victim.

The analysis suggested the participants often changed the male from the victim to perpetrator as a reflection of their training and the perceived gender focus within Victoria Police regarding family violence.

5.16.5 Analysis – Reporting outcomes - Actual outcome

Further analysis of the police interview data suggested that the Straus Model approach to family violence also impacted the decisions made by some participants. The Straus Model advocated that gender did not dictate who had been a victim or perpetrator of family violence (Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Lysova, 2016). The police interview data indicated the Straus Model enabled participants to report an 'Actual Outcome' of the family violence based on the facts and evidence available in each family violence incident.

Having been guided by the principles of the Straus Model, many participants had implemented the family violence process based on the evidence available. The perceived gender focus of the Victoria Police and the family violence training indicated that females should be seen as the victims and males as the perpetrators did not influence some members. The analysis found that many members had not followed those recommendations. Instead, they had acted on the evidence presented, reaching an 'Actual Outcome' and a balanced approach to family violence for all victims of the harm, regardless of gender.

5.16.6 Analysis – Reporting outcomes - Desired outcome

An analysis of the victim and police interview data suggested that many victims and perpetrators had used the FVIO process to gain an advantage in family violence and subsequent court processes. By using the Intervention Order process and family violence reports to gain an advantage, people had achieved a 'Desired Outcome' in the family

violence process. The data analysis suggested that the ‘Desired Outcome’ in family violence reporting was usually associated with child custody and financial and property settlement.

The result of victims and perpetrators using the family violence process to gain a ‘Desired Outcome’ added to the lack of empathy some participants felt towards many victims of family violence.

5.17 Conclusion

Previous research by Bohall et al. (2016) revealed that family violence had been a persistent concern for victims, families, police, governments, and the community for many years (Abu Saada, 2019; Neave et al., 2016). The data analysis and key findings in this chapter enriched the existing knowledge and understanding of the drivers and issues that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence in the SMR. Importantly, the data analysis provided a comprehensive insight into several aspects of the management and impact of high-risk repeat family violence.

As front-line police members responded to high-risk repeat family violence, it was essential to understand which issues influenced them in their response to the family violence management process. Importantly, the data analysis implied that many of the police participants felt isolated and not supported by Victoria Police, especially in the decisions they were required to make in the family violence management process. The data suggested that the conflict experienced by the police participants emanated from the philosophy or the Duluth Model, which was the preferred family violence management model adopted by Victoria Police and the State of Victoria.

The analysis of the police focus groups and police interviews suggested that due to the gender-focus of the Duluth Model, many of the police participants indicated that the philosophy of the Duluth Model conflicted with their lived experiences of family violence and created unacceptable difficulties for them. This chapter explored the influence of the Duluth Model and the subsequent requirement of police to follow the philosophy of the model and identify females as victims and males as the perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. The analysis also examined the types of family violence suffered by the victims and the family relationships that contributed to the harm. This chapter also explored the survey data collection used in this research and the current VP-L17 family violence data collection process. Many police participants indicated that integrating parts of the survey utilised in this research into the VP-L17 could assist Victoria Police practice, policy,

procedures, and service delivery to be enhanced to provide a balanced approach to all victims of family violence.

This chapter also explored which drivers guided the Victoria Police response and service delivery in high-risk repeat family violence. The analysis of the victim and perpetrator interviews provided an insight into the personal experiences of each participant and how the drivers identified impacted them. The drivers that directly impacted the police response in high-risk repeat family violence included drug and alcohol abuse and mental health issues. This chapter examined the impact FVIOs had in offering protection for the victims. Furthermore, the victim and perpetrator data analysis indicated how the FVIO process impacted how Victoria Police responded to family violence and supported the victims.

Chapter 6 will examine the data analysed in Chapter 5 and discuss the results. Chapter 6 will summarise the surveys conducted and identify potential gaps in the police data collection. The chapter will also examine the benefits of the current data collection process and summarize the interviews conducted and the issues identified by the victims, perpetrators, and police participants. Chapter 6 will also discuss the results of the themes and outcomes and the impact on the police.

CHAPTER SIX: Results and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

The uniqueness of this research was that it aimed to understand the complexity, drivers and the issues that impacted how Victoria Police responded to, and managed, the high-risk repeat family violence process from a victim and a front-line police perspective. This study examined a complex set of interrelated factors influencing the family violence management process adopted by Victoria Police. The Duluth Model and the Straus Model were based on two existing family violence management theories, however, the Duluth Model was adopted, and that influenced how Victoria Police and the Government managed the family violence process.

This chapter is divided into three separate sections in order to gain a conceptual understanding, answer the research questions and provide insights into the components of high-risk repeat family violence. Section 1 examines and discusses the issues and drivers that directly impacted victim support, police policy and the procedures and service delivery processes that support family violence responses. The discussion in this section helps to answer the three research questions.

Section 2 examines the police practice that has impacted the police response to high-risk repeat family violence. The results of the data analysis found that the policies adopted by police and the government had a far-reaching impact on the victims, perpetrators and the police members who responded to family violence. Finally, Section 3 discusses the results of the emerging themes, the outcomes identified in this research, and how they impacted the family violence management process.

6.2 Results and discussion – Section 1 - Research questions

The research question that was developed to explore the complexity of the issues and emerging themes that impacted the police process, procedures and service delivery in the management of high-risk repeat family violence was:

“How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”

Since the literature review identified several drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, the following supporting questions provided further structure to identify how the drivers of family violence impacted the victims of the harm caused by family violence:

“What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

The research questions set the parameters, underpinned this study, and provided the flexibility to address the elements of the questions in depth (Saunders et al., 2012; Seric, 2016). In addition, the research design provided the guidelines to ensure that the data collection process focussed on issues such as the approach taken by Victoria Police, the drivers, emerging themes and the outcomes applicable to high-risk repeat family violence. The versatility of the mixed-methods, three-step, inter-connected data collection design was extremely valuable in answering the research questions for several reasons.

First, exploratory research provided a flexible approach to gain better insights into the specific drivers that impacted high-risk repeat family violence victims. Adopting a sequential explanatory research design also enabled the quantitative research to inform the interviews and fill in the gaps identified in the data collection. Finally, the inductive approach that was adopted with the interviews also enabled participants' lived experiences to add to the bank of knowledge (Saunders et al., 2012).

6.3 Results and discussion – Research question 1

The first research question in this study is “How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?” Hence, it was essential to examine what issues existed in the Victoria Police family violence management process. The results of this study clearly showed that interlocking issues directly impacted the management of high-risk repeat family violence in Victoria. The first issue found in the study was the family violence model selected from the two existing models to guide the police response. The next section provides a discussion on each model and identifies the benefits of each and how they impacted police practice in Victoria.

6.3.1 Results and discussion – Family violence model

This research identified two distinct models and theories available for Victoria Police to help guide Victoria's family violence management process. The Duluth and Straus Models were found to have social and organisational implications for the family violence management process. However, the philosophy of each model had contradictory theories on

how family violence should be managed, and that influenced the way police responded to the harm. Therefore, the outcomes of the family violence management process differed based on the philosophy of each of the models.

Although the findings in this research identified two different approaches to managing family violence, Brotto (2019) indicated that the Duluth Model was the preferred approach to managing family violence by Victoria Police, the Victorian Government and Judiciary. One of the concerns identified in this research about the Duluth Model as the preferred family violence philosophy was that it was based on feminist and sociological frameworks. The way police responded to reported high-risk repeat family violence was influenced by the Duluth Model and the concept that males' controlling behaviour resulted in family violence against their female partners. In addition, the philosophy espoused the patriarchy theory and that males used power and control in family violence to assert dominance over their female partners. It is worth noting here that previous literature dispelled the concept of male dominance in family violence (Dobash and Dobash, 1979, 1984, 2000; Pence and Paymar, 1993, 2003). Extensive research also highlighted that over 90% of males in countries like the United Kingdom, Poland, Russia, France and Finland had never assaulted a current or former female partner. Therefore, by not considering this research, Victoria Police failed to adopt a balanced model that could help and support all victims of high-risk repeat family violence (Archer, 2002, 2006; Dutton, 2012; Zimmermann, 2019).

6.3.2 Results and discussion – Benefits of the models

The literature review in this research extensively examined the components of the Duluth and Straus Models. To help understand how Victoria Police can improve police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence, this chapter examined the benefits of each model to help answer the research question “How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?” In addition, an examination of the literature revealed the benefits of each model and how they could contribute to improving the Victoria Police response to the harm and enhance the existing knowledge of the family violence management process.

6.3.3 Results and discussion – Benefits of the Duluth Model

A positive aspect in the introduction of the Duluth Model was the development of a co-ordinated approach to family violence by multiple agencies and a specific focus of incorporating the community as an essential partner in the program's delivery. The concept of a multi-agency coordinated and structured approach by police, the judicial system and support services helped empower and protect the victims of family violence, and also held perpetrators accountable for the harm they caused (Emerson, 1979; Pence, 1999, 1983). One of the strengths of the Duluth Model that influenced how the police and the courts responded to family violence was understanding the theory of the power and control used by perpetrators in family violence. Understanding the power and control theory enabled the Duluth Model to develop a change-behaviour program to address the actions of the perpetrators through conceptual practices and in conjunction with relevant agencies and service providers. The establishment of the change-behaviour program within the model provided compulsory educational programs for male perpetrators of family violence that encouraged them to understand and change their behaviour (Corvo et al., 2009; Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). The development of a co-ordinated approach, standard procedures, policies and language, could also help overturn the deeply entrenched social belief of the patriarchy and the harm perpetrated in family violence. Rizza (2009) indicated that the Duluth Model's development was more than just a change-behaviour program for male perpetrators of family violence. Pence and Paymar (2003, p.1) further articulated the strength of the Duluth Model philosophy and the implementation of the multi-agency response for family violence by stating:

“Negotiating common understandings among agencies lessens the negative impact of fragmented philosophies and responses on the victims of domestic violence”.

This research found that the introduction of the Duluth Model change-behaviour program did provide a restricted platform to help police understand the extent to which male perpetrators used violence against their partners. However, as the model and the change-behaviour program did not consider the violence females perpetrated on male victims, the full benefits of the program were not appreciated or achieved. One benefit of the Duluth Model that assisted police in their response to family violence was that the model helped develop suitable methods for police to distinguish between the male perpetrators who used low levels of violence and those who escalated the family violence to high levels and

severity. Finally, the philosophy enabled the identification of those male perpetrators who assaulted their partners and the offenders who engaged in a pattern of coercion and violent behaviour. Again, the weakness of the model was that it did not acknowledge and investigate the harm perpetrated by females.

To add to the strength of the Duluth Model, Bohall et al. (2016) suggested that the most prominent tool in the structure of the Duluth Model was the ‘Power and Control Wheel’ (Chavis and Hill, 2009). This study found that the benefit of the ‘Power and Control Wheel’ was that the components of each segment of the Wheel helped to articulate the type of harm the male perpetrators used to control their female victims. However, the structure of the Power and Control Wheel also provided police with a new opportunity of understanding the dynamics of the violent behaviour of male perpetrators in family violence. It also helped police to develop policies, strategies and processes to help manage the family violence process. This study found that, in Victoria, compulsory educational programs were developed and implemented to ensure that male perpetrators of family violence went through a change behaviour program to address the issues that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence.

6.3.4 Results and discussion – Benefits of the Straus Model

While this study found that the Straus Model does not currently inform police practice in Victoria, police participants in the study frequently mentioned that elements of the Duluth Model restricted the way they responded to reported family violence. Their perceptions of the Duluth Model highlighted numerous difficulties when responding to family violence. However, they indicated that the gender symmetry of the Straus Model could have been beneficial in several family violence circumstances. The benefits of the Straus Model are presented below, and in chapter seven, a discussion on how both models could be used in harmony is discussed.

This study found that the Straus Model embraced the philosophy of gender symmetry in family violence. Understanding the roles, risk factors, dynamics and interactions of all perpetrators in family violence was important, especially for police. The Straus Model provided a broader context of family violence for police and articulated that both males and females perpetrated violence, and both were also the victims of the harm perpetrated by their current or former partners at an equal rate (but not necessarily equal severity of outcome). The results of the victim interview phase of this research reflected the Straus Model

philosophy of gender symmetry in family violence. Indeed, fifteen of the thirty victims interviewed for this research were female, and fifteen were male.

One of the benefits of the Straus Model found within the literature was that it provided the police with the opportunity to examine family violence through a gender symmetry lens. That provided an alternative model that could be used to inform police about the practice, response and management of family violence. Another benefit of the model was that it could provide police with a suitable framework to analyse family violence from a violent event perspective as a 'contextual dynamic process' (Meier et al., 2001).

It is important for the police, governments, and service providers to effectively help all victims of family violence and prosecute the perpetrators; as a result, it is essential to understand the real environment of family violence, which was noted by participants in this study. The Straus Model provided a well-designed, targeted, effective and lasting intervention process to address family violence. In addition, the Straus Model demonstrated that change behaviour programs to reduce family violence could be developed to address the harm perpetrated by males and females on their current or former partners (Lysova, 2016). Thus, there is some overlap between the two models.

A significant benefit of the Straus Model in managing family violence for police and the courts was the development of the CTS (Straus, 1979). The CTS elements were an objective instrument consisting of eighty elements that measured the conflict, tactics and personal interactions used by family members in violence in the home (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979, 1987). Langhinrichsen-Rohling (2005) described the benefits of the Straus Model CTS as an essential tool for evaluating the prevalence of family violence. It was reported that CTS was used in more than thirty countries. One of the unique aspects of the CTS was that it contained eighty elements to help measure the extent to which family members used reasoning, physical and verbal aggression in a relationship conflict, especially in family violence (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Straus, 1979, 1987; Straus et al., 1996).

A benefit of the CTS for police and the courts was the adaptability of the questions within the scales. They were structured to replicate any role in a relationship that had experienced family violence, rather than targeting a specific gender (Straus, 1974, 1993; Straus and Douglas, 2004). A further benefit of the CTS was that it recorded the harm caused by physical assault, psychological aggression, negotiation and sexual coercion and could also measure the results of the harm (Straus, 1987). The CTS and the associated

questions also provided police with new skills to investigate family violence and replicate specific scenarios as required.

An important aspect of the Straus Model for police and the investigation of family violence was the evidence of gender symmetry in the family environment. A fair and open approach to family violence was found to be beneficial. A balanced approach to questions was achieved by including instruments such as the CTS that were used to inform the police. To ensure the approach to the investigation was balanced, the CTS ensured the same questions and information were asked of male and female perpetrators of family violence (Straus, 1999, 2007).

6.3.5 Combined benefits of the Duluth and Straus Models for family violence

This research found that the police were not required to provide a balanced response to protect all victims of family violence. As a result, they were not implementing the most appropriate procedures and strategies to protect the community and prosecute the perpetrators of the harm. The results of this research identified that the Duluth and Straus Models had individual strengths. However, when both models were utilised separately, they did not provide the optimum outcome for victims, police, the courts or even the perpetrators. However, the combined elements of the Duluth Model's Power and Control Wheel and the Straus Model's CTS could provide a positive and robust alternative for police, the courts, and victims. The Power and Control Wheel of the Duluth Model identified eight core themes and behaviours used by male perpetrators to control female victims.

The Duluth Model's multi-agency approach that incorporated police, the court system and relevant support agencies could also be enhanced by including the Straus Model philosophy of gender symmetry. For example, this could incorporate all male and female perpetrators with anger management issues in change-behaviour programs. The research found that the combined strengths of the CTS and the Power and Control Wheel in a gender-neutral environment could provide police with a viable option to manage the family violence process. Furthermore, by applying the Power and Control Wheel elements to all perpetrators, regardless of gender, and asking the same questions of male and female perpetrators without exception, police and the courts could establish a more appropriate and balanced understanding of the harm perpetrated in family violence.

By combining the strengths of both models, the police, courts, the judiciary and service providers could develop a powerful tool to provide equal support for all victims. All

perpetrators could be prosecuted regardless of their gender and included in the change-behaviour programs. In other words, the benefit of combining the strengths of the Duluth and Straus Models and adopting gender symmetry in family violence, and police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence could be improved.

6.3.6 Results and discussion - Answer to research question 1

The first research question in this study was, “How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”

The current family violence management model utilised by Victoria Police has entrenched the concept and philosophy of a gender focus in family violence. The analysis of the police interviews in this research suggested that, due to the influence of the gender focus within the Duluth Model, many police participants perceived that they did not have the discretion to identify any male victims of family violence and, importantly, could not record females as the perpetrators of the harm. Therefore, the gender focus adopted by Victoria Police facilitated an unbalanced response to, and management of, the family violence process. Hence, it was essential to examine the elements that guided the Victoria Police's approach to the harm. Due to the importance of Victoria Police providing a balanced approach to, and support for, all victims of family violence, regardless of gender, it was important to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the two specific models. By exploring the philosophies of two approaches to family violence, this study has uncovered that, understanding the Duluth and Straus Models' attributes, and combining the best elements of each model would help answer the first research question. The concept of combining the best elements of each model would provide more flexibility for front-line police members when they responded to family violence.

Eliminating the gender focus in family violence and combining the Duluth Model's Power and Control Wheel elements and the Straus Model's CTS would provide a positive and robust alternative for police, the courts, and victims. The combination of the two strong elements of the Duluth and Straus Models would also provide the flexibility for front-line police members to respond to all reported family violence in a balanced and unbiased way that would not favour any gender in the management process. This would enable police to focus on the event of family violence and not the gender of the victim or perpetrator (Lysova, 2016). In addition, there would be a substantial benefit for front-line police

members of the Power and Control Wheel of the Duluth Model utilised the eight-core themes and behaviours to identify the harm caused to all victims of family violence, regardless of gender.

The Duluth Model's multi-agency approach that incorporated police, the court system and relevant support agencies could be further enhanced by including the Straus Model philosophy of gender symmetry. For example, this process could incorporate all male and female perpetrators with anger management issues in change-behaviour programs.

The research found that the combined strengths of the CTS and the Power and Control Wheel in a gender-free environment provided police with a viable option to manage the family violence process. The CTS ensured gender symmetry when examining the elements of family violence by asking the same questions of all perpetrators of harm (Stanko, 2008; Straus, 2007, 2010). By applying the elements of the Power and Control Wheel to all perpetrators, regardless of gender, and asking the same questions of male and female perpetrators without exception, police and the courts could establish a more appropriate understanding of the harm perpetrated in family violence (Lysova, 2016).

The combined elements of the Duluth and Straus models in a gender-neutral environment could provide additional strengths and a balanced platform for the police, courts, the judiciary and the service providers to offer equal support for all victims. All perpetrators could be prosecuted regardless of their gender and included in change-behaviour programs, and all perpetrators would be treated equally under the law. In chapter seven, the strengths of the Duluth and Straus Models identified are presented in a proposed family violence integrated management model.

6.4 Results and discussion – Research question 2 and the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence

To help answer the second research question, “What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?” this research explored which drivers impacted the way police responded to family violence harm. The WHO (2016) previously indicated that many drivers impacted victims of family violence. However, this study found that the specific drivers that impacted the response to the harm by police were mental health issues, illicit drug use and alcohol consumption. These specific drivers added to the complexity of the Victoria Police response and significantly escalated the risk of harm.

6.4.1 Results and discussion – Drivers – Mental health issues

This study found that there had been a strong link between mental health issues and family violence. However, Zealberg et al. (1992) previously found that the complexity of the mental health issue in family violence was too significant for police members to deal with in the family environment in Victoria (Yates, 2020). It was also found that many police participants did not feel they were sufficiently trained to deal with the complexity of the mental health issues that confronted them in the family environment. Constable 6, for example, articulated the concerns of many police members and the ability to deal with mental health issues when she said, “I do not think the Police Force know a lot about mental health...We lack that knowledge”.

6.4.2 Results and discussion – Extent of Mental health issues

The extent and impact of mental health issues in family violence was not a new concern for Australian Governments and Police. The Commonwealth of Australia (2016) suggested that in approximately 30% of all family violence incidents, at least one person had a mental health issue (Chhikara, Jakhar, Malik, Singla and Dhattarwal, 2013; Siemieniuk, Krentz, Gish and Gill, 2010; Worell, 2001). Mental health issues in high-risk repeat family violence had increased in Victoria over a five year period and this had a direct impact on the victims, community, governments and the police who responded to the harm (COAG, 2009; Shearson, 2014). The VRCIFV (2017) and the State of Victoria (2016) suggested that mental health issues had been present in one in five of the family violence incidents police responded to.

After considering the extent to which the Commonwealth of Australia (2016) indicated mental health issues were present in family violence incidents and the increasing associated problems, this study found that mental health issues in high-risk repeat family violence in the research area were far greater than previously recognised (COAG, 2009; Shearson, 2014; Yates, 2019). As an example, the survey analysis in this study found that almost 40% of participants suggested mental health issues contributed to their experiences in family violence. However, the victim interview data revealed a much higher rate of mental health issues, with almost 90% of participants reportedly being impacted in their experience of family violence. The impact of mental health issues in high-risk repeat family violence identified by the police members in this research was a much higher rate. Over 80% of the

police participants in this study indicated they had identified mental health issues in most of the family violence incidents that they attended.

The data analysis in this research revealed that mental health issues in high-risk repeat family violence was a much greater concern than previously identified. Almost 90% of the victim participants indicated that mental health issues were a contributing factor in their experiences of high-risk repeat family violence, and thus, a greater demand was placed on the existing resources and police members.

6.4.3 Results and discussion – Drivers – Drugs in high-risk repeat family violence

The use of illicit drugs as a driver of high-risk repeat family violence has been an ongoing concern for police and governments for the last decade (Coomber et al., 2021; Yates, 2019). In the submission to the VRCIFV, Victoria Police (2015) estimated that drugs had been present in approximately one-third of family violence incidents police responded to (Yates, 2019). Victoria Police previously indicated that due to illicit drug use in high-risk repeat family violence, there was an elevated risk of physical harm and injury for the police who responded (Fals-Stewart et al., 2003; Miller et al., 2016; Salom et al., 2015).

Due to the elevated risk of physical harm and injury for victims of family violence and the police who responded, it was essential to understand the extent to which drugs had been used in high-risk repeat family violence and who used them (Fals-Stewart, Golden, and Schumacher, 2003; Dowling and Morgan, 2019; Miller et al., 2016; Salom, Williams, Najman and Alati, 2015). Previous studies found that the use of illicit drugs in high-risk repeat family violence had predominantly been by the perpetrators of the harm (Abbey et al., 2004; Braaf, 2012; Humphreys et al., 2005; Noonan et al., 2017; Rivera et al., 2015). Therefore, as the perpetrator was the predominant user of illicit drugs in high-risk repeat family violence, the police were more inclined to remove the perpetrator from the home environment (Miller et al., 2016).

6.4.4 Results and discussion – Extent of drugs in family violence

The results of the survey and interview data analysis in this study provided a new insight into the extent to which illicit drug use had impacted high-risk repeat family violence. As the results of the survey data analysis was from information provided directly by the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence, it added to the integrity of the data. The survey results found that almost 45% of the participants revealed illicit

drugs had contributed to their experiences in family violence. The victim interview data showed a slightly higher rate of 50% of the participants indicating illicit drugs had been present in their experience of high-risk repeat family violence. These results of the illicit drug use in high-risk repeat family violence demonstrated the potential for higher risk for police members who responded to the harm.

However, the lived experiences presented in the police interview data suggested there was a significantly higher rate of illicit drug presence in high-risk repeat family violence they responded to. Thus, the extent to which illicit drugs contributed to high-risk repeat family violence in this research was more significant than the drug use identified in the Victoria Police (2015) submission to the VRCIFV. Given that the data collection for this study was completed in 2019, it would appear that the impact of drugs in high-risk repeat family violence in Victoria may have been underestimated or, indeed, increasing. Consequently, the extent to which illicit drugs were identified in high-risk repeat family violence has the potential to increase the significant risk to the victims and the police who respond to the harm.

6.4.5 Results and discussion – Drug type in family violence

Previous research found that the use of illicit drugs in the family environment had increased the potential harm for the victims and had added to the complexity for the police (Coomber et al., 2021; Dowling and Morgan, 2019; Victoria Police, 2019). Therefore, it was essential to identify the type of drugs that contributed to the elevated risk of harm. To help understand the type of drugs, this study interrogated a significant number of surveys and explored the personal experiences of the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence in the subsequent interviews. An extensive examination of the literature identified that illicit drugs such as ICE, marijuana, heroin, cocaine, speed, ecstasy, and others had contributed to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence.

Of the type of illicit drugs identified that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence, the AIHW (2017) and Coleman, Ridley and Christmass (2021) found that the drug ICE had been a significant concern in the family environment and the harm it generated. Coomber et al. (2021) found that drugs such as ICE (methamphetamines) in family violence had been less common and had only been approximately 20% of the drugs. However, the survey and victim interviews in this study did not support the findings of Coomber et al. (2021). The survey analysis found that ICE had been the most substantial drug in high-risk

repeat family violence. Over 70% of the victims nominated ICE as the most significant drug used in their experience of family violence. Therefore, this represented a significant risk to the police members who responded. In addition, the victim interviews found that ICE had represented almost 40% of the drugs used in high-risk repeat family violence. Therefore, the results concerning ICE were more extensive than exposed in the assertions of Coomber et al. (2021).

This research found that previous family violence research had focussed on drugs such as marijuana and cocaine when examining the link between drugs and the harm perpetrated in the family environment (Crane, Oberleitner, Devine and Eason, 2014; Morgan and Gannoni, 2020). This study found, however, that the threat of harm emanating from the use of ICE in the family environment in Victoria had been extensive. Nevertheless, marijuana had also significantly contributed to the harm. The initial survey analysis found, for example, that marijuana constituted 20% of drugs nominated in the harm perpetrated in family violence. The victim interview data also revealed that marijuana had a higher rate of over 30% of the drugs present in high-risk repeat family violence.

Even though the previous research by Crane et al. (2014) and Morgan and Gannoni (2020) included cocaine in the harm perpetrated in family violence, participants in this study had not nominated cocaine as a drug that had contributed to the family violence harm. In addition, this research found that cocaine and heroin had not added to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence in this study, as the participants indicated that these drugs were less than 6% of the drugs used in the family environment.

6.4.6 Results and discussion – Who used illicit drugs in repeat family violence

The use of illicit drugs in family violence has been a complex issue that has been ongoing for both police and governments. Identifying the users of drugs is also not a straightforward process (Choenni, Hammink and van de Mheen 2017; Coomber et al. 2021; Morgan and Gannoni 2020). Although Nicholas et al. (2012) had previously articulated the importance of identifying who had used illicit drugs in high-risk repeat family violence, the use had been an ongoing concern for police and governments for an extended period (Rivera et al., 2015; Yates 2019). This study sought to gain a deeper understanding of who used illicit drugs in family violence in Victoria.

6.4.7 Results and discussion – Victim and perpetrator use of illicit drugs

To help police respond appropriately to reported high-risk repeat family violence, it was important to understand the extent of victims and perpetrators use of illicit drugs. The victims' reported use of illicit drugs in family violence in this study varied between the data collected from the surveys and the victim interview data. The self-reported survey data revealed that the use of drugs in high-risk repeat family violence was relatively low, with only 3% of the victims having nominated that they had used illicit drugs alone. The victim interviews in this study found that 6% of the victims in the interview process had indicated they had used the drugs by themselves. Considering the extent to which illicit drug use had been identified in high-risk repeat family violence, the identification of victim use alone was quite low. The low reporting may have been that the victims did not want to incriminate themselves for drug use. Conversely, this study found that the reported use of illicit drugs by the perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence had been quite significant in the family environment. First, the survey data found that over 50% of the perpetrators had used illicit drugs in reported family violence. However, the victim interview data analysis revealed a significantly higher rate of perpetrator drug use. The research showed that 81% of family violence perpetrators in this research were reported to have used illicit drugs in reported family violence incidents. One concern identified in this study was that victims and perpetrators had used illicit drugs together in high-risk repeat family violence.

6.4.8 Results and discussion – Victim and perpetrator use of drugs together

This study revealed that the issue of illicit drug use by the perpetrators and victims in the same location had concerned the police who had responded to the harm. The survey data indicated that 35% of the illicit drug use in high-risk repeat family violence had been by the perpetrator and victim together at one location. However, the participants in the interview phase revealed that only 13% of the perpetrators and victims acknowledged having used illicit drugs with a partner in one of their homes.

This study had previously indicated that the use of illicit drugs in family violence added to the risk of harm for the victims and police who responded. Also, the harm escalated when a perpetrator and victim used illicit drugs together in one location. As a result, this study adds to our limited knowledge and understanding of the impact of drugs on the family environment and the extent to which the perpetrator and victim contributed to the harm. This is important because the combined use of drugs adds to the complications and

risk for the police members who respond to reported family violence incidents (Coomber et al., 2021).

6.4.9 Results and discussion – Drivers – Alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence

The third driver of high-risk repeat family violence identified in this research that contributed to the harm in the family environment was the consumption of alcohol. This study found that the previous research by Scott et al. (2021), Mayshak et al. (2020) and Weiss (2020) indicated that the consumption of alcohol was one of the most significant drivers of family violence (Hulme, Morgan and Boxall, 2019; Sutherland et al., 2016). Research by Braaf (2012) and Miller et al. (2016) indicated that when alcohol had been consumed in the family environment, there had been an increased risk of serious injury as a consequence. Coomber et al. (2021) identified that when the perpetrator and victim had consumed alcohol in one location, the risks for the police increased considerably. Therefore, it was essential in this research to understand the extent to which alcohol had been consumed in the family environment.

6.4.10 Results and discussion – Extent of alcohol in family violence

In earlier research completed by Miller et al. (2016), the researchers identified that alcohol had been involved in approximately one-third of all family violence incidents. However, later research by Scott et al. (2021) estimated that alcohol had contributed to as much as 50% of all family violence incidents (ABS 2016; Laslett et al. 2015; Sutherland et al. 2016). The analysis of the survey data, together with victim and police member interviews provided an insight into the contribution of alcohol harm in this research. The survey analysis found that almost one-third of the participants felt alcohol contributed to their experience of family violence. In addition, the victim interview data found that just over 40% of the participants had attributed family violence harm to alcohol consumption. Nevertheless, the results of the police interview data in this study revealed that police participants found that alcohol had been present in over 80% of the incidences of family violence that they had attended. The large discrepancy in the victim interview data and the police interview data may be due to police being called to high alcohol use locations within the respective Local Government Areas.

6.4.11 Results and discussion – Who consumed alcohol in repeat family violence?

Alcohol has significantly impacted family violence. However, Sutherland et al. (2016) found that little research had been conducted to identify who had consumed alcohol in the family environment (Hirschel and Hutchison 2011). Research by Feder and Henning (2005) found that most of the alcohol consumed in family violence had been by the victim and the perpetrator together. However, there had been an elevated risk of harm when the perpetrator had consumed alcohol alone. Therefore, to enable the police and governments the opportunity to develop the most appropriate strategies, policies and procedures to respond to high-risk repeat family violence, it was important to understand the link between who had consumed the alcohol in the family environment and any violence that had ensued.

As a result of the responses provided by the participants, the analysis of the surveys and victim and perpetrator interview data provided an understanding of who had consumed alcohol in the family environment and the extent to which the victims and perpetrators had both consumed alcohol in reported family violence incidents.

6.4.12 Results and discussion – Victim’s consumption of alcohol

The previous CSA (2016) data revealed that only 2% of the victims had consumed alcohol in the reported family violence (Sutherland et al., 2016). However, analysis of the survey data in this study revealed that approximately 9% of the victims of family violence had consumed alcohol in the family environment. The interview data in this study recorded a similar response with approximately 8% of the victims in this research had indicated they had consumed any alcohol that had contributed to the harm in family violence.

6.4.13 Results and discussion – Perpetrator’s consumption of alcohol

When discussing the impact of the harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence, it was essential to identify to what extent the perpetrators had consumed alcohol that contributed to the harm. However, the CSA (2016) reported that the VP-L17 data had only recorded 12% of family violence incidents where the perpetrators had consumed alcohol (Sutherland et al., 2016). The survey data in this study indicated that over 50% of the perpetrators had consumed alcohol in the family environment where violence had been committed. However, the victim interview data showed that over 90% of the alcohol consumed in high-risk repeat family violence had been by the perpetrator. Thus, this study identified a considerable gap in recording alcohol consumption by the CSA (2016) compared

to the results of the surveys and victim interviews in this study. In addition, the data collected in this research was from the personal experience of the victims and perpetrators and had not been the subjective view of the police members who responded to family violence. This provides a clearer understanding of the lived experience of the impact of alcohol on family violence.

6.4.14 Results and discussion – Combined consumption of alcohol

The previous research by Sutherland et al. (2016) indicated that the risk of harm in family violence was elevated when the perpetrator and the victim consumed the alcohol together. The CSA (2016) data suggested that less than 10% of the alcohol consumed in family violence had been consumed by the perpetrator and victim together in the one location. The survey data in this study found that almost 40% of the alcohol consumed in reported high-risk repeat family violence had been consumed by the perpetrator and the victim together. The survey findings of combined alcohol consumption were significantly higher than those observed by the CSA (2016), which was the subjective view of the responding police members. Such a high percentage of alcohol consumption by the perpetrator and victim in one location increase the complexity and risks for the police who respond to reported family violence incidents.

6.4.15 Results and discussion – Where the alcohol was purchased

Previous research indicated several locations where alcohol was purchased that had been linked to family violence. The locations included packaged liquor outlets, supermarkets, hotels, and clubs (VicHealth 2013; Livingston 2012; Miller et al., 2016). VicHealth (2013) previously examined the impact of alcohol sales and found that almost 80% of the alcohol sold in Australia was purchased from packaged liquor outlets (Euromonitor International 2012; Livingston 2011a, 2011b; Miller et al. 2016; Victoria Police 2012).

The survey and interview data analysis results in this study revealed the extent to which packaged liquor outlets (bottle shops) had contributed to family violence in this research. The data found that almost 60% of the alcohol consumed in the homes where family violence had occurred had been purchased from a bottle shop or packaged liquor outlet. In addition, analysis of the survey data indicated that approximately one-third of the alcohol purchased in family violence had been from supermarkets. However, supermarkets

also had packaged liquor outlets for separate alcohol sales, so they also presented a risk of harm in the home. When the results of the alcohol sales from the bottle shop, packaged liquor outlets and supermarkets were combined, it constituted approximately 90% of alcohol sales that had contributed to the family violence in this research.

Extensive research by VicHealth (2013) and Livingston (2011a, 2011b) previously found that alcohol purchased and consumed in hotels and clubs had a negligible impact on family violence (Livingston 2012; Miller et al. 2016; Roman and Reid 2012). The survey analysis in this research found that this was generally correct in that less than 10% of alcohol consumed in hotels and clubs was associated with family violence. Alcohol purchased from packaged liquor outlets (bottle shops) and supermarkets posed the most significant risk when considering the impact of alcohol in high-risk repeat family violence.

6.4.16 Results and discussion – Where the alcohol was consumed

The research by Callinan, Mojica-Perez, Wright, Livingston, Kuntsche, Laslett, Room and Kuntsche (2021) and Euromonitor International (2012) indicated that various locations where alcohol had been consumed contributed to high-risk repeat family violence. This research found that almost 75% of all alcohol consumption that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence had been in the home of the victim or perpetrator. Less than 10% of alcohol consumed in this research that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence in this study had been consumed at a friend's house. Furthermore, less than 3% of alcohol that contributed to family violence had been consumed in a hotel or club. Consequently, the most significant risk of harm for high-risk repeat family violence victims had been in their own homes. This adds to the complexity of harm for the police who respond to high-risk repeat family violence.

6.4.17 Results and discussion - Answer to research question 2

The analysis of the data collected in this research was able to answer research question 2, “What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”

This study found that the specific drivers that contributed to high-risk repeat family violence were mental health issues, illicit drug use and alcohol consumption. Each of these drivers impacted the management process when the front-line police members responded to high-risk repeat family violence. These specific drivers added to the complexity of the

Victoria Police response and, as a result, police required to utilise more resources to address the problems (Cornelius, 2015). The complexity of the drivers, especially mental health issues, significantly escalated the risk of harm for the police and victims (AIHW 2018; Coomber et al., 2021; Dowling and Morgan 2019; Ericsson 2019; Victorian State Government 2019; Weiss 2020; Yates 2019).

Zealberg et al. (1992) indicated that mental health issues in family violence were too significant for police members to deal with in the family environment in Victoria (Yates, 2020). In this research Constable 6 confirmed the concerns of Zealberg et al. (1992) when she said, “I do not think the Police Force know a lot about mental health... We lack that knowledge”. Also, many of the police participants did not feel that Victoria Police had provided the front-line police members with the required skills to address issues such as schizophrenia, paranoia, bipolar disorders and other complex mental health issues (Hester et al., 2015). The extent of the problem and concern was revealed when the police participants in this research indicated that mental health issues were evident in over 80% of the high-risk repeat family violence that they responded to.

Adding to the demand for police resources was the impact of illicit drugs and alcohol consumption in high-risk repeat family violence. The use of illicit drugs and the consumption of alcohol were reported to be a common factor in high-risk repeat family violence; however they often added to the harm suffered by victims and increased the risks for front-line police members (McKeown et al., 2022; VRCIFV, 2017; WHO, 2013). This study revealed the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence that directly influenced the response by front-line police members. The research provided an opportunity for Victoria Police to enhance the current policies, practices and service delivery procedures police used to manage the family violence process and help break the cycle of harm and reduce the risk for victims and the police (Klosterman and Fals-Stewart, 2006; Mayshak et al., 2020, 2022; Miller et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2016).

6.5 Results and discussion – Research question 3

The third research question in this study was:

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

In order to answer this question, it was essential to examine what data is currently collected concerning the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence on the existing VP-L17 by Victoria Police. These drivers contribute to significant harm; therefore, it was important to provide comprehensive information about drug and alcohol-related reporting in family violence to enhance academic knowledge, police practice, policies, and service delivery.

6.5.1 Results and discussion - Answer to research question 3

The third research question in this research that contributed to the enhancement of Victoria Police' response to high-risk repeat family violence was:

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

To answer the third research question, it was important to examine how much data Victoria Police currently collected on the VP-L17 that was relevant to the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence. The significance of Victoria Police collecting comprehensive family violence data in the VP-L17 was that it also helped guide the Victorian Government and other relevant stakeholders in the development of appropriate policies, strategies and plans to help reduce the severity, prevalence and cost of family violence (Satyen et al., 2020; State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020). The number of family violence incidents in Victoria continued to rise in the period 2015 to 2019 (ABS, 2020; CSA, 2020). Therefore, it was vital to ensure Victoria Police collected the most relevant data to help guide the current strategies. However, the current VP-L17 family violence data collection process analysis found that the police family violence data collection document did not solicit sufficient data about the identified drivers of high-risk repeat family violence to inform the police response to the family violence harm.

The police participants in this research suggested that a revised VP- L17 would provide comprehensive data and enhanced the understanding of the mental health issues, drug use, and alcohol consumption for Victoria Police, Government and other relevant family violence stakeholders. Including the specific survey questions addressing the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence would then help guide current family violence policy, procedures and legislation. Additionally, developing an electronic VP-L17 with enhanced survey questions to address the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence would assist

police members by requiring less writing. The electronic family violence forms could also be accessed immediately by other police sources (State of Victoria, 2016; Yates, 2020).

6.5.2 Results and discussion – Victoria Police family violence data collection

When police members attended family violence incidents, they were responsible for recording if drugs or alcohol had been involved in the harm. However, the recording of the extent that drugs or alcohol had contributed to the harm was only based on the police member's view of the incident. Because drugs and alcohol played a significant role in family violence, Victoria Police required a more informative and comprehensive data collection process to help understand the extent of the problem.

McEwan et al. (2019) found that Victoria Police had substantially changed the family violence response by introducing the Family Violence Response Models and implementing the new Family Violence Report. However, there were still significant gaps in collecting drug and alcohol data on family violence (Miller et al. 2016; Yates 2019). Due to the high levels of alcohol and drug harm recorded in Victoria's family violence, the current VP-L17 did not include probing questions about the extent to which these drivers had contributed to the harm. By not including more exploratory alcohol and drug questions, the VP-L17 did not maximise the opportunity to develop a richer understanding of the impact of these drivers on family violence (Millar et al., 2016; Yates, 2019).

The latest version of the VP-L17 (Victoria Police 2019) did not provide relevant questions to enable the attending police members to explore the drug and alcohol contribution to family violence. In addition, the new VP-L17 still only recorded the drug and alcohol use in family violence as 'Possible' or 'Definite'. Therefore, by police members recording if drugs and alcohol were possible or definite, Victoria Police was unable to capitalise on the opportunity to enhance the knowledge of the type of drugs and alcohol used in family violence (Neave et al., 2016; Yates, 2019)

6.5.3 Results and discussion – Impact of family violence data collection

The focus group analysis and police interview data provided valuable feedback in relation to the use of the current VP-L17. Many of the police participants found the current VP-L17 family violence data collection form had improved from the previous document. For example, Senior Constable 2 said that the VP-L17 "Is helpful in letting police know that

there had been previous [Family violence] incidents”. Senior Constable 3 also said, “I do not find the VP-L17 process too bad”.

However, other members had different views about the content of the VP-L17 and discussed the complexity of the recording process. Sergeant 7 said, “There is a lot of statistics in them. They are complicated and time-consuming”. Sergeant 6 added his view about the difficulty of the VP-L17 data collection process. He said:

“They are just too difficult; there is too much information required on them; it is doubled up. We are collecting data for the sake of collecting data; the forms are not user friendly”.

Many police members questioned the integrity and validity of the data collection process utilised by Victoria Police in family violence and felt that the VP-L17 was only used to collect the information for the sake of collecting data. However, this study found that Victoria Police had not recorded sufficient details on the type of illicit drugs and alcohol used in family violence. As there had been limited research about drugs and alcohol, the importance of Victoria Police collecting relevant data identifying the drivers, such as drugs and alcohol contributing to family violence was amplified (Rivera et al., 2015). Capturing the relevant drug and alcohol data on the VP-L17 at the time of the family violence incident could have helped develop more comprehensive knowledge of the harm caused by drugs and alcohol.

6.5.4 Results and discussion – Improved family violence data collection

The police participants in this research indicated that the front-line police members who responded to family violence were unhappy about the structure and content of the current VP-L17 as it duplicated the family violence data collection process. The members also revealed that the inconvenience of recording the same personal data up to three times for the same family violence incident was time consuming and unnecessary. An outcome of the police interviews and focus groups was that many participants suggested that the mental health, drugs and alcohol survey questions utilised in this study should be incorporated into the existing VP-L17. Also, they suggested that an enhanced VP-L17 combining the relevant data from this study should then be developed into an electronic document. This would then assist the police by reducing time, require less writing, and the electronic family violence forms could be accessed immediately by other police sources.

By incorporating the relevant survey questions from this study into an electronic VP-L17 could help enhance police practice in managing high-risk repeat family violence. The

survey questions could also provide relevant data to help guide current family violence policy, procedures and legislation. In addition, the participants suggested that by adding the relevant survey questions to the VP-L17, more comprehensive data could be collected that could inform agencies such as the DHHS and other family violence support organisations. The police participants also suggested that including the survey questions about the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence in the VP-L17 could provide relevant information for potential funding for family violence support agencies.

6.6 Results and discussion – Section 2 – The impact of police practice

The family violence management process adopted by Victoria Police has caused concern for many police members and impacted how they responded to family violence and managed the process. Sergeant 6 felt “there was a lack of consistency” in how Victoria Police approached family violence. Constable 4 indicated that it was important to “...do things right from a procedural point of view”. The impact of the family violence management process was evident when Senior Constable 8 stated that he felt that Victoria Police did not always get the management of family violence right.

The analysis of the focus groups and police interview data found four specific issues impacting how police responded to, and managed, the high-risk repeat family violence process. The main areas of concern for the police participants in this research included the gender focus in family violence adopted by Victoria Police. The gender focus had caused trepidation for some members as the focus had influenced how they responded to high-risk repeat family violence. Many of the police participants also felt that their response to the harm was actually policy and process driven by Victoria Police, and not a desire to achieve the best outcome for all victims (Gracia et al., 2011).

The analysis of the focus groups and interviews revealed that many of the police participants felt that there was an emotional impact on the front-line police members who constantly responded to high-risk repeat family violence. The data indicated that many police members had been regularly exposed to appalling instances of high-risk repeat family violence with traumatic outcomes for the victims. The effects of the constant exposure to trauma in the family violence environment caused frustration and contributed to emotional stress for those members and influenced their response to high-risk repeat family violence (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Police Association of Victoria and Ambulance Victoria, 2016; Victorian Ombudsman, 2016; Segrave et al., 2018).

Whilst some of the police participants in this research indicated that they felt very well supported by Victoria Police in their management of the family violence process, the police interview data revealed that most of the front-line police members felt that Victoria Police did not support them when they responded to family violence. Also, due to the perception that Victoria Police did not support the front-line police members and the decisions they made when they responded to high-risk repeat family violence, was a source of frustration for the police members (Huppert and Griffiths, 2015; McKenna et al., 2015). The multiple factors identified in this section that had a direct impact on the front-line police members influenced the way those members responded to high-risk repeat family violence. This affected outcomes for the victims of high-risk repeat family violence (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019).

6.6.1 Results - Gender focus in family violence

Previous research by Machado, Santos, Graham-Kevan and Matos (2016) indicated a gender focus in family violence for an extended period. However, the police focus groups and interview data revealed substantial evidence that many police participants had genuine concerns about the gender focus in the family violence process adopted by Victoria Police and how that focus influenced the way the front-line police members responded to high-risk repeat family violence and how they managed the family violence harm. The results of the police interview analysis also supported the concerns of the police focus group participants and the gender focus adopted by Victoria Police.

The Police Inspector participant in this research provided organisational insights and a cultural perspective of the family violence management process. The Inspector articulated that the specific gender focus in the family violence process adopted by Victoria Police had created organisational difficulties for the front-line police members who responded to family violence daily. The results of the police interview data also found that twenty-four of the police participants considered Victoria Police as an organisation that had perpetuated a gender focus in family violence and that had influenced how the front-line police responded to the harm. Twenty-eight police participants also indicated that the gender focus of Victoria Police in family violence impacted how they managed the family violence process. This then contributed to an unbalanced approach to high-risk repeat family violence on the part of Victoria Police.

6.6.2 Results - Family violence policy and process driven

Due to the ongoing harm and violence suffered by victims of high-risk repeat family violence, the Victorian Government introduced the FVIOs. The FVIOs was a legal process that was intended to help break the cycle of harm in high-risk repeat family violence (Victoria Police, 2019). Also, the process provided Victoria Police with a valuable legal procedure that helped protect vulnerable victims and prosecute the perpetrators of harm in the family environment (Victoria Police 2015, 2019).

The results of the victim interview data revealed that many participants believed the FVIO process provided immediate protection for them and also helped reduce harm and agreed that the police process and response was appropriate for them. However, many other victim participants thought that the police action in the FVIO application process was not in the best interest of the victims and did not achieve the best outcome for them. In many cases, the victims believed the FVIO actually increased the problems they had experienced in the family home, especially when the victims were not informed by the police that an application had been made.

The victim interview data revealed concerns that police were process driven in the family violence context. For example, Victim 21 felt that many of the FVIOs applied for by police were just 'process driven' and were not focused on protecting victims. Victim 6 also expressed concern about the police response to family violence when he said, "They [Victoria Police] are just process driven". Victim 19, a current Victoria Police member, expressed a similar view when she stated, "...process driven Yes. I totally agree with that".

The police interview data analysis also indicated that the FVIO process had been 'process driven' and had not been obtained to provide the best outcome for the victims. However, the police interview data analysis indicated that, for many of the participants, the process of getting an Intervention Order in family violence may not have been for the best outcome for victims but was actually 'an act of self-protection for the police members'. Constable 4 further indicated that the application for FVIO was:

"Protection for the police members if something happened in the family environment later, and the police members were required to give evidence in court".

Police supervisor Sergeant 9 also asserted that the FVIO process was one of 'self-protection' when she said, "They [Police members] are protecting themselves against the process". However, this research found that many police participants perceived that the

FVIO process was purely process driven. For example, Senior Constable 11 indicated that the FVIO was obtained because "...they [Police] are obliged to take one out, even at the sniff of family violence". Constable 4 also indicated that the FVIO is "a process that you do by default...?"

Eight police participants felt that the FVIO process in family violence was not process-driven; however, twenty-eight participants thought that the police response to high-risk repeat family violence was process and policy-driven and not always in the best interests of the victims. This research found that the process-driven approach to family violence by the participants and Victoria Police had not reflected the intent of the FVIO process and the protection of the victims. Police had often obtained the FVIO to ensure the process provided some protection for the police members who attended family violence.

6.6.3 Results – Emotional impact of family violence on police members

The police interview analysis results found that police members had been frustrated and traumatised by constantly responding to family violence. Recent research by Maple and Kebbell (2021) found that police members' attitude towards family violence was overwhelmingly negative and this had a direct impact on their response to high-risk repeat family violence.

This research found that twenty-five police participants reflected a similar view to Maple and Kebbell (2021) when they indicated they had reached an emotional breaking point and were constantly fearful due to the pressure of family violence work.

Due to the constant stress caused by family violence work on the police members, Segrave, et al. (2018) acknowledged that this was the most frustrating task for police. Senior Constable 6 reflected a similar view to Segrave et al. (2018) when he said:

"You ask any member what part of the job you hate the most, I would be surprised if they did not say family violence".

The extent of the impact and the trauma suffered by the police participants was evident when Senior Constable 11 said that family violence was "very traumatic, and you see things that keeps you up at night". Senior Constable 4 added to the experience of trauma when she said:

"I think it definitely does impact me... I have been to some horrible jobs, where there are victims that we just cannot help".

The desperation of the impact of constantly responding to family violence was evident when Senior Constable 9 said:

“I really struggled with that. Sometimes you will see colleagues come back from family violence jobs, and they’ll just be flat, frustrated, angry as to what is going on”.

The analysis of the police interview data found that there was concern expressed by some of the police supervisors about the reporting demands required concerning family violence. For example, Sergeant 4 said:

“The effects that this had on some of the members because it is just relentless. You know, and you can see it. You see it in their face”.

Some police supervisors who participated in this research suggested that the consequences of responding to family violence had put enormous ‘pressure on the members emotionally’. The data suggested that family violence had placed them in a mental state that did not enable them to deal with the trauma of family violence. Sergeant 14 articulated the concerns of many participants about the impact of family violence on police members. She said:

“This job is quite soul-destroying because of the accumulative stress that we deal with on a daily basis. That has a massive impact on our mental health”.

Sergeant 8 added further insight into the frustration of the stress of family violence when she said:

“I think we get very jaded. We get very cynical because we are dealing with it [family violence] over and over again”.

Sergeant 10 indicated that the stress of family violence added to the police members’ emotional struggles as there was “...not enough support from outside the organisation”.

6.6.4 Results - Support for police members

The results of the police interview data provided a revealing insight into the perception of support that participants considered Victoria Police provided to them as part of the family violence management process. This study found that twelve police participants felt that Victoria Police had supported them and their decisions when responding to family violence. Senior Constable 10 said:

“We are very well supported, and we are lucky to have excellent management and good sergeants that really look after us”.

Some participants felt there was sufficient support for police members and that the supervisors provided the necessary support and guidance to help manage family violence processes. For example, Constable 1 added, “I think it [Support] is pretty good”. Sergeant 8 also added that “the support is definitely out there”.

Conversely, fourteen participants indicated they did not feel Victoria Police had supported them in their decisions in the family violence management process. This study found that many police members did not feel confident in the support provided and their decisions when responding to family violence. The frustration felt by police participants was articulated by Senior Constable 4 when she stated:

“There is so much responsibility placed on us, with little support, in terms of the organisation. I feel like they will just hang us out to dry if we do the wrong thing. There is no support for us when it comes to this sort of stuff”.

Senior Constable 4 went further to say:

“We should be backed by the Department...rather than thrown under the bus, if we do not [apply for an Intervention Order]”.

Sergeant 6 added to the concerns of the other police members when he indicated that he did not think that Victoria Police provided the necessary support for police members who were required to respond to family violence every day. The feeling that front-line police members were not supported by Victoria Police when they responded to high-risk repeat family violence, impacted the way they reported the harm and who they considered the victims and the perpetrators. However, the interview data also revealed a frustration that suggested that the participants experienced a real fear of organisational repercussions if mistakes were made in responding to family violence. For example, the data indicated that if an Intervention Order had not been obtained because of family violence, Sergeant 20 suggested the police members ‘constantly lived in fear’. He also indicated that the police members were trying to ‘protect their job’ when family violence was concerned. The members in the interview phase demonstrated a real fear of repercussions from Victoria Police if they made a mistake in the reporting process of high-risk repeat family violence. A concern was that if they did not comply with the gendered narrative of high-risk repeat family violence, there was a potential to lose their jobs in Victoria Police. Due to the real fear of consequences in the reporting process, valid information was not always gathered by

Victoria Police members to enhance the existing knowledge and understating of high-risk repeat family violence.

6.6.4.1 Results – Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers

Responding to family violence was one of the most frustrating tasks police had to deal with (Segrave et al., 2018). Managing the family violence process was also very difficult and time-consuming for police (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave, 2018). Therefore, the family violence management process added to the trauma suffered by many police participants. Due to the complexity of managing the family violence process, thirty-one police participants indicated that Victoria Police should consider the concept of providing specifically trained clerical support staff to assist the police members in the family violence management process. The police participants suggested that specially trained support staff could reduce the stress for the police members and streamline the family violence process.

In addition, this research found that Victoria Police had an existing model that could be adapted to assist in the family violence management process. For example, Victoria Police Custody Officers were previously sworn police members who had retired from Victoria Police. The Custody Officer program successfully integrated retired police members into police operations to help streamline prisoner management and reduce the pressure on police members. Therefore, as the Custody Officers had previous police skills, a similar program, a Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officer program could be introduced to assist the front-line police members in managing family violence as they had existing knowledge of the family violence management process. By incorporating the existing skills of retired police members and establishing a Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officer program, the family violence management process could be streamlined. As a result, the front-line police members would work in a less stressful work environment.

6.6.4.2 Results – External family violence support for police members

The results of the police interview data found that thirty-three of the police participants expressed a desire for external agencies with specialist skills to assist police in the family violence process. If Victoria Police incorporated external agencies with specialist skills to work with front-line police members, the family violence management process and the response to the victims of the harm could be enhanced. In addition, data analysis

indicated that police members felt that specific government departments with an existing responsibility in the family violence management process, had not contributed support to the family violence process as they were required to do.

More specifically, the police interview data revealed that twenty-nine police participants felt that the Victoria DHHS had an organisational responsibility to assist police members in the family violence process. Currently, police members were completing the tasks in the family violence process that DHHS were actually responsible for. This then added un-necessary pressure on the front-line police members. However, many of the police participants indicated that the DHHS needed to assist police members. The results of the police interview data showed that police participants felt that a more effective and efficient process could have been achieved due to the complexity of family violence, if the DHHS and other government agencies were involved. They were of the opinion that a multi-agency approach with Victoria Police, DHHS and other specialist support groups was required.

6.7 Results and discussion – Section 3 – Emerging themes and reporting outcomes

The analysis of the focus groups and police interview data provided a rich insight into the emerging themes that influenced how members of Victoria Police responded to high-risk repeat family violence. Therefore, it had the potential to influence the support front-line police members provided to all victims of high-risk repeat family violence, regardless of gender (Douglas, 2019). This study found that the emerging themes, issues, reporting outcomes and the influence they had on the front-line police members had been guided by the focus of Victoria Police in the family violence management process. Many of the police participants indicated that they felt very restricted by the Victoria Police approach to family violence and, as a consequence, they felt they could not provide a balanced outcome for all victims of high-risk repeat family violence.

6.7.1 Results and discussion - Emerging themes and family violence reporting outcomes

The previously mentioned expected themes demonstrated how family violence harm impacted the victims, but the emerging themes illustrated how police responded to that harm. The analysis of the police participant data found nine emerging themes that directly impacted police practice, policy, procedures, and service delivery concerning family violence. In addition, the analysis of the police interviews highlighted the extent to which the emerging themes had impacted how they responded to the harm and the emotional

impact of those emerging themes. **Table 6.1** provides a breakdown of the nine emerging themes identified in this research and explains the impact of each theme.

Emerging Themes Identified	Impact of the Emerging Themes
Police training for family violence	The Victoria Police training influenced participants to choose the Duluth Model when responding to family violence.
Gender focus	The analysis identified that Organisational and Judicial gender focus guided how police identified victims of family violence.
Lack of discretion and empathy	Due to the complexity of family violence and the training the participants received, participants felt they did not have any discretion and lost empathy with victims of family violence.
Support for police members	Participants felt that Victoria Police did not always support their decisions regarding family violence.
The emotional impact on police	The complexity and volume of family violence incidents each participant dealt with emotionally impacted most members.
Process and policy driven.	Many participants believed that family violence response was process-driven and did not necessarily seek the best outcome for victims.
Administrative support	Due to the volume of work required to complete family violence processes, participants believed there needed to be more administrative support to help reduce the exhausting workload.
Agency support (DHHS)	Most participants believed external agencies, such as the DHHS, were required to support the family violence process.
Use of family violence for advantage	The participants identified that the family violence process had been complicated because victims and perpetrators used the family violence process for personal advantage.

(Table 6.1: Source: Chapters 2 & 5)

An extensive analysis of the victim, perpetrator and police interviews and the outcomes of the emerging themes indicated that there were three reporting outcomes that directly influenced how the front-line police members responded to the family violence management process. The three reporting outcomes identified include a ‘Required Outcome’, the ‘Actual Outcome’ and a ‘Desired Outcome’. Each of these identified outcomes had a direct influence on the victims, perpetrators and the FVIO process.

6.7.2 Results and discussion – Reporting outcomes - Required outcome

The analysis of the police interview data found that as Victoria Police adopted the Duluth Model as the preferred family violence management model, it influenced the decision

making of the front-line police members as they felt compelled to record a 'Required Outcome' when responding to family violence. Due to the organisational influence of the Duluth Model in the family violence process, a 'Required Outcome' is described as when police participants consistently recorded females as the victims and males as the perpetrators, regardless of the evidence provided. Many victims and police participants interviewed in this research stated that even though the evidence demonstrated a male was the actual victim of family violence, they reversed the roles and recorded the male as the perpetrator and the female as the victim. The analysis found that many police participants felt compelled to change the male from the victim to the perpetrator to reflect the police training and the influence of the gender focus within Victoria Police regarding the family violence process.

Many police participants indicated that they felt restricted by the Victoria Police gender focus in the decisions they could make in the high-risk repeat family violence process. Therefore, they could not provide a balanced and fair reporting outcome. The restrictions of the gender focus and the required outcomes in the reporting process obscured the true victim dynamics in the existing literature and knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence.

6.7.2.1 Results and discussion – Reporting outcomes – Actual outcome

Further analysis of the police interview data found that the Straus Model approach to family violence also impacted the decisions made by some participants. The Straus Model advocated gender symmetry in family violence, and anyone could be a victim or perpetrator, regardless of gender (Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Lysova, 2016). The police interview data indicated the Straus Model provided the freedom for the police participants to report an 'Actual Outcome'. The 'Actual Outcome' in the family violence process meant that the police participants were not influenced by the gender focus of Victoria Police in family violence, but reported the family violence incident based on the facts and evidence available to them when investigating the harm.

This research found that the strong gender focus in the Victoria Police family violence training had not influenced the decision making of the many of the police participants. Instead, they felt empowered to act on the evidence presented, reaching an 'Actual Outcome' and a balanced approach to family violence for all victims of the harm, regardless of gender.

6.7.2.2 Results and discussion – Reporting outcomes – Desired outcome

The police interview data found that victims and perpetrators often used the FVIO process to gain an advantage in family violence and any subsequent court processes and that did not reflect the actual family violence that had taken place. Often, there had not been any identifiable family violence perpetrated by anyone. By using the FVIO process and family violence reporting to gain a specific advantage, some people had achieved a ‘Desired Outcome’ in the family violence process. The data analysis also found that the ‘Desired Outcome’ in family violence reporting was usually associated with child custody and financial and property settlements in Family Court proceedings.

The result of victims and perpetrators using the family violence process to gain a ‘Desired Outcome’ added to the complexity for the front-line police members and increased their stress due to the perceived false reporting of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, the use of the FVIO process by some victims and perpetrators to gain a ‘Desired Outcome’ contributed to the change of attitude for the police members and the growing lack of empathy that some police participants felt towards many victims and the family violence reporting process. This then had the potential to influence the response and service delivery provided by Victoria Police. Also, the use of the FVIO process by victims and perpetrators to gain an advantage in the Family Court process had the potential to distort the true statistics about the FVIO process. Therefore, accurate data could not be used to enhance knowledge and practice.

6.8 Results and discussion – Further research

This research previously identified various limitations in the Victoria Police response to high-risk repeat family and the subsequent management process and influenced how the front-line police members reported the harm. To enable Victoria Police to provide an unbiased, balanced and well informed approach to high-risk repeat family violence to help break the cycle of harm and support the victims, further research is required. Also, there is a requirement for further examination of issues such as FVIO’s, family relationships and which relationships add to the harm in the family environment. Further research should be undertaken to help understand the extent to which drivers such as mental health issues, illicit drugs and alcohol consumption contribute to high-risk repeat family violence.

Due to the difficulty and the time required to manage the family violence process, further research should be undertaken to ascertain how additional specially trained family

violence clerical staff could be utilised to enhance the family violence reporting process (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave, 2018). Thirty-one police participants indicated that if Victoria Police considered providing additional specifically trained family violence clerical to support the front-line police members and streamline the FVIO process could help reduce a significant amount of existing stress.

6.8.1 Further research – Family Violence Intervention Orders

The introduction of the FVIOs in Victoria was a process that helped guide the response by police, the direction of the courts and were an effective way to protect the victims of family violence. Also, it provided a legal framework that helped break the cycle of harm in high-risk repeat family violence that helped protect vulnerable victims and identified the perpetrators of harm in the family environment (Victoria Police 2015, 2019). However, this study found that the FVIO process had caused serious operational issues for police members that challenged the integrity of the process (Napier et al., 2015; State of Victoria, 2016; Victoria Police, 2015, 2019; Zimmermann, 2017).

Adding to the complexity for the police participants was that the contravention of existing FVIOs had become one of the fastest-growing criminal offences in Victoria (Bytheway, 2015; Oum and Schwebel, 2016). The analysis of the victim interviews in this research suggested that 80% of the participants' FVIOs had been contravened. The contravention of the FVIOs was a significant concern for the police participants. Constable 6 added to that concern about the contravention of the FVIOs when she said:

“We might put Orders [FVIO] in place, and then both of them breach the Orders or the AFM invites the respondent to breach the Order”.

Adding to the complexity of the FVIO process for the front-line police was that often, the order was not a true reflection of what the evidence indicated at a high-risk repeat family violence incident. The action taken by police and the implications of the FVIO was expressed by Sergeant 3 when he stated:

“When I apply for the Intervention Orders, make an application, it does not reflect what I want; it reflects what the Family Violence Code of Practice states as required, and the Victoria Police policy”.

Furthermore, the study found that many perpetrators' and victims' misused the FVIO process as front-line police members were required to implement the process, even when there was no evidence of any harm in the reported family violence. Another significant issue

that added to the complexity in the family violence process for police was the extent to which false allegations had been made in the intervention order process. Senior Constable 3 added to the concept of false allegations in the FVIO process when she said that “you can say whatever you want to say” when alleging family violence.

Further research is required into the contraventions of high-risk repeat family violence FVIOs because Bytheway (2015), Napier et al. (2015) and Oum and Schwebel (2016) found that the police, the courts and the government did not understand the nature of the contraventions and why they occurred. Further research was also required to help add to the existing knowledge of how the drivers, such as mental health issues, illicit drugs and alcohol consumption contributed to the contravention of FVIOs in high-risk repeat family violence. More comprehensive research of the FVIO process involving the victims, perpetrators and front-line police members could help influence, and inform, future family violence policy, processes, procedures and service delivery to help break the cycle of harm (Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019; Mayshak et al., 2020; Napier et al., 2015; Rollings and Taylor, 2008).

6.8.2 Further research – Family Violence relationships

Responding to reported high-risk repeat family violence is often difficult as the cause of the harm was not always apparent to the front-line police members. It is important that Victoria Police responded to high-risk repeat family violence and provided a balanced and fair approach to supporting all victims of family violence, regardless of gender. Therefore, it was important to understand the diversity and dynamics of the family relationships in high-risk repeat family violence to help develop the processes, policies and the strategies used by Victoria Police to guide the police response to, and management of, high-risk repeat family violence (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Lysova, 2015; Papamichail, 2019).

Previous research suggested that the harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence was primarily violence used by males on female victims (Pence and Paymar, 1993). However, the research of Archer (2002), Dutton (2012) and Zimmerman (2019) disputed that previous assertion as they indicated that less than 10% of males in countries such as Finland, France, Poland, Russia and the United Kingdom had ever used any type of violence against a current or former partner.

The analysis of the data collected from victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence and the front-line police members who responded to the reported harm indicated that the gender focus of Victoria Police in the management of reported family

violence was not the lived experience of the participants. The data revealed that current or former female partners were not the only family members at risk of harm. There were a substantial number of child-on-parent incidents reported together with grandchild-on-grandparent violence. Therefore, parents and grandparents were at substantial risk from their own children or grandchildren.

However, as there is very little data provided related to elder abuse and child-to-parent violence, further research is required to help understand how prevalent this type of family violence is in the home and the family dynamics of where the harm is taking place. It is important that police, the government and the relevant family violence support agencies are well informed by current data. By adopting appropriate policies, strategies and processes, police, governments and relevant family violence support agencies can help reduce the cycle of harm for all victims, regardless of their gender, age and relationship (Brillon et al., 1996; Dziewa and Glowacz, 2021; Woods, 2000).

6.8.3 Further research – Alcohol home deliveries

This study found that alcohol contributed significantly to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence. Many perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence suggested that binge drinking of alcohol within the family environment contributed to their offending and the harm caused (VRCIFV, 2017; State of Victoria, 2016). Pence and Paymar (1993) suggested that alcoholism may have also contributed to male perpetration of family violence. When front-line police responded to reported family violence, they had legal, social and liability obligations to ensure they resolved the issues in family violence (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Furness et al., 2016; Janik, 1992; Miller et al., 2016; Kulkarni 2015). Therefore, it was important to understand the impact and influence of alcohol in the perpetration of high-risk repeat family violence.

Family violence could be reduced if there was a reduction in alcohol consumption, especially in the family environment. By reducing alcohol consumption in the home, police, the government and other service providers may be able to provide improved support for all victims of high-risk repeat family violence (State of Victoria, 2016). However, home deliveries of numerous products, including alcohol, are now a convenient aspect of everyday life in Australia. Mayshak et al. (2022) Miller et al. (2016) and Sutherland et al. (2016) suggested that there has been little detailed focused research into alcohol consumption by the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence.

Therefore, specific research into the impact of alcohol home deliveries on family violence could help police, governments, and academia understand the extent of home delivery alcohol sales. This study suggests that understanding who places the order for the alcohol home deliveries is important as there is the potential for under-age alcohol purchase and then consumption. This should be followed by further research that explores whether the home delivery of alcohol has added to the instances of high-risk repeat family violence.

This study found that alcohol contributed significantly to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence. Now that home deliveries have become a convenient aspect of everyday life, specific research into the impact of alcohol home deliveries on family violence could help police, governments, and academia understand the extent of home delivery alcohol sales. This should be followed by further research that explores whether the home delivery of alcohol has added to the instances of high-risk repeat family violence.

6.8.4 Further research – Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers

This research identified that responding to high-risk repeat family violence was often the most frustrating tasks front-line police members had to deal with. The subsequent family violence reporting and management process was very time-consuming and caused substantial stress for many police members (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave et al., 2018). The interview data found that thirty-one of the police participants indicated that there was an opportunity to enhance the family violence management process within Victoria Police. Many participants suggested that specifically trained staff could assist in the FVIO process to support front-line police members and reduce the existing stress (Maple and Kebbell, 2021). The Inspector who participated in this research confirmed that the family violence process placed time constraints and extra pressure on the police members. He articulated the extent of the pressure when he said:

“There is absolute time pressure on them, which created an extra strain on the existing complexity of police work”.

Due to the complexity, strict time requirements and the existing stress of the family violence process, this research identified that Victoria Police had developed the Victoria Police Custody Officer (Custody Officer) program to assist and support police members in the management of prisoners within the confines of a police cell. The Custody Officer program had successfully integrated recently retired sworn Victoria Police members back into police operations to help streamline prisoner management and reduce the pressure and

workload for police members. Bearing in mind the existing Custody Officer program had reduced the workload of front-line police members in the prisoner management process, further research and evaluation of that program should be undertaken to assess if a Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers (Support Officers) program could enhance the FVIO management process. The introduction of a Support Officer program of specifically trained staff could streamline the FVIO process, enhance the liaison between the courts and the DHHS and enable front-line police members to respond to more of the Victoria Police core functions.

6.8.5 Further research – External family violence support for police members

The results of the police interview data found that thirty-three of the police participants expressed a concern that external agencies with specialist family violence capability and obligations did not assist police in the family violence process as and when required. The lack of external family violence support added to the existing tasks front-line police members had in the high-risk repeat family violence management process. In addition, the analysis indicated that police members felt specific Victorian Government departments that had an existing responsibility had not contributed support to the family violence process as required. In particular, this study found that twenty-nine of the police participants nominated the Victoria DHHS as the organisation that had a direct responsibility to assist police members in the family violence process. However, the data found that many police participants indicated that the DHHS had the responsibility for providing relevant family violence reports and information to the Courts; however, the department regularly failed to provide them. Consequently, the task fell on the police members and they had to source the relevant family violence information from the DHHS to present to the Court. Participants in this study asserted that this added responsibility was placed on the police members because some DHHS staff had failed to expedite their family violence reporting responsibilities. This then added to the existing operational pressure on the front-line police members and reduced their ability to perform their core police functions in a timely manner.

The extent of the police frustration with the DHHS not providing the required assistance and support in the family violence process was expressed by police members. Senior Constable 12 indicated the lack of support from the DHHS by stating, “I feel like other organisations need to stand up and start supporting Victoria Police”. One sergeant in

this research articulated the frustration expressed from a police supervisor's perspective about the lack of support from the DHHS in the family violence process. Sergeant 7 said:

“They [DHHS] want us to be social workers, they want us to do referrals, they want us to do all these things; we are not trained to do it. We are not social workers; we are cops”.

Many of the police participants suggested that the DHHS had not fulfilled their obligations in the family violence process as required. However, the police participants also felt that Victoria Police had willingly assumed total responsibility for the whole family violence process and relieved other organisations such as the DHHS of their organisational obligation. Senior Constable 4 expressed the frustration of front-line police members and their responsibility for managing the family violence process alone. She said:

“We are just completely overloaded with the amount of stuff we have to deal with, and we're not utilising other areas that we could perhaps utilise to help us. I think we need to spread the load a bit, and I think like you said, we tend to take sole responsibility for the issue, whereas it is really not entirely our issue to fix”.

However, Leading Senior Constable 9 added to the concerns of Victoria Police assuming full responsibility for the family violence process when he said, “We need to be able to have a situation where it is not just on the Police to do things”. Due to the complexity of the family violence management process and the concerns of the participating police members, the analysis of the interview data found that the police members would like to have professional family violence support staff from external organisations to form a family violence processing team to attend and assess family violence incidents. This study found that a family violence processing team could consist of DHHS members with expert knowledge of the drivers of family violence to attend with police members. Due to the complexity of the family violence issues, the analysis found that, by adding mental health clinicians to the family violence processing team, the clinicians could collaborate with police at the scene of family violence to help determine the best course of action to reduce the harm. Leading Senior Constable 9 added to the concept of a family violence processing team when he said:

“Having clinicians or professionals working with police members and they are both making joint decisions...having somebody as an external professional working, they would be the ones that are best to then decide where things should head from here. Whether it is down the path of an Intervention Order, whether it is simply marriage counselling because it's a very, very minor incident”.

As a result of the analysis of the police interview data, the study found that further research was required to evaluate the potential benefits of dividing family violence into criminal activity and civil disputes. Further research could examine the viability of the police having primary responsibility for the criminal aspects of family violence, whilst an external family violence support team, with other specialist agencies could focus on civil disputes in the family environment. Further research could also examine which external family violence support agencies had the most appropriate expertise and training to help guide Victoria Police family violence response, management, processes, procedures and strategies to enhance the outcomes in high-risk repeat family violence and break the cycle of harm. This future research also had the potential to add to existing high-risk repeat family violence knowledge.

6.9 Conclusion

Neave et al. (2016) previously identified gaps in understanding the issues and drivers contributing to family violence. The research questions that guided the exploration of this research allowed the examination of the issues, specific drivers and emerging themes that directly impacted the police processes, procedures, and service delivery for the family violence process in Victoria.

This chapter discussed the results of this study and provided an overview of the philosophies of the Duluth and Straus Models and the approach each model used in family violence in Victoria. After examining the focus of each of these family violence models and the individual strengths of each model, this chapter demonstrated that the most valuable components of each model could be combined. Combining the strengths and philosophy of each model could provide the police and the government with a more robust platform and strategies to approach high-risk repeat family violence. Replacing the gender focus of the Duluth Model with the gender symmetry of the Straus Model could ensure a balanced approach to all victims of family violence, regardless of gender. The combined strategies of both models also has the potential to provide a comprehensive structure to address the anger and other issues of all perpetrators, irrespective of their gender.

This chapter identified the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence and the extent of the harm in the family environment. Those drivers were mental health issues, illicit drug use and the consumption of alcohol. The chapter found that many police participants

did not feel that Victoria Police had provided them with the skills to address family violence's complex mental health issues.

The chapter also examined the impact of illicit drug use and how alcohol contributed to high-risk repeat family violence. The research found a greater risk for police members when the victims and perpetrators used drugs and/or consumed alcohol together in one location.

Furthermore, the chapter explored the current family violence data collection process utilised by Victoria Police. The research results showed that by combining the sections of the survey used in this study that addressed the drivers of family violence with the current VP-L17, a more comprehensive understanding of the drivers of family violence harm could inform Victoria Police and guide policy, procedures and service delivery.

The focus groups and police interviews provided an insight into the emerging issues that have impacted how police responded to high-risk repeat family violence. The police participants also highlighted the results of the reporting outcomes in the family violence process and how victims and perpetrators had manipulated the FVIO process to gain an advantage in subsequent civil court cases. The study found that the cases where people manipulated the FVIO process were often associated with child custody and family court financial and property settlements.

Many police participants indicated that the Victoria Police family violence training had a strong gender focus that identified females as victims and males as the perpetrators. Although the analysis of the police interview data indicated most of the police participants had extensive experience in responding to family violence, many had been influenced by the training and processes of Victoria Police to select females as the sole victims of family violence, even when this was not actually the case. The analysis also indicated that the best outcome for high-risk repeat family violence victims was not always achieved. The police interview data showed that over 60% of the police participants did not feel that they had the discretion to select the most appropriate approach to the family violence they had responded to.

After exploring all the surveys, focus groups, victim and police interviews, this study answered the three research questions that guided this research. The answers to the research questions have provided viable solutions and suggestions to improve how Victoria Police approaches the family violence management process.

Chapter 7 will provide a conclusion to the research and the findings and by presenting potential recommendations for Victoria Police and other stakeholders to help break the cycle of harm in high-risk repeat family violence.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research approach and the study's relevance in broadening the understanding and knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence. Scholars have examined the complexity of family violence for decades, and many studies have focused on the gender of the victim or gender symmetry within the family environment which has influenced the way front-line police members have responded to the harm caused (Chen and Chan, 2019; Pence, 1999, 1983; Straus, 1979). However, the uniqueness of this study of high-risk repeat family violence and the contribution it makes to knowledge and practice was that it examined family violence harm through a police lens and the experiences of front-line police members. Also, a serving Victoria Police Inspector who had extensive police organisational experience conducted the research.

The chapter begins by outlining the limitations and strengths within the study and provides some recommendations to help guide future high-risk repeat family violence research. Next, the chapter summarises the relevant findings related to the family violence literature and the implications of those findings. Although the existing social constructs of family violence focus strongly on the harm perpetrated on female victims by male perpetrators, this study explored the benefits of gender symmetry in managing high-risk repeat family violence. The study postulates a new model that can provide a gender-neutral approach to managing high-risk repeat family violence and, in doing so, allows police and family violence support agencies to be more inclusive in their approach to family violence service delivery. Next, the chapter examines the original contribution to knowledge and practice that this study has made and discusses the issues that influenced the research questions that guided the exploration of high-risk repeat family violence. Finally, this Chapter will outline key recommendations identified within the study that help enhance the current practice of high-risk repeat family violence management process and also to guide future research to help enrich the current knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence research.

7.2 Limitations and strengths of this study

The purpose of this research was to examine high-risk repeat family violence from a police perspective and to investigate what issues and drivers impacted the response by the front-line police members and the management of family violence process by Victoria

Police. To enable this study to identify the issues and drivers, there were limitations and strengths identified in the research process. Some of the limitations in the study hampered some elements of the data collection process that could enhance the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence. However, there were strengths within the research that added to knowledge and enhanced police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence.

7.2.1 Limitations of this study

During the data collection phase of this research, it was important to gather specific data that would help to enhance the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence and the issues and drivers that influenced police practice and management of the harm. There were several limitations identified in this research that detracted from extensive data being collected. However, the limitations identified were beyond the control of the researcher.

This research identified that the collection of survey data from victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence was important to help add to current academic knowledge and police practice. The first limitation encountered in this research was the reduction of the survey data collection time-frame. The recommended survey data collection time frame was from the 1st of March 2016 to the 30th of November 2016. However, after the survey data collection phase commenced, the SMR Police Command reduced the data collection phase by one month due to police operational commitments. An initial estimation made by the SMR intelligence unit members was that approximately nine hundred surveys could be completed across the region in the allocated time-frame. However, although the survey phase had been reduced by one month, it was not detrimental to the outcome, as a total of six hundred and four completed surveys were collected.

An important part of this research process was the inclusion of three focus groups consisting of FVIU police experts. The structure of the focus groups enabled the FVIU members to evaluate the survey data collection's strengths, weaknesses, and operational value. The specialist police members based in the FVIUs were usually Senior Constables, Sergeants and Senior Sergeants, so this research sought to include a balanced representation of these ranks. The limitation identified in the focus group phase of the research was that FVIU unit rostering and staff availability determined the number of police members who could participate in the process. A balanced number of police ranks was not achieved;

however, the information gained in the focus groups added to the current knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence.

The next limitation identified in this study was that the research could not capture the lived experiences of a significant number of high-risk repeat family violence perpetrators. An equal number of female and male victims were interviewed in this study; however, the research could have been enhanced if ten male and ten female perpetrators had been included in the interview process. However, only one female, thirty-six years old, was identified as the original perpetrator of family violence in this study. Three males and one female who were identified by police as being the victims of family violence had family violence reported against them to the police by their abusive spouses. Therefore, counter FVIOs were also issued against the original victims. The perpetrator's experience could have added to the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence and helped to guide police practice.

An important limitation in this research was not gaining information about the Victorian Magistrates' Court family violence process. Although Victoria Police play a significant role in responding to family violence, one of the most critical roles in the family violence management process was the Magistrates' Court of Victoria. One important matter that emanated from the VRCIFV (2016) that impacted the Victoria Police family violence management process, was the recommendation that all family violence matters be determined in specialist family violence courts to achieve greater consistency in dealing with the harm (Victorian Government, 2020).

This research sought to understand the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence and the impact of the harm on the Victorian Court system. To enable the knowledge of the Magistrate's family violence experienced in the judicial process to be captured, it would be advantageous to conduct interviews with a sample of Magistrates in various locations across Victoria. By exploring the issues that the Magistrates face in the family violence process, the information could help identify contributions that the Magistrates may consider would help improve the family violence process for the victims, police, and the government. When the research plan was considered in the methodology chapter, the study identified the benefit of understanding the issues faced by the Magistrates in the family violence courts. Therefore, after initial discussions with a representative of the Victorian Magistrates' Court, permission was given to interview three Magistrates to gain an insight into their experiences of the family violence judicial process.

An important limitation encountered in this research that impacted the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of family violence in the Victorian Court system was the unexpected withdrawal of the permission for the three Magistrates to participate in the interview process after the research had commenced. In Victoria, the Magistrates' Court can order a perpetrator of family violence to attend a men's change-behaviour program by adding a particular condition in the final FVIO process. Although not critical to the research, it reduced the opportunity to understand the judicial process from a Magistrate's perspective.

This Chapter acknowledges the limitations experienced in this research. However, the limitations did not detract from the significance of the findings, and the strengths of this family violence study are its unique contribution to knowledge and practice. Furthermore, the limitations in this research have provided a viable platform for future family violence research.

7.2.2 Strengths of this study

Responding to high-risk repeat family violence by front-line police members has had a significant impact on front-line police resources and the Victoria Police family violence management process (Cornelius, 2015; Hickman and Simpson, 2003). For an extended period, there has been extensive academic research about family violence and, as a result, there have been conflicting results about the causes of family violence and how it has been managed by the police and the courts (Fisher et al., 2022; Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; McKeown et al., 2022). There have also been significant gaps in the existing knowledge of the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence and the characteristics of the perpetrators and victims of the harm (Fitz-Gibbon, 2022; Neave et al., 2016).

To enable this research to add to existing knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence and police practice, a strength of this study was the choice of a sequential explanatory model to help gather the relevant data. The strength of a mixed-methods approach was that it incorporated a sequential explanatory research design that enabled this study to explore historical Victoria Police data, and also helped to develop the content, structure of the research and gave a voice to the victims, perpetrators and the front-line police members and explored the lived experiences of these participants. It also provided a structured approach to the planned focus groups, interviews of the victims, perpetrators and

police members (Cooper and Schindler, 2008; Green and Caracelli, 1997; Saunders et al., 2016).

The strength of the methodology selected enabled this study to collect new and comprehensive data to inform knowledge and practice from six hundred and four surveys that reflected the experiences of victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence. In addition, three focus groups with FVIU specialist police members added to the strength of the research. These expert FVIU police members provided expert insights into high-risk repeat family violence and the Victoria Police management process of the harm.

An important strength of this research and its contribution to knowledge and practice was that thirty victims of high-risk repeat family violence took part in interviews and provided a unique understanding of the harm suffered by these participants. A further strength of the research was that forty-one front-line police members of various ranks were interviewed and they were able to provide the researcher with an overview of the current police practice and policies that guided their response and the management process of high-risk repeat family violence (Creswell, 2012; Edgar and Manz, 2017; Flick, 2007; Harrell and Bradley, 2009; Saunders et al., 2012, 2016). Finally, the strength of the front-line police interviews exposed the emotional impact of high-risk repeat family violence had on front-line police members who were constantly exposed to the trauma and frustrations of the management process.

7.2.3 Future research identified in the limitations and strengths of this study

To enable Victorian Government, Police and the Judiciary to provide a balanced and fair response and management process of high-risk repeat family violence, this study identified that further research should be undertaken to enhance existing knowledge and police practice (Dowling et al., 2018b; Jury, 2022; Morgan et al., 2020). An analysis of the survey data in this research provided a comprehensive insight into the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, family relationships, the type of family violence experienced and extensive information about the FVIO process. As the survey data revealed results that did not reflect current research and knowledge of the drivers and issues that impact high-risk repeat family violence, future research should be undertaken. Future research could consider the benefits of the Victorian FVIUs utilising the survey designed for this research. A comprehensive addition to high-risk repeat family violence knowledge and police practice

could be achieved if each FVIU throughout Victoria asked all victims and perpetrators they manage in the family violence process to participate in the survey process.

To enable the government, police and the Judiciary to provide a balanced and effective change behaviour program in family violence, all perpetrators of the harm must be treated equally, regardless of gender. Future research should be considered to examine family violence change behaviour programs, such as the Duluth Model, to understand if the programs could be successful if they were more flexible and focus on all perpetrators of family violence, regardless of gender (Hine et al., 2022; Kuskoff, 2021). By undertaking comprehensive future research of all victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence, regardless of gender, could help to enhance the existing knowledge and also influence police practice in the response to, and management of, the harm. The future research could also examine if the change behaviour programs could be made compulsory in Victoria for all perpetrators, regardless of gender.

7.3 Summary of findings

This study found a number of issues and findings that have presented extensive additional information to the existing knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence and enhanced the understanding of police practice in the management process of the harm in the research area of the SMR. The summary of findings in this chapter provide an insight into the issues that directly influence police practice and how the front-line police members respond to the harm and manage the family violence process. Family relationships and the type of family violence experienced in the family environment influence existing knowledge and guide police practice.

The findings of the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence demonstrate the extent they contribute to the risk for the victims of the harm and the front-line police members who respond to the harm. Also, the Family Violence Intervention Order process has a direct impact on police practice and how the members report and manage the process. The reporting outcomes identified in this research explained the influence of the preferred Victoria Police family violence management model and the implications of the gender focus of the model.

The summary of findings also examines the implications of high-risk repeat family violence on the front-line police members who respond to the harm and manage the process. The summary of findings provides an insight into the potential for Victoria Police Family

Violence Support Officers to assist front-line police members and also, the requirement for external family violence agencies to support Victoria Police in the family violence process.

7.3.1 Summary of findings – Family relationships

As previously mentioned, responding to reported high-risk repeat family violence is often difficult for the front-line police members. One of the issues confronting the police is trying to understand the family relationships and dynamics where the violence has been reported. Therefore, it was important to identify the relationships that posed the most significant risk to the victims of the harm. By identifying the relationships in reported high-risk repeat family violence where victims were exposed to current and future danger, this research could add to the existing knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence relationships. Also, the added knowledge of the relationships could help guide the current police practice used by Victoria Police in the response to high-risk repeat family violence and also enhance the management process (Brillon et al., 1996; Dziwina and Glowacz 2021; Victoria Police, 2019; Woods, 2000).

The analysis of the victim survey and interview data revealed that the most significant at risk family relationship in high-risk repeat family violence that were not popularly reported in the existing literature. The data in this research revealed that the perpetrator's wife was the relationship that was at the most risk of violence in reported high-risk repeat family violence. The data also revealed that the husbands of female perpetrators were similarly a significant relationship where they were subjected to family violence. This study found that the ex-partner relationship in high-risk repeat family violence was a concern for the front-line police members who responded to the reported harm. Almost 40% of the ex-partners of the perpetrators, both female and male, were at risk of significant harm. In addition, the data also indicated that 30% of the current spouses, wives and husbands, were also at risk of harm from the perpetrator in the family environment. Another significant group of victims of high-risk repeat family violence relationships identified were parents and grandparents who were the victims of abuse perpetrated by their own children or grandchildren.

No family violence should be tolerated, so it is important to understand which relationships in high-risk repeat family violence present the greatest and most immediate threat to the victims. By understanding the relationships that present the greatest risk to the victims in high-risk repeat family violence, knowledge can be enhanced to ensure the most

appropriate research and data collection is conducted to reduce the harm to all victims, regardless of gender. Also, by understanding the family relationships where the victims of the harm are subjected to immediate or ongoing family violence, police practice can be enhanced to ensure the vulnerable victims of high-risk repeat family violence can be supported by the police, courts and also influence future strategies.

7.3.2 Summary of findings – Type of family violence

Often, when front-line police members responded to reports of high-risk repeat family violence, they were confronted with numerous challenges when they tried to identify the type of family violence that had been perpetrated on the victim (Gill et al., 2019; Jung and Wielinga, 2019; Victoria Police, 2019). An important aspect of this research was to contribute to literature, knowledge and police practice, so it was important to identify the types of harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence (Commonwealth of Australia, 2019). This study gained first-hand knowledge of the experiences of the victims of high-risk repeat family violence and the harm perpetrated against them.

Often, when front-line police members respond to reported high-risk repeat family violence, the types of family violence suffered by the victim may not provide visible manifestations easily observed by police. Therefore, it was often difficult for the police members and may have impacted how they responded to the harm. To ensure the most extensive information about the types of violence perpetrated in this study, each participant was encouraged to report all types of harm they had experienced in the family environment. The most reported types of family violence that emerged from the analysis of the data in this study were physical and psychological violence. These types were often reported by the victims as being used together by the perpetrator. Also, significant numbers of the participants in this study indicated emotional, behavioural and controlling family violence had been a significant type of harm they had suffered in their experiences of high-risk repeat family violence.

The data collection process and the analysis in this research provided a comprehensive insight into the types of harm perpetrated in high-risk repeat family violence that presented the greatest risk to the victims and also the police. This enhanced information could inform the existing knowledge about the types of family violence, and potentially influence the Victorian Courts, Police practice, State Government and family violence support services.

7.3.3 Summary of findings – Drivers of high-risk repeat family violence

Previous literature identified that there were an extensive number of drivers that influenced high-risk repeat family violence. Those drivers included financial insecurity, education and social and economic exclusion (AIHW, 2018; State of Victoria, 2014-2016; WHO, 2016). However, this research only explored those drivers that directly impacted the response to high-risk repeat family violence by Victoria Police members. Examining the current literature could help gain new insights into the specific drivers and issues impacting police processes, procedures, and service delivery in the family violence management process (Menéndez, Tusell and Weatherburn, 2015; Yates, 2020).

The existing literature and knowledge of family violence previously had identified numerous drivers of high risk repeat family violence. Therefore, it was important to understand which drivers impacted the victims and perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence and how those influenced the front-line police members who responded to the harm. After careful analysis of the data obtained in this research, the specific drivers that influenced the police response, processes, procedures, service delivery and management of high-risk repeat family violence were the use of illicit drugs, the consumption of alcohol and mental health issues in family violence.

After carefully analysing the data in this research, the results of the analysis have enhanced the existing knowledge of the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence and the extent that those drivers impact on the harm. The analysis has also provided a deeper understanding of the specific drivers for Victoria Police and the Government. Therefore, police practice in the response to, and management of, high-risk repeat family violence can be enhanced and the most appropriate strategies can be developed to ensure all victims of family violence, regardless of gender, can be protected and supported.

7.3.4 Summary of findings – Family Violence Intervention Order process

This research previously discussed that the FVIO process was an effective way to protect the victims of family violence. However, this study found that the process had caused serious operational issues for police members. When front-line police members respond to reported high-risk repeat family violence, they are guided by the existing operational requirements of the FVIO process. The research found that the FVIO process was an effective way to protect the victims of high-risk repeat family violence. However,

the analysis of the victim, perpetrator and police interview data suggested that the conditions of the FVIO process were not complied with by many of the research participants.

Oum and Schwebel (2016) previously suggested that quite often, the conditions of the FVIO were not complied with. A significant concern for the front-line police members in this research was that 80% of the victims interviewed indicated that the perpetrator or the victim had failed to comply with the conditions of their FVIO. The failure of the victims and perpetrators to comply with the conditions of the FVIO that had been issued to protect the victim from further harm, had a direct impact the way police managed the process. Police participants in this research were also concerned about the FVIO process and the ease with which an application for the Order could be made.

The front-line police members were not happy with the process as they were required to apply for a FVIO even when there was no evidence of any harm in the reported family violence as there was very little requirement to produce evidence of any harm or violence. This study also found that many victims and perpetrators had often used the FVIO application process to gain an advantage in the Court system rather than for personal safety or protection. Carpenter et al. (2001) and Parkinson et al. (2010) noted that the FVIOs were not being used for the purpose for which the process was intended. They also reported that many Magistrates in Australia considered that the FVIO process was used to gain a tactical advantage in court proceedings.

Understanding the implications of the extent to which the FVIO process had been compromised by victims and perpetrators failing to comply with the conditions of the order revealed the complexity of how police practice has been compromised when trying to protect victims of the harm. This study and the results found enhanced existing knowledge of the FVIO process and can also help to influence future police practice and the development of specific strategies to address the FVIO process and how the Orders are used.

7.3.5 Summary of findings – Reporting outcomes

By understanding the implications of the existing reporting outcomes in high-risk repeat family violence identified in this study can enhance existing knowledge and influence current police practice. This study found that the response provided by police had been influenced by various reporting outcomes identified in the family violence reporting process. For example, the implementation of the Duluth Model by Victoria Police and the use of the FVIO for personal gain by the victims and perpetrators impacted service delivery by police.

In addition, as previously mentioned in Chapter 6, three outcomes were identified that directly influenced the approach taken by police members when they responded to high-risk repeat family violence.

The three reporting outcomes that impacted the family violence process were the Required, Actual, and Desired outcomes. Due to the organisational influence of the Duluth Model, a **'Required Outcome'** was recorded when police participants felt compelled to record females as the victims and males as the perpetrator, regardless of the evidence gathered.

The police interview data indicated that the Straus Model and the principle of gender symmetry in family violence enabled participants to report an **'Actual Outcome'**. Police members indicated that, as they had experienced gender symmetry in family violence, they had been able to identify the victims and perpetrators based on the facts and evidence when investigating the harm. They had not been influenced by gender but by the violent offences committed in the family environment.

The victims and perpetrators who used the FVIO process to gain a specific advantage had achieved a **'Desired Outcome'** in the family violence process. However, the data analysis found that the 'Desired Outcome' was frequently associated with child custody, financial and property settlements, rather than personal safety. In addition, this study found that using the FVIO process to gain a 'Desired Outcome' had a detrimental impact on the police participants who were required to respond to high-risk repeat family violence. Due to the reporting of family violence for personal gain, many police participants had a growing lack of empathy towards the victims of family violence due to the ongoing use of the FVIO process.

7.3.6 Summary of findings – Impact on front-line police members

To enable this research to enhance the existing knowledge of the impact of high-risk repeat family violence on front-line police members and enhance police family violence practice, it was essential to explore the rich and diverse insights and experiences of the front-line police members. The analysis of the lived experience of the front-line police members who participated in this research, together with the current Victoria Police family violence management model, revealed the impact of responding to the harm in the family environment. The data revealed that responding to high-risk repeat family violence was

extremely frustrating and time consuming for the front-line police members (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave et al., 2018).

The impact of front-line police members constantly responding to high-risk repeat family violence indicated many had reached an emotional breaking point due to the inherent pressures of the work and their experience in the family violence environment (Maple and Kebbell, 2021; Segrave, Wilson and Fitz-Gibbon, 2018). Also, many front-line police members had developed overwhelmingly negative attitudes towards family violence due to the constant stress of being exposed to horrific family violence events (Chung, 2006; Diemer, 2015; Maple and Kebbell, 2021).

An ongoing concern for Victoria Police was that, as a result of front-line police members responding to high-risk repeat family violence, many members often developed mental health issues and experienced psychological trauma, anxiety, depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Cotton, Hogan, Bull, and Lynch, 2016; Police Association of Victoria and Ambulance Victoria, 2016; Victorian Ombudsman, 2016). By understanding the impact of high-risk repeat family violence and the trauma suffered by the front-line police members, knowledge can be enhanced and police practice, policies and procedures can be influenced to help reduce the harm and suffering of the police members.

7.3.7 Summary of findings – Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers

This study found that when front-line police members responded to reported incidents of high-risk repeat family violence, they were often undertaking frustrating and time-consuming duties that restricted them from completing other core police duties. The analysis of the police participant interviews revealed that there was a desire expressed by the participants for support in the FVIO process by Victoria Police. The research identified that there was an opportunity to replicate the existing and successful model of the Victoria Police Custody Officers program that was introduced to help streamline the prisoner management process within a police station so as to reduce the pressure on front-line police members.

The Victoria Police Custody Officer program had recruited recently retired sworn police members and had successfully re-integrated these police members into police operations to supervise the prisoner management process. Therefore, Victoria Police could re-integrate recently retired sworn police members with an extensive knowledge of the FVIO process into a Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers program. If Victoria Police did introduce a Family Violence Support Officers program, police practice in the response

to, and management of, high-risk repeat family violence could be streamlined, therefore allowing front-line police members the opportunity to undertake more vital patrol duties.

7.3.8 Summary of findings – External family violence support for police members

The results of the police interview data found that numerous police participants in this research expressed a concern that external agencies with specialist family violence capability and obligations did not assist police in the family violence process as and when required. Specifically, the police members in this research felt that some Victorian Government departments that had obligations in the family violence process, had not provided the expert service it was required to. In particular, this study found that many police participants nominated the DHHS as one organisation that had a direct responsibility to assist police members in the family violence process. However, the data found that the DHHS staff had often failed to expedite their family violence reporting responsibilities and regularly failed to provide the obligatory family violence reports to the Courts. Consequently, many police participants felt that Victoria Police had willingly assumed total responsibility of the whole family violence process and relieved other organisations such as the DHHS of their obligation. This then added to the stress and existing pressure on the police members in the family violence process.

The analysis of the police interview data found that if there was external family violence support for the front-line police members, police practice could be enhanced and the family violence process could be streamlined. By including professional support staff from external organisations with expert knowledge and skills in relation to high-risk repeat family violence, a multi-agency approach could be introduced. This study found that a family violence processing team could consist of DHHS members with expert knowledge of the drivers of family violence and mental health clinicians. The analysis found that by adding mental health clinicians to the family violence processing team, the clinicians could collaborate with police at the scene of family violence to help determine the best course of action to reduce the harm.

The study also found that there would be a benefit to police practice if family violence was divided into criminal activity and civil disputes. The analysis found that police should have the primary responsibility for the criminal aspects of family violence, whilst the DHHS and other specialist agencies could focus on civil disputes in the family environment. The data suggested that, by combining the expertise and training of external support agencies

in family violence, the response, police practice and outcomes in high-risk repeat family violence could be enhanced, and more victims could be assisted.

7.4 Implications of the key findings for knowledge, policy and practice

The three research questions that guided this study helped explore the complexity of family violence and how such complexity impacted the police process, procedures and service delivery in managing high-risk repeat family violence. The study found that in answering research question one, **“How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”** a new approach to enhance knowledge, research and practice was identified. This study found that more comprehensive and inclusive strategies and policies could be developed if the Victoria Police and Victorian Government combined the strengths previously identified in the Duluth and Straus Models. By not having a specific victim gender focus in high-risk repeat family violence, more meaningful research could be conducted to establish how all perpetrators, regardless of gender, caused violence in the family environment. This would be in keeping with the research of Lysova (2016).

In answering the first research question, this study developed a new family violence management process that could inform existing knowledge, police practice, the judicial system and service providers. The new family violence model provides a powerful tool to afford equal support for all victims. The model also has the potential to enable all perpetrators to be prosecuted regardless of gender and to be included in change-behaviour programs. The benefit of combining the strengths of the Duluth and Straus Models and adopting gender symmetry in family violence would be that police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence can be improved.

The implications of the key findings of this study helped to provide details about the specific drivers in the second research question, **“What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”** The WHO (2016) previously indicated that many drivers impacted victims of family violence. This study found that the specific drivers that had the most significant impact on the police response were mental health issues, illicit drug use and alcohol consumption. These drivers added to the complexity of the Victoria Police response and significantly escalated the risk of harm. This study also provides a platform to enable further investigation into the specific impact of the drivers identified in this study. Further research could improve the understanding of the drivers of

high-risk repeat family violence as noted by Coomber et al. (2021), Dowling and Morgan (2019) and Weiss (2020).

Based on answering the third research question: **“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”** this study was able to suggest an enhanced data collection process. This study also identified the benefits of integrating relevant questions that explored high-risk repeat family violence drivers into the existing VP-L17. In addition, incorporating the comprehensive mental health, drug and alcohol questions contained in the survey developed for this study would add value to the VP-L17 data collection process. The enhanced VP-L17 data collection process could also add additional information to help guide further research about the drivers, and fill the gaps identified in the understanding of high-risk repeat family violence.

7.5 Original contribution of this study to knowledge and practice

The issue of family violence has been examined in a variety of ways over the last five decades, and the discussions have either focussed on female victims or gender symmetry in the harm perpetrated in the family environment (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Lien and Lorentzen, 2019). However, in most family violence research, few have examined the violence based on direct interaction with the victims or perpetrators (Lysova, 2016). Consequently, this study makes a significant original contribution to knowledge and to the practice of managing high-risk repeat family violence by bringing a unique insight into family violence harm. One enhancement of the contribution was that the researcher was a member of the Victoria Police and held the rank of Inspector with thirty-eight years of experience (Holder, 2011; Rollings and Taylor, 2008; Saidin and Yaacob, 2017). Thus, the researcher had an in-depth understanding of the police reporting and management processes dealing with high-risk repeat family violence due to his lived experience in Victoria Police.

As a result of the researcher being a member of Victoria Police and conducted research that directly impacted front-line police members, he was readily accepted by the police participants. That provided the opportunity to obtain more in-depth information than may have been available to other researchers (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009). Furthermore, the high-risk repeat family violence victims felt at ease sharing their personal experiences with the researcher. They had an existing relationship with police members who had provided them with support and guidance during their difficult times.

This study also made an original contribution to the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence by examining the Duluth Model that Victoria Police had introduced to guide the police response to family violence. The exploration of the Duluth Model and the subsequent literature review found that this model had provided a restricted approach to many victims of the harm perpetrated in the family environment due to the gender-specific focus. Although Victoria Police endorsed the values of the Duluth Model and the focus on patriarchy and power and control, this study found that this did not enable front-line police members to provide a balanced approach to all victims of high-risk repeat family violence. Indeed, the model was found to restrict the options for police as they were obliged to focus only on female victims of family violence. However, research by Straus (1979) revealed that gender symmetry in family violence was an option that existed for police members who responded to the harm. Furthermore, this research found that many police participants had embraced the concept and flexibility of gender symmetry when they responded to family violence rather than being restricted by the gender focus of the Duluth Model.

This study made an original contribution to the knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence by addressing the existing conflict in the family violence literature. For example, Livings et al. (2022) suggested that other approaches could help break the cycle of family violence. By exploring the ongoing pressure on police members who responded to family violence harm, this study found that the Duluth and Straus Models could complement each other in the police approach to family violence.

Furthermore, the Duluth Model in America enabled various professional organisations such as the police, courts, counselling agencies and prisons internationally to utilise the concepts of the model to implement change-behaviour programs (Emerson, 1979; Pence, 1983). The implementation of a multi-agency approach in the prosecution and subsequent management of relevant change-behaviour programs for the perpetrators had two distinct community benefits. Firstly, the multi-agency concept enabled specific strategic plans to be adopted with standard procedures, policies and accepted family violence language (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Rizza, 2009). The second benefit of the multi-agency approach to family violence was the potential to ensure the strict monitoring of the probation agreements made by the perpetrators in court sentencing and enforcing the mandatory change-behaviour programs. The consistent approach then had the potential of reducing the opportunity of family violence escalating into high-risk repeat family violence by the perpetrators (Machado, Hines and Matos, 2016).

Examining each model's positive elements and adopting a gender-neutral approach to the harm in the family environment has the potential to provide a balanced platform for further family violence research. In addition, the gender-neutral focus in family violence research can expand the development of inclusive strategies, policies, procedures, and service delivery that will help all victims and reduce the stress and trauma for police members who respond to the harm (Lysova, 2016).

For example, if the gender focus of the Duluth Model was removed and it embraced gender neutrality, the eight-core themes of the 'Power and Control Wheel' could then be adapted to include all perpetrators of family violence. The adaption to gender symmetry in the Duluth Model could then provide robust and positive support for the CTS of the Straus Model. An 'Integrated' family violence model utilising the eighty elements of the Straus Model could help police and the courts discover how perpetrators use the 'power and control' identified in the Duluth Model over their current or former partners (Chapman and Gillespie, 2018; Chavis and Hill, 2009; Pence and Paymar, 1993; Straus, 1979, 1987; Straus et al., 1996).

By understanding the power and control used by perpetrators of family violence, the development of the change-behaviour program within the Duluth Model would provide the police and the courts with another option to address the harm caused. In addition, the program would establish a way to help the perpetrators address their anger issues collaboratively (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019). Combining the Duluth Model's change-behaviour program and the multi-agency approach with the Straus Model's gender symmetry provides a balanced family violence management process for police, the court system and relevant support agencies (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Rizza, 2009).

A coordinated approach that embraces gender symmetry and recognises male and female perpetrators of family violence could overturn the deeply entrenched social belief of the patriarchy and provide a balanced approach to high-risk repeat family violence (Rizza, 2009). In addition, by including standard procedures, policies, and family violence language that recognises male and female perpetrators of family violence could help provide a balanced approach to addressing the anger issues of perpetrators (Rizza, 2009). Rizza (2009) described the Duluth Model's development as more than just a change-behaviour program; it has the potential to provide a process to address the anger issues of all perpetrators of family violence, regardless of gender. This research found that including the

strengths of the CTS and the Power and Control Wheel in a gender-free environment would provide police with a viable option to respond to, and manage, the harm in the family environment (Stanko, 2008; Straus, 2007, 2010).

Combining the positive elements of the Duluth Model's Power and Control Wheel with the CTS of the Straus Model and applying the elements to all victims and perpetrators of family violence provides a new 'Combined' and balanced family violence model. Also, asking the same family violence questions relevant to the 'Power and Control Wheel' and the CTS of all perpetrators, without exception, is likely to enable the police and the courts to establish a more nuanced understanding of the harm perpetrated in family violence (Lysova, 2016).

7.6 Recommendations for Victoria Police and Government Agencies

For many decades, family violence has been an ongoing concern for police and has impacted how police responded to family violence harm and managed the process (Abu Saada, 2019; Boxall and Morgan, 2020; Cherney et al., 2019). Ongoing gender debate about the victims of family violence has influenced how the police developed policies and procedures to help break the cycle of harm. However, the current family violence management process used by Victoria Police has an entrenched gender focus and has not embraced the concept of gender symmetry in family violence. Therefore, all victims of family violence harm have not been supported equally, and all perpetrators have not been held accountable (Chen and Chan, 2019; Pence, 1999, 1983; Straus, 1979).

After examining the complexity of the current Victoria Police family violence management process and the impact this has had on front-line police members, this research proposes four recommendations to enhance the family violence process. The recommendations include (i) an enhanced family violence management model, (ii) a support process to help the front-line police members with family violence management, and (iii) a proposal to establish a multi-agency task force to assist police members when attending family violence incidents, and (iv) psychological support for police members adversely affected by experiencing severe trauma as a result of attending extreme high-risk family violence crime scenes.

7.6.1 Recommendation 1: Proposed development of a ‘Family Violence Integrated Management Model’ approach to family violence.

An extensive exploration of the existing family violence literature and the victim and police interviews revealed internal conflict in response to family violence by Victoria Police. This research proposes that Victoria Police consider introducing a Family Violence Integrated Management Model response to family violence that will provide an opportunity to deliver a balanced approach for all victims to break the cycle of violence.

7.6.1.1 Comment: Recommendation 1

This research found that the police were required to provide a balanced response to protect all victims of family violence and prosecute the perpetrators of the harm with the most appropriate police procedures and strategies. However, the philosophy of the Duluth Model did not provide the balanced approach required for all victims of harm (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). In addition, the results of this research identified that the Duluth and Straus Models had individual approaches and strengths when responding to family violence. Many of these strengths have been previously identified in the literature review (Bates, 2019; Powney and Graham-Kent, 2019; Robbins, 1994; Wallace et al., 2019).

The first recommendation is for the Duluth Model’s Power and Control Wheel elements and the Straus Model’s CTS to be combined to develop a ‘Family Violence Integrated Management Model’ approach to family violence. Combining the strengths of the two models in a gender-neutral environment could provide a positive and robust alternative for police, the courts, and victims. For example, the Power and Control Wheel of the Duluth Model identified eight core themes and behaviours used by male perpetrators to control female victims. This could be amended to include all perpetrators, regardless of gender.

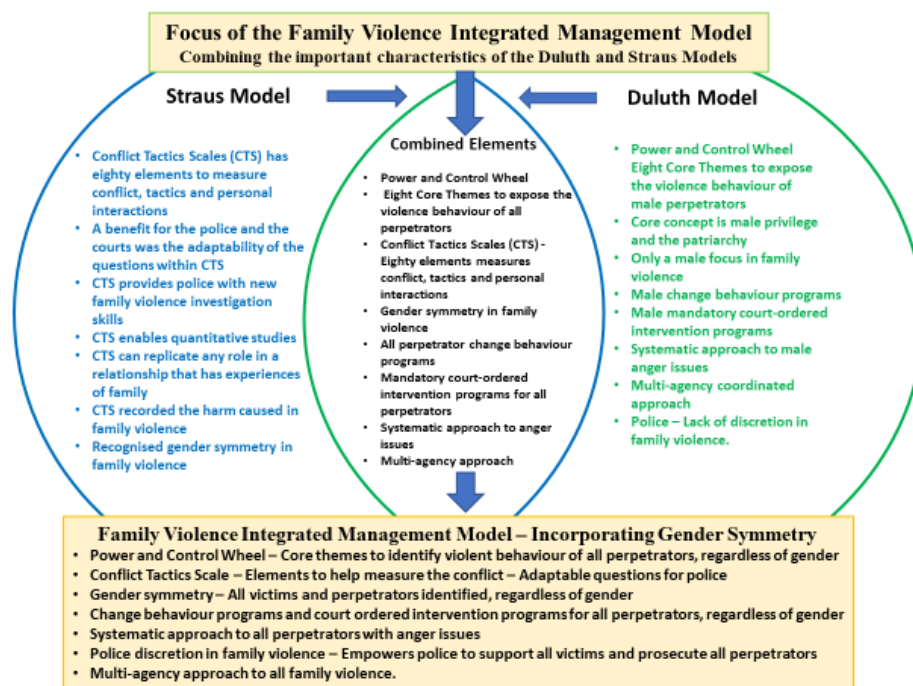
The Duluth Model’s multi-agency approach that incorporated police, the court system and relevant support agencies could be enhanced by including the Straus Model philosophy of gender symmetry (Pence, 1999; Powney and Graham-Kevan, 2019; Rizza, 2009). For example, this could incorporate all male and female perpetrators with anger management issues in the change-behaviour program. By applying the Power and Control Wheel elements to all perpetrators, regardless of gender, and asking the same questions in the CTS of male and female perpetrators without exception, police and the courts could establish a more appropriate understanding of the harm perpetrated in family violence.

By combining the strengths of both models, the police, courts, judiciary and service providers would have a powerful tool to provide equal support for all victims. In addition,

all perpetrators could be prosecuted regardless of their gender and included in the change-behaviour programs. The benefit of combining the strengths of the Duluth and Straus Models and adopting gender symmetry in family violence is that police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence can be improved.

Introducing gender symmetry and eliminating the current gender focus in Victoria Police family violence training, relevant procedures, policies, and family violence language could also help provide an ‘Inclusive’ approach to the harm. As a result, all victims could be treated with the dignity that they deserve. A ‘Family Violence Integrated Management Model’ approach could then reflect the lived experiences of the front-line police members in the family environment. In addition, it could help overturn the deeply entrenched social belief of patriarchy when dealing with family violence.

Figure 7.1 demonstrates the proposed Family Violence Integrated Management Model that incorporates the strength of the Duluth and Straus Models and combines them into a structure that can provide a balanced approach to high-risk repeat family violence.



(Figure 7.1: Family Violence Integrated Management Model)

7.6.2 Recommendation 2: Proposed Victoria Police Family Violence Support Officers.

This study found that responding to, and managing, family violence was difficult, time-consuming, and one of the most frustrating tasks police participants had to deal with. This was also a theme found in a research study by Maple and Kebbell (2021). Therefore,

the family violence management process added to the trauma suffered by many police participants. This research recommends that Victoria Police consider providing additional specifically trained family violence support officers to support the police members and the Family Violence Intervention Order process.

7.6.2.1 Comment: Recommendation 2

Due to the complexity of managing family violence, this study found that specially trained support staff could be introduced to help streamline the process and reduce the stress on the sworn police members. This research identified that Victoria Police had an existing model that could be adapted to help develop a new family violence management administrative support process. The Victoria Police Custody Officers (Custody Officers) were previously sworn police members who had retired from Victoria Police. The Custody Officer program successfully integrated retired police members into police operations to help streamline prisoner management and reduce the pressure on police members.

The Custody Officers had previous front-line police skills and family violence experience, so a similar program could be introduced to assist the front-line police members in managing the family violence process. By incorporating the existing skills of retired police members and providing specific family violence training, administrative support staff could help streamline the family violence process. This would help the front-line police members work in a less stressful environment, and the victims and society would be better served. (Segrave et al., 2018).

7.6.3 Recommendation 3: Proposed integrated family violence processing team.

Due to family violence being intrinsically complex due to multiple drivers of the harm, this study found that the specialist skills of various agencies were required to provide an appropriate response. In addition, as police had to contend with the harm from drugs, alcohol and mental health issues in family violence, the complexities are too significant for the police alone to address. Consequently, a multi-disciplined approach to family violence is required. This research recommends that integrated multi-discipline family violence processing teams with specialist skills relevant to family violence be introduced to enable members of Victoria Police to work within a specialist team to respond to family violence.

7.6.3.1 Comment: Recommendation 3

After evaluating the evidence about the drivers of high-risk repeat family violence, this study found that mental health issues added to the complex and dangerous situations police members faced when responding to family violence. The mental health issues included psychiatric disorders, personality disorders, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, paranoia and passive-aggressive behaviour. A number of these issues were also found in research by Hester et al. (2015).

However, regardless of the dangers and complexity of the mental health issues, illicit drug use and alcohol consumption in family violence, police members had legal, social and liability obligations to ensure they resolved the issues in family violence (Cotton and Coleman, 2013; Furness et al., 2016; Janik, 1992; Miller et al., 2016; Kulkarni 2015).

This study proposes that the multi-discipline family violence processing teams consisting of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) (Formerly the Department of Health and Human Services) members with expert knowledge of the family violence process could assist police members. Due to the complexity of the family violence issues, this study also recommends including mental health clinicians in the family violence processing team. Mental health clinicians could collaborate with police at the scene of family violence and help determine the best course of action required to reduce the harm.

This study further proposes that family violence-related elements should be separated into criminal activity and civil disputes. The proposal is for the police to have the primary responsibility for the criminal aspects of family violence, whilst the DFFH and other specialist agencies focus on the civil disputes in the family environment. By combining the expertise and training of external support agencies in family violence, the response and outcomes in high-risk repeat family violence could be significantly enhanced, and more victims could be provided with appropriate assistance.

7.6.4 Recommendation 4: Proposed trial of an integrated family violence perpetrator change behaviour program

An extensive exploration of the existing family violence literature revealed the existence of gender symmetry in the perpetration of family violence. However, this study found that gender ideologies and policies prevented the inclusion of female perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence in the Victorian Government's family violence change behaviour programs (Kuskoff and Parsell, 2021). Although the Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008) is gender-neutral in the approach to family violence, the Victoria

Government (2009) has only considered the harm perpetrated by males in family violence in the referral pathways and change behaviour program intakes in Victoria.

This study found that there were benefits of the Duluth Model change behaviour approach to perpetrators of family violence. Still, the model's weakness is that it only focuses on male perpetrators (Rizza, 2009). However, the Straus Model adopted a gender symmetry approach to the perpetration of family violence.

Therefore, this study proposes a three-year government-funded trial of an integrated family violence perpetrator change behaviour program for male and female perpetrators of family violence. This study proposes that the first year of the trial includes a sample of approximately one hundred male perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence in various existing change behaviour programs provided by the numerous service providers in multiple locations within Victoria. The focus of the initial phase of the trial would be to combine the existing elements of the Duluth and Straus Models in the program and ensure it was a perpetrator issue and not a gender matter.

The second phase of the trial in year two would include a sample of approximately one hundred female perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence participating in a similar program to the male perpetrators in the first year. The American National Institute of Justice (2003) found that change-behaviour programs such as the Duluth Model did not change the behaviour of family violence perpetrators. Alder and Francis (1994) previously found that, in Victoria, change-behaviour programs for male perpetrators should not be relied upon to change their behaviour. Previous research by O'Connor, Morris, Panayiotidis, Cooke and Skouteris (2021) indicated a lack of evaluation of men's change-behaviour programs in Victoria (Kelly and Westmarland, 2015; Brown and Hampson, 2009). Therefore, this study suggests that the third year of the proposed trial would consist of evaluating the outcomes of the change behaviour programs for the male and female perpetrators and measuring any change in the perpetrator's behaviour. The trial could also assess the ability of the police and the courts to refer all perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence to undertake change behaviour programs without a gender focus.

7.6.4.1 Comment: Recommendation 4

Previous research has confirmed that family violence can happen to anyone, regardless of gender, and violates an individual's human rights (WHO, 2010). However, there continues to be a strong gender focus in family violence. For example, substantial

research suggests that women and children have been at the most significant risk of family violence harm, but Fiebert (2014) and Zimmermann (2017) identified gender symmetry in family violence where females and males are both victims of family violence.

The approach to family violence adopted by the Victorian Government and Victoria Police did not provide a balanced approach in the prosecution of family violence perpetrators (Cherney et al., 2019; Rollings and Taylor, 2008). The extensive research by Fiebert (2004, 2010, 2012, 2014), who examined three-hundred and forty-three scholarly investigations with over four hundred and forty thousand participants, found that females were just as violent as males in the perpetration of family violence (Powney and Graham-Kent 2019). Although the Victorian Government and Victoria Police have developed and implemented numerous strategies and management processes to help reduce the harm, family violence has escalated (Abu Saada, 2019; Kim et al., 2018; Morse, 2018).

The Victorian FVPA (2008) had three main purposes in relation to family violence: first, to maximize the safety of children and adults and second, to prevent and reduce family violence. In the context of Recommendation 4, the Government was to ‘promote the accountability of perpetrators of family violence for their actions’. However, as the Victoria Government’s approach to the perpetrators of family violence and the implementation of the change behaviour programs were only for male perpetrators, the government did not comply adequately with the requirements of the Family Violence Protection Act (2008).

To enable the Victoria Government to ensure all perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence are held accountable, the change behaviour programs need to be flexible and focus on all perpetrators, regardless of gender (Hine et al., 2022). The trial of an integrated family violence perpetrator change-behaviour program that was well designed, targeted and encompassed all perpetrators could assist the Victoria Government and Police to help address the harm in family violence and break the cycle of harm (Livings et al., 2022).

7.7 Conclusion

High-risk repeat family violence and the impact of the harm has been an ongoing concern for the victims, Victorian Government, Victoria Police, support agencies, the media and the community. This research sought to discover the implications of high-risk repeat family violence and the impact of that harm. The analysis of the data collected in this study revealed that high-risk repeat family violence was not a simple concept of male dominance over female victims and the exploitation of power and control in the family environment. However, high-risk repeat family violence was a very intricate set of incidents that were

often interwoven with various issues and drivers that create a very complex set of circumstances in the family environment. To help explore the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence in the SMR and the impact of the harm on the victims, Victoria Police, the Victorian Government and Courts and family violence specialists, this study identified that a mixed methods, sequential explanatory research design was the most appropriate methodology to explore and identify the intricate factors that were the embodiment of high-risk repeat family violence. To help guide this research to explore original data and explore the lived experience of victims, perpetrators and front-line police members to help existing police practice and contribute to family violence knowledge, the following research questions were used;

Research question 1

“How can the management of high-risk repeat family violence be improved to enhance police practice and contribute to knowledge?”

Research question 2

“What are the specific drivers that contribute to high-risk repeat family violence?”

Research question 3

“How can Victoria Police data collection be enhanced to help police, governments and family violence specialists identify the specific drivers of high-risk repeat family violence?”

The research methodology and the research questions enabled victims to record the impact of their family violence experiences by responding to a specially designed high-risk repeat family violence survey and participating in interviews with the researcher. This survey enabled six hundred and four participants to add to the existing knowledge of the relationship between the victims of high-risk repeat family violence and the perpetrators of the harm. Also, thirty victims were able to personally discuss their lived experience in a family environment where high-risk repeat family violence had been perpetrated. Their contribution provided comprehensive information about the extent to which drivers such as mental health issues, illicit drug use and the consumption of alcohol and the FVIO process contributed to the violence that they had been subjected to in the family environment. The mixed methods research methodology provided a unique opportunity to conduct three focus groups to delve into the extensive experiences of FVIU police experts. These focus groups helped this study to gain an insight into the views of family violence experts. The interviews

of forty-one front-line police members revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the existing police practice, response and management of high-risk repeat family violence.

The police interview data also indicated that Victoria Police, the Government, the Judiciary and the family violence support agencies needed to unravel the contributing factors to help identify a clear and responsible way of protecting all victims and help break the cycle of harm. Therefore, this study examined high-risk repeat family violence through a police lens and the lived experiences of the front-line police members. The study found that even though Victoria Police administered the response and the management process of high-risk repeat family violence, other factors such as the drivers of the harm were beyond the immediate control of the police. Consequently, this research found that due to the complexity of high-risk repeat family violence, the issues associated with the harm were far too substantial for Victoria Police to manage by themselves as an organisation (Zealberg et al., 1992).

This study found that the FVIO process could be streamlined if Victoria Police utilised the skills of recently retired sworn police officers and re-integrated them into Victoria Police as Family Violence Support Officers. These members who already have extensive experience and knowledge of the family violence process, could help reduce the operational requirements of front-line police members and therefore, increase the time required for them to undertake core police functions other than family violence. Also, the study demonstrated that with external support from various family violence specialists, the FVIO and family violence process could be streamlined so that Victoria Police did not have sole responsibility of the family violence process.

This chapter discussed the police approach to the management of high-risk repeat family violence and the potential models available to address the harm. The police participant's interviews revealed that the existing social constructs of family violence that firmly focused on the harm perpetrated on female victims by male perpetrators were not reflected in their experience of responding to family violence. Hence, the police interview data implied there was a disconnect between the front-line police members and Victoria Police about the strong gender focus in family violence. This study found there were several well established international models that may well have been utilised to help guide the Victoria Police and Judicial management of family violence. The Duluth Model, which had an ethos of the patriarchy and the power and control used by male perpetrators to control female victims, was adopted as the preferred family violence management model, neglecting

the gender symmetry philosophy of the Straus Model. Although the Duluth Model had a very strong gender focus that only considered male perpetrators, it did have a comprehensively structured change behaviour program.

Many of the front-line police participants felt restricted in their ability to report females as perpetrators of high-risk repeat family violence and males as the victims due to the gender focus adopted by Victoria Police. However, the concept of gender symmetry in high-risk repeat family violence as articulated in the Straus Model would enable police members to accurately report family violence, regardless of the gender of the victim or the perpetrator. As a result, this study proposed a new model that can provide a gender-neutral approach to managing high-risk repeat family violence. This study also outlined the key limitations within the study and provided recommendations to help guide future research to further enhance the study of high-risk repeat family violence.

However, this study revealed that academic knowledge and police practice could be enhanced in the high-risk repeat family violence environment. A new family violence management model that combines the strengths of the two philosophies can be implemented. By combining the strengths of the Duluth and Straus Models, and discarding the patriarchy's influence, and embracing gender symmetry in family violence, a balanced outcome could be achieved for all victims. Therefore, the current Victoria Police family violence management process can be improved by adopting a gender-free approach to family violence training and implementing the 'Family Violence Integrated Management Model'. In doing so, a more balanced approach can be achieved for all victims of family violence. By adopting the concept of a 'Family Violence Integrated Management Model' in the approach to high-risk repeat family violence, a trial of an integrated approach to all perpetrators of family violence could be considered. A trial of the integrated approach could help to add to the current knowledge of high-risk repeat family violence and also enhance existing police practice.

This study found there were many drivers that exacerbated and contributed to the harm in high-risk repeat family violence. However, this research only examined the drivers which directly impacted the ability of Victoria Police to provide a suitable response to the harm in the family environment. The drivers of high-risk repeat family violence that directly influenced how police practice and policies guided the response of front-line police members were illicit drug use, alcohol consumption and mental health issues. Understanding the extent that the relevant drivers impacted the police response and management of high-risk repeat family violence would add to existing knowledge and enhance police practice.

The study also revealed that police practice in the management of high-risk repeat family violence had been impacted by victims and perpetrators who had manipulated the FVIO process to gain an advantage in subsequent civil court cases that were often associated with child custody and family court financial and property settlements. The Victims' and perpetrators' use of the FVIO process for personal gain negatively impacted the front-line police members who responded to the family violence and tried to manage the process to ensure a balanced outcome for the victims of the harm.

This study found that by identifying the drivers and issues of high-risk repeat family violence and adopting a model that includes all victims and perpetrators, regardless of gender, a much more balanced approach to the harm can be achieved and this can help the cycle of harm. Also, this can contribute to existing knowledge and also enhance current police practice. Therefore, Victoria Police, the Government and the Judiciary can also be enabled to ensure future practice, policies, procedures and strategies can reflect the reality of high-risk repeat family violence that is not influenced by a gender focus.

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Appendices

Appendix A:



VICTORIAPOLICE

Regional Commander Southern Metro
Region Dandenong Police Complex
50 Langhorne Street, Dandenong 3175
Victoria Australia
Phone (03) 9767 7547
Facsimile (03) 9767 7632

Professor Barry O'Mahony
Director of Research Development
Faculty of Business and Enterprise
Swinburne University of Technology
PO Box 218, Hawthorn,
Victoria, 3122, Australia

Inspector John Ingham, Application to Enter Swinburne University as a PhD Research Candidate.

Dear Professor O'Mahony,

I write to offer my full support for Inspector John Ingham of the Southern Metro Region (SMR) who is currently applying to undertake Higher Degree by Research studies in the PhD by Practice-based Research within the Faculty of Business and Enterprise at Swinburne University of Technology.

In the course of his work, Inspector Ingham has applied a novel framework to develop the SMR Licensed Premises and Railway Station Harm Indicators that are now entrenched in the management and coordination process throughout the SMR. These Harm Indicators have the ability to reduce alcohol harm in the SMR, particularly those that contribute to drink driving, alcohol related violence in public places and alcohol induced family violence.

More recently, Inspector Ingham has begun to transfer the knowledge gained in these key areas to GeoSpatial mapping. This mapping is beginning to demonstrate a possible correlation between alcohol consumption in licensed premises, vehicle collisions involving alcohol, alcohol related assaults and domestic violence. In his studies at Swinburne, Inspector Ingham proposes to conduct additional research and bring this body of data together to develop a community harm minimisation model to enhance the current SMR Community Safety Management Model that he has been developing.

This process does appear to have the potential to identify high risk alcohol harm locations including licensed premises and packaged liquor sales outlets within the SMR community. I believe this is worthy of further study and research to develop the model and to identify community policing and management strategies and processes that can reduce alcohol related harm in the community. As a result, I fully support the research.

I am also confident that Inspector Ingham has the ability to undertake advanced studies and research at this level. If Inspector Ingham is successful in his application, further processes within Victoria Police must be addressed prior to the release of any data or information, however I understand that, should it be deemed necessary, doctoral theses can be embargoed so that sensitive data is not made publicly available.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Luke Cornelius APM', written over a horizontal line.

Luke Cornelius APM
Assistant Commissioner
Regional Commander SMR

1/10/2012

Appendix B:



VICTORIA POLICE

Assistant Commissioner's Office
Southern Metro Region
Dandenong Police Complex

50 Langhorne Street
Dandenong. 3175.
Victoria. Australia.
Tel : 9767 7622

Mr Keith Wilkins
Research Ethics Office
Swinburne Research
Swinburne University of Technology
PO Box 218, Hawthorn,
Victoria, 3122, Australia

Inspector John Ingham, Application to Conduct Research as a PhD Research Candidate.

Dear Mr. Wilkins,

I write to offer my full support for Inspector John Ingham of the Southern Metro Region (SMR), who is currently undertaking research studies in the PhD by Practice-based Research within the Faculty of Business and Law at Swinburne University of Technology.

As part of his study, Inspector Ingham proposes to conduct additional research in relation to high risk repeat victims and perpetrators and the drivers of family violence in the SMR. This research will consist of a one (1) page questionnaire that will be administered by members of the SMR Family Violence Units.

Inspector Ingham will manage the research and will bring the body of data together and will conduct the analysis of the data. Inspector Ingham has permission to keep a copy of the data collected in this research for the purpose of completing and submitting a Thesis to Swinburne University of Technology. The copy of the data collected may also be utilised for further research and any publications that may arise from the study or verifying findings made in this research.

As this research in relation to high risk repeat victims and perpetrators of family violence in the SMR being undertaken by Inspector Ingham is a SMR police project, this part of the questionnaire research is not the subject of a separate or additional Victoria Police Human Research Ethics Committee (VPHREC) application.

I fully support the research being undertaken by Inspector Ingham and any publications that may be submitted for consideration such as a Thesis or journals. Further processes within Victoria Police must be addressed prior to the release of any data or information, however I understand that, should it be deemed necessary, doctoral theses can be embargoed so that sensitive data is not made publicly available.

Your sincerely,

Robert J. Hill APM
Assistant Commissioner
11 / 1 / 2016

Appendix C:

From: Keith Wilkins **On Behalf Of** RES Ethics
Sent: Thursday, 4 February 2016 5:27 PM
To: John Dalrymple <jdalrymple@swin.edu.au>; John Ingham <jingham@swin.edu.au>
Cc: RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>; Barry O'Mahony <bomahony@swin.edu.au>; john.ingham@police.vic.gov.au
Subject: SHR Project 2016/009 Ethics Clearance

To: Prof John Dalrymple/Insp John Ingham, FBL

Dear John and John

SHR Project 2016/009 Development of a Southern Metro Region Community Safety Management Model

Prof John Dalrymple, FBL; Insp John Ingham, Prof Barry O'Mahony
Approved Duration: 01-02-2016 to 30-11-2016

Ethical review of the above project protocol was undertaken by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) at its Meeting 01/2016 held 29 January 2016.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted, ethics clearance has been given for the above project to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions outlined below. (You will have received a separate email containing brief positive feedback from the Committee review for your attention as appropriate.)

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.
- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.
- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.
- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project. Information on project monitoring and variations/additions, self-audits and progress reports can be found on the Research Intranet [pages](#).
- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the Swinburne project number. A copy of this email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
P O Box 218
HAWTHORN VIC 3122
Tel +61 3 9214 5218
Fax +61 3 9214 5267.

Appendix D:

-----Original Message-----

From: Astrid Nordmann [anordmann@swin.edu.au]

Sent: Monday, May 01, 2017 02:37 PM AUS Eastern Standard Time

To: RES Ethics; John Dalrymple; John Ingham

Cc: Barry O'Mahony; Ingham, John

Subject: RE: SHR Project 2016/009 Ethics extension/modification (2)

To: Prof John Dalrymple/Insp John Ingham, FBL

Dear John and John

Prof John Dalrymple, FBL; Insp John Ingham, Prof Barry O'Mahony

Approved Duration: 01-02-2016 to 30-11-2016; extended to 31-05-2017 [November 2016];
extended to 31-05-2018 [May 2017]

I refer to your request to modify the approved protocol for the above project as emailed on 13 April 2017 with further clarifications received in April 2017 and on 01 May 2017. **The request (concerning inclusion of focus groups, corresponding changes to consent documents, an email 'Thank You' letter, and extension of ethics clearance to 31 May 2018) was put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration.**

I am pleased to advise that, as modified to date, the project may continue in line with standard ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below. Please note that information on self-auditing, progress/final reporting and modifications/additions to approved protocols can now be found on the Research Ethics Internet pages.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. A copy of this email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

As before, best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely,
Astrid Nordmann



Dr Astrid Nordmann | Research Ethics Coordinator
Swinburne Research | Swinburne University of Technology
Ph +61 3 9214 3845 | anordmann@swin.edu.au
Level 1, Swinburne Place South
24 Wakefield St, Hawthorn VIC 3122, Australia
www.swinburne.edu.au

Appendix E:

From: Astrid Nordmann

Sent: Tuesday, March 20, 2018 1:19 PM

To: John Dalrymple <jdalrymple@swin.edu.au>; John Ingham <jingham@swin.edu.au>

Cc: Barry O'Mahony <bomahony@swin.edu.au>; john.ingham@police.vic.gov.au; RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>

Subject: RE: SHR Project 2016/009 Ethics extension/modification (3)

To: Prof John Dalrymple/Insp John Ingham, FBL

Dear John and John

SHR Project 2016/009 Development of a Southern Metro Region Community Safety Management Model

Prof John Dalrymple, FBL; Insp John Ingham, Prof Barry O'Mahony

Approved Duration: 01-02-2016 to 30-11-2016; extended to 31-05-2017 [November 2016];

extended to 31-05-2018 [May 2017]; extended to 31-05-2019

Modified: March 2018

I refer to your request to modify the approved protocol for the above project as emailed on 19 March 2018. The request (**concerning interviews with victims and perpetrators of family violence**, and extension of ethics clearance to 31 May 2019) was put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as modified to date, the project may continue in line with standard ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below. Please note that information on self-auditing, progress/final reporting and modifications/additions to approved protocols can now be found on the Research Ethics Internet pages.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. A copy of this email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

As before, best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely,
Astrid Nordmann

Appendix F:

To: Prof John Dalrymple/Insp John Ingham, FBL

Dear John and John

SHR Project 2016/009 Development of a Southern Metro Region Community Safety Management Model

Prof John Dalrymple, FBL; Insp John Ingham, Prof Barry O'Mahony

Approved Duration: 01-02-2016 to 30-11-2016; extended to 31-05-2017 [November 2016]; extended to 31-05-2018 [May 2017]; extended to 31-05-2019; extended to 31-05-2020 [September 2018]

Modified: March 2018, September 2018

I refer to your request to modify the approved protocol for the above project as emailed on 04 September 2018. The request (**concerning interviews with operational police members and Family Violence Unit expert police members, and extension of ethics clearance to 31 May 2020**) was put to a SUHREC delegate for consideration.

I am pleased to advise that, as modified to date, the project may continue in line with standard ethics clearance conditions previously communicated and reprinted below. Please note that information on self-auditing, progress/final reporting and modifications/additions to approved protocols can now be found on the Research Ethics Internet pages.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. A copy of this email should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

As before, best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely,
Astrid Nordmann

Dr Astrid Nordmann | Research Ethics Coordinator
Swinburne Research | Swinburne University of Technology
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Level 1, Swinburne Place South
24 Wakefield St, Hawthorn VIC 3122, Australia
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Appendix G:

From: Sally Fried <sfried@swin.edu.au>
Sent: Friday, 23 August 2019 4:20 PM
To: John Dalrymple <jdalrymple@swin.edu.au>
Cc: RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>
Subject: RE: Ethics Final Report: John Ingham Project 2016/009

Dear John,

Many thanks.

Please don't worry about submitting this through ERM.

Please treat this e-mail as approval of the Final Report.

Kind regards,

Sally



Appendix H:



VICTORIA POLICE

Policing Innovation and Research Unit
Corporate Strategy and Operational Improvement Department

Victoria Police Centre, 637 Flinders Street,
Melbourne VIC 3005
DX 210096
Telephone 9247-3385
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Email research.committee@police.vic.gov.au
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2 May 2017

Mr John Ingham
50 Langhorne Street,
Dandenong Victoria 3175

Dear John,

Re: Application to the Research Coordinating Committee for RCC 822 The Southern Metro Region (SMR) Family Violence Research Program (Management of Repeat Family Violence in the Southern Metro Region)

I write to advise you that the Victoria Police Research Coordinating Committee (RCC) has approved your request to undertake the above research involving Victoria Police.

This approval is conditional on The Research Organisation signing a Research Agreement outlining the conditions governing the conduct of research involving Victoria Police.

You will need to ensure the completion of the Research Agreement and return it to Victoria Police before the research can commence. The Research Agreement will be forwarded to you electronically in due course.

If you have any queries or require further clarification please contact the RCC Secretariat on the contact details above.

Yours sincerely,

Dr David Ballek
Secretariat, Research Coordinating Committee

Appendix I:

The Commonwealth of Australia Family Law Act (1975) provided the Australian community with a clear definition of family violence and the types of behaviour that contribute to that violence. For example, the Australia Family Law Act (1975), page 33, states:

“4AB Definition of family violence etc.

(1) For the purposes of this Act, family violence means violent, threatening or other behaviour by a person that coerces or controls a member of the person’s family (the family member), or, causes the family member to be fearful.

(2) Examples of behaviour that may constitute family violence include (but are not limited to):

- (a) an assault; or
- (b) a sexual assault or other sexually abusive behaviour; or
- (c) stalking; or
- (d) repeated derogatory taunts; or
- (e) intentionally damaging or destroying property; or
- (f) intentionally causing death or injury to an animal; or
- (g) unreasonably denying the family member the financial autonomy that he or she would otherwise have had; or
- (h) unreasonably withholding financial support needed to meet the reasonable living expenses of the family member, or his or her child, at a time when the family member is entirely or predominantly dependent on the person for financial support; or
- (i) preventing the family member from making or keeping connections with his or her family, friends or culture; or
- (j) unlawfully depriving the family member, or any member of the family member’s family, of his or her liberty”.

The Australian Federal Government recognised the vulnerability of children in the trauma of family violence, so it added further protection for children within the Family Law Act (1975). The Australia Family Law Act (1975), page 34, states:

“(3) For the purposes of this Act, a child is exposed to family violence if the child sees or hears family violence or otherwise experiences the effects of family violence.

(4) Examples of situations that may constitute a child being exposed to family violence include (but are not limited to) the child:

- (a) overhearing threats of death or personal injury by a member of the child's family towards another member of the child's family; or
- (b) seeing or hearing an assault of a member of the child's family by another member of the child's family; or
- (c) comforting or providing assistance to a member of the child's family who has been assaulted by another member of the child's family; or
- (d) cleaning up a site after a member of the child's family has intentionally damaged property of another member of the child's family; or
- (e) being present when police or ambulance officers attend an incident involving the assault of a member of the child's family by another member of the child's family".

The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008), Part 2, page 16, describes the behaviour towards a family member and the type of violence it represents:

- (a) "behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour—
 - (i) is physically or sexually abusive; or
 - (ii) is emotionally or psychologically abusive; or
 - (iii) is economically abusive; or
 - (iv) is threatening; or
 - (v) is coercive; or
 - (vi) in any other way controls or dominates the family member and causes that family member to feel fear for the safety or wellbeing of that family member or another person; or
- (b) behaviour by a person that causes a child to hear or witness, or otherwise be exposed to the effects of, behaviour referred to in paragraph (a)".

The Victorian Family Violence Protection Act (2008) provided examples of the behaviour associated with the types of violence and included (page 16):

"1 The following behaviour may constitute family violence under paragraph (a) —

- * using coercion, threats, physical abuse or emotional or psychological abuse to cause or attempt to cause a person to enter into a marriage;

- * using coercion, threats, physical abuse or emotional or psychological abuse to demand or receive dowry, either before or after a marriage”.

The Act provided further clarity concerning the types of violence concerning children (page 17):

“2 The following behaviour may constitute a child hearing, witnessing or otherwise being exposed to the effects of behaviour referred to in paragraph (a)—

- * overhearing threats of physical abuse by one family member towards another family member;
- * seeing or hearing an assault of a family member by another family member;
- * comforting or providing assistance to a family member who has been physically abused by another family member;
- * cleaning up a site after a family member has intentionally damaged another family member's property;
- * being present when police officers attend an incident involving physical abuse of a family member by another family member.

(2) Without limiting subsection (1), *family violence* includes the following behaviour—

- (a) assaulting or causing personal injury to a family member or threatening to do so;
- (b) sexually assaulting a family member or engaging in another form of sexually coercive behaviour or threatening to engage in such behaviour;
- (c) intentionally damaging a family member's property, or threatening to do so;
- (d) unlawfully depriving a family member of the family member's liberty, or threatening to do so;
- (e) causing or threatening to cause the death of, or injury to, an animal, whether or not the animal belongs to the family member to whom the behaviour is directed so as to control, dominate or coerce the family member”.