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## **Corrupt Police Networks: Uncovering hidden relationship patterns, functions and roles**

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This article applies social network analysis techniques to a case study of police corruption in order to produce findings which will assist in corruption prevention and investigation. Police corruption is commonly studied but rarely are sophisticated tools of analyse engaged to add rigour to the field of study. This article analyses the 'First Joke' a systemic and long lasting corruption network in the Queensland Police Force, a state police agency in Australia. It uses the data obtained from a commission of inquiry which exposed the network and develops hypotheses as to the nature of the networks structure based on existing literature into dark networks and criminal networks. These hypotheses are tested by entering the data into UCINET and analysing the outcomes through social network analysis measures of average path distance, centrality and density. The conclusions reached show that the network has characteristics not predicted by the literature.

**Key Words: police corruption, social network analysis**

## **Background**

Public officials who place their own interests before those of the public have corrupted a system in which they are supposed to act as agents of the public will (Lauchs 2007). Police are an essential part of the Australian justice system and are the frontline actors in keeping the peace and social stability and cohesion. Thus good governance relies on honest policing. However, there will always be at least a small group of corrupt police officers, even though Australians are culturally averse to corruption (Khatri et al. 2006). Police officers attract corruption because of their ability to enforce or ignore the law and police who are unethical or in financial stress are vulnerable to offers of illicit payments. Organised police corruption, which is a subset of organised crime, aggravates the situation because it threatens the community by undermining good governance. Organised police corruption constitutes “*social behaviour*, conducted in groups within organisations, that is powerful enough to override the officer’s oath of office, personal conscience, departmental regulations and criminal laws.” (Punch 2000)

Organised corrupt policing is more dangerous than individual actions because collaboration between offenders can multiply their income; the income of the group is greater than the sum of the income of individuals acting apart (Morselli and Tremblay 2004). There are many historical examples of powerful organised crime syndicates of predatory police establishing themselves within the Australian police services.

Policing bodies need to understand the nature and structure of these networks to be able to better identify and apprehend the targets of their investigations. As Warr has stated in relation to the policing of delinquents: "...it is difficult to imagine how investigators can develop, defend, or test general theories of delinquency without some knowledge of the organization and operation of delinquent groups" (Warr 1996).

The necessity of studying criminal networks is well established but has not received much attention from social network theoretical approach (Morselli and Tremblay 2004; Moran 2005, 62). The main contribution of this article is that in uncovering hidden (or confirming) bribe and other corrupt exchanges and their associated influence tentacles it provides a better understanding of the nature, structure and socialisation processes of these embedded networks. Understanding how corrupt police networks are structured and their dynamics affords better opportunities for strategies to be developed to interrupt dark networks and re-enforce positive policing practices. This study is a departure from current studies of criminal networks in that it draws on social network analysis to provide rigorous data to verify the characteristics of networks and particularly to uncover the hidden relationships that support them.

This project will provide previously unavailable information on corrupt police networks in Australia. It is the first to study each of the separate inquiries into Australian police corruption and convert information from the inquiries into useful data for corruption prevention, detection or investigation; turn the unanalysed information and into actionable intelligence (Dean and Gottschalk 2007). The project will provide insights

into the structure and dynamics of their operation by unpacking the topology of their interconnections and increase understanding of points of intervention and strategies to sure up or insulate 'good networks' and stop them tipping over the edge and to the 'dark side'.

Although focused on the Queensland context, this article is part of a larger study that will interrogate corrupt police network across Australian jurisdictions. The article outlines and focuses on the first stage of the project being the corrupt police network in Queensland (Australia) called 'the Joke' that ran from the 1950s to the 1980s.

### **Corrupt Networks**

Social networks form when people interact. Networks are a type of social organisation that rely on relationships of trust, mutuality and reciprocity, coupled with a set of common norms established and maintained through peer pressure, social approval and sanction (stigma), to bind individuals to a collective unit. The characteristic ability of networks to be inclusive, flexible in their operation and quick to respond to opportunities and problems networks can be leveraged to benefit individuals, groups or businesses or society at large (Jones, Hesterly and Borgatti, 1997).

However, as Raab and Milward (2003) have noted networks can also have a dark side, where the network achievements come at the cost of other individuals, groups or societies. It has been argued that the *particularism* of networks, that is, the banding

together to pursue particular or common interests, is a key element of network disadvantage since it can lead to exclusivity rather than an inclusive approach (Taylor and Hoggett 1994). Such inclusivity renders networks as essentially private rather than public entities and therefore not exposed to wider levels of scrutiny or subject to external accountability regimes. Because of this, networks can be quite secret and invisible in their operation and endeavours.

This opaque nature of networks and their lack of transparency, coupled with values and norms that support clandestine actions and goals, can provide a basis for corruption. Granovetter (1992, p.45) points out” networks can create their own norms at odds with the outside world to the point where they become a ‘law unto themselves”. In such a context, illegal activities can take on the aura of normality and members protect each other from the sanctions of the outside world.

### **Current Research on Criminal Networks**

Most of the study on criminal networks has been based on the structure of organised crime syndicates. The primary contemporary document on this subject is the United National Office of Drugs and Crime (2002) report entitled *Results of a pilot survey of forty selected organized criminal groups in sixteen countries*. This report examined forty organised crime groups and determined five typologies of organisational structure that range from a standard hierarchy which matches the longstanding

Bureaucratic Model (Cressey 1969), through to criminal networks which are loosely connected individuals who regularly participate in crime. However, there has been a growing movement away from looking at the structure to examining the network itself.

Albini (1971) and Ianni (1972) discussed how the Mafia was based on patron-client networks and or kinship relationships in which individuals were motivated by self interest. Other research has supported the loose network picture of organised crime (Kleemans and de Poot 2008; Bruinsma and Bernasco 2004; Block 1994; McIllwain 1999) culminating in Morselli's (2009, 55) claim that the study of hierarchical structures is no longer necessary. What is important for this work is not the structure of the syndicate but what we can learn from the network itself. That said, , there are some aspects of criminal networks that will help us predict the nature of a corrupt police network.

### **Social Network Analysis**

Network analysis is an empirical tool which can be used to identify, measure, visualise (map) and analyse the ties between people, groups and organisations (Scott 1991, p.113). It plots relationships between individuals or entities by representing them as nodes and showing their relationships by linking nodes with lines. Lines can have different depictions to indicate characteristics of links including frequency and method of contact. The nodes and lines form a network map that reveals relationships between members of the network such as gate keeping (controlling the network), liaisons and core and periphery members' (Keast and Brown 2005). In doing so, it uncovers the often

hidden or opaque patterns of interaction and enables the underlying structure of relationships to become more apparent (Cross, Borgatti and Parker 2002).

Network metrics, mathematical calculations or measures, make it possible to gain deeper insights into the actual texture and operation of the networks. The metrics applied to this study include:

Density – In simple terms, is a measure of the number of actual connections compared to the total number of possible connections. The higher the density ratio - the higher the level of cohesion within a network. Density values range from 0 to 1: the closer the score to 1 the higher the level of connection.

Centrality - gives an indication of how concentrated a network is – do a small number of people control the flow of resources, or is it distributed more widely through a number people. This measure provides useful insights into where influence and power maybe concentrated, or to the location of blockages or key flow points. The centralisation score is expressed as a percentage and can vary for 0 (every member is connected to every other member) to 100 (all members are connected to only one member). A high centralisation score indicates that some network actors have many more connections than others.

Average Path Distance – is an indication of how easy it is to navigate around the network. This measure provides insights into how close or removed certain actors are and as a consequence their level of knowledge of flows.

### **Police Culture and Networks**

Corrupt police networks may share characteristics with other types of dark networks. It is well established in criminology that drug trafficking operations rely on kinship and friendship networks to protect themselves from penetration by law enforcement agencies; they only deal with people they know and trust (Edwards and Levi 2008, 368; Williams and Godson 2002, 328; Pearson and Hobbs 2001, viii; Morselli 2001, 205). Cohesive networks like family relationships are ideal for criminal ventures where a strong degree of mutual trust is needed, especially carrying out activities with high criminal and financial risks (Bruinsma and Bernasco 2004, 90). These relationships can also be developed over time through empirical evidence that a non-family member is trustworthy. This is more likely to be seen in long standing “high end” organisations (CMC 2004, 4). It could be argued that a police agency is also a trust based organisation. Members build trust by working together in dangerous and even life-threatening circumstances that weed out the untrustworthy. Groups may even develop their own criteria for trust for example; the New South Wales CIB mantra was “you never trust a man that doesn’t drink” (Padraic 2005, 19).

Hypothesis 1: the network will only extend to those who can be trusted through association with a common denominator.

Networks are made up of people performing specific roles. A key role is that of the broker who fills the spaces between nodes. Brokers are power players as they control communication between the parties that make up the network. In a corruption network it is assumed that the brokers will bring together the illicit operators outside the force with the police within the force who can provide them with protection. The illicit operators wanted support from the Joke, and that support worked because it was a syndicated operation rather than ad hoc arrangements between individuals. It is therefore likely that within the network are one or a few key persons who facilitate the communication between the payers and the police protectors.

Hypothesis 2: A small number of individuals will broker arrangements between the illicit operators and the police.

Morselli (2009) has hypothesised that different cultures will display different network structures. If this is true then a corrupt network of police should be different to a criminal enterprise like a drug smuggling group. Also the difference should reflect the nature of the organisation. Smuggling operations have been plotted in the past (Chin and Zhang 2008). These groups tend to be either highly structured in hierarchies or loosely structured flat networks (Natarajan and Belanger 1998, 1006). The trend is to conclude that drug trafficking as fluid, loosely organised, adaptable social networks (Natarajan

2006, 172; Mackenzie 2002, 3, Chin and Zhang 2008, 186). Rather than being a monolithic enterprise, drug smuggling is operated by smaller groups that interact in a flexible manner with different groups specialising in certain stages of the operation from growing the drugs, through supply to sale (Abele 2004, 34, Williams 1998, 155, Bruinsma and Bernasco 2004, 91).

A police network will probably be different because it is a network within a network, that is, within the Queensland Police Force. It is highly likely that the structure of the QPF will influence the structure of the network as the protection supplied by the police officers is determined by their power and jurisdiction within this agency. Thus we should not see officers from unrelated sections of the force, such as homicide detectives, within the corruption network. It should be centred on the Licensing Branch which has jurisdiction over the offences committed by the illicit operators. In addition, the hierarchical rank of the officers should play some part in the network as their authority to exercise discretion over raids, charges and even internal investigations should make them attractive to the network. Thus just as a criminal network selects its membership by the skill sets that are required (UN 2002) the police network will, out of necessity, have to select membership from those who can protect the network. Similarly, the structure of the network will then, of necessity, have a pyramidal hierarchy reflecting that of the agency.

Hypothesis 3: the structure of the corruption network will mirror the hierarchy of the police force thus it will have a high density.

Hypothesis 4: The structure will be highly centralised reflecting the bureaucratic structure of the QPF. This will be reflected in long average path lengths as communication follows the chain of command and the network will have a high rating of centrality.

Hypothesis 5: Social network analysis can identify key actors within the network that can be targeted to disrupt or close down the network's activity.

## **Methodology**

The project followed three stages. First, data was extracted from police inquiries into corruption and the corrupt networks plotted as network maps. Then organised crime theory was used to examine the networks. Network analysis theories will be used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the police networks to target strategies for detection, investigation and prevention.

Data for networks should include as much as possible of the data set, in this case the corrupt network. It is difficult to obtain information on criminal networks and most information available is unreliable. Data gathered from informers and incarcerated gang members cannot be checked because researchers cannot know the true size of the people involved. The nature of modern criminal enterprises means that membership and

relationships are temporary and constantly in flux. For example, a core group of criminals may deal with different specialists for each job. These problems are reduced in an examination of police corruption such as this as the raw data utilised has been compiled through the comprehensive investigatory and coercive powers of formal Commissions of Inquiry. Corruption is a routine operation as opposed to the varied operation of a criminal network. Payments are made regularly by the same people to the same people. Natarajan notes that often researchers try to establish these factors through interviews with participants. Obviously, there is limited scope for this option and he has demonstrated that network analysis can reveal a great deal about these relationships without relying on interviews (Natarajan 2006). Thus there is much greater certainty when studying the network or more qualitative data on the nature of members of the network. In this project the data is pre-packaged in the inquiry reports.

There are limitations to this study. First, the data sources are imperfect and rely on evidence produced at police inquiries and reminiscences of participants. Neither source of data is complete. Moreover, the latter can be highly unreliable. However, these are the best sources available. Secondly, network maps may plot relationships that have been identified by a third party without the benefit of confirmation. Thus the appearance of a name on a map may imply an unconfirmed relationship. In view of this, network maps should be read cautiously and only in connection with the accompanying commentary in which the details of relationships can be expanded. In this way, as Rogers (1987) contends network analysis can serve to 'turbo charge' case study information.

Given this article's specific focus on the Queensland policy corruption networks a content analysis of the Fitzgerald Inquiry (1989) report has been undertaken to distil three key variables of bribes, corrupt support which are central to police corruption: bribes, transference of bribes and corrupt support. The data used in the network maps in this article were specifically derived from Fitzgerald (1989) and Herbert and Gilling (2004).

The relational data derived from the content analysis were collated and arrayed into matrices for each of the key variables identified above. From this starting point, network maps were constructed using UCINET6.

The resulting network maps were used to provide visual representations, of the nature and patterns of exchanges occurring within corrupt networks as well as the overall architecture/topology of the network. Associated network metric measures will provide additional and deeper insights into the structure and operation of the networks.

## **Analysis and Discussion: Uncovering Patterns, Structures and Roles of a Corrupt Police Network**

### ***The Corruption Network***

No one knows when police corruption commenced in the Queensland Licensing Branch (QLB) within the Queensland Police Force (QPF). It is known however, that the corrupt network, or Joke, as it was known, was endemic by the 1950s. The corruption took the form of payments being made from bookmakers, prostitutes and operators of illegal gambling games to officers from the QLB in return for protection. The protection was

reciprocal: payers would be warned of raids by non-corrupt officers and the payers would provide low level employees for token arrests for the payees so that they could record a satisfactory 'clean up rates' for vice in Queensland. If the New South Wales' Wood Commission definitions are applied the corruption was both *systemic*, in so far as it was self-perpetuating within the QLB and *entrenched*, because the corrupt officers had alliances in place to defend their corrupt network from inquiries or interference (Wood 1977, para.2.4). In network terms the Joke was an exclusive network that maintained a legitimate public face, concealing an invisible web of corrupt relationships. These relationships had developed to a strategic level to protect the inner web from external examination or attack.

Figure 1 has been created using the variables of bribe payments (bribe), distribution of bribes amongst police officers (Joke Payment), and support via illegal actions to ensure that the Joke is maintained and continued (corrupt support). Aggregating the links (bribes, joke payments and corrupt support) provides an overview of the structure, composition and flow of the corrupt police network in Queensland. For ease of reading and analysis the links have been coloured coded such that green = bribes , red = joke payments, and blue = corrupt support.

Overall the network presents as a loosely coupled set of connections, which reflects both its multiple layers of operation and an ad hoc evolution. The network centres on four key players: the organiser, Jack Herbert who took over the organiser role, the former commissioner Frank Bischof and Tony Murphy, who had formed strategic

relationships supporting the Joke. On the periphery are the bribers (SP bookies, prostitutes including Shirley Brifman, politicians such as Don Lane and illegal gaming operators like Robinson, Scognamiglo and Bellino), the police officers and their wives.

The data used to produce this map also generated a suite of network metrics that afford deeper insights into the structural properties of the network. The first metric – density – provides an indication of the degree of cohesion evident. Table 1 sets out the density measures for Figure 1 (aggregate ties) It is interesting to note that for each of the three relationship types or links – Bribe, Joke Payment and Corrupt Support – there is an escalating level of density.

**Table 1: Density of Network Ties**

	Density	No. of Ties
Bribe	0.0204	9
Joke Payment	0.0272	12
Corrupt Support	0.0567	25

Density represents how close knit the network is, and is an indicator of the strength of the network.<sup>1</sup> As the table shows with nine (9) ties the Bribe sub net is comprised of a small group of actors with relatively few interactions beyond the basic bribe exchange. This small size, coupled with a low density measure of 0.0204, indicates

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<sup>1</sup> Density is a ration of the number of actual ties out of the number of all possible ties with a node that met all the ties having a rating of 1. As the table demonstrates the density if much lower with ratings of 0.02 to 0.05.

that the Bribe sub network is loose in its structure and exhibits a low level of cohesion. This means that this network is small, contained and loosely coupled involving those people immediately involved in the Bribe exchange. The Joke Payment, is comprised of both a slightly higher number of ties (12) and density level (0.0272). This result makes sense as the participants are all Queensland police officers and most belong to the Licensing Branch. Alternatively, the bribe sub net group members are unconnected individuals who deal with the police and do not interact with each other.

The third set of ties, Corrupt Support, is the event that characterises most ties in the network (25) and displays the highest level of density at 0.0567 for this network. Although this measure is low by normal standards, it is apparent that the corrupt network operates to provide a slightly denser web of connections that support and implicitly condone the illegal activities of the Bribe and Joke payment sub networks.

The overall low density measures for the Network Map (aggregate ties) highlights the low degree of connection between actors. A loosely coupled network is a necessary feature for a clandestine entity (UN 2002, 30) such as the corrupt police network which operates mostly under the radar, with players from different areas connecting the network (i.e. if it was too dense the corruption would be more recognisable). Another consequence of its confidential nature is the network's broken up or destructed format; one of the few central players is removed the network and information held between the others is disconnected.

However, this result conflicts with hypothesis 3 that a network based on the hierarchical QPF should have a high density reflecting the bureaucratic structure of the organisation. The higher density of the corrupt support network shows that there was greater reliance on the QPF structure to provide protection for the Licensing Branch; the layers of protection reflect the organisation structure as the protection is made possible by superior authority within the Force. Having said that, even this score is very low so we can conclude that while the actors' positions within the structure played a greater role in corrupt support, it is still outweighed by the need for a low profile to conceal the illicit activity.

The centrality of the network was 21.7% which is also quite low and indicates that the network is not controlled by one or two individuals. The players have multiple paths to connect with each other. This is clearly seen in figure one but there are still three players that dominate the map. Once again this is evidence that the QPF structure does not determine the structure of the network. Had the hierarchy been reflected then all paths would pass through Bischof the Police Commissioner; if he was the senior police officer everyone's' actions would reflect the chain of command and seek his approval to act on their own or communicate with other parts of the network. Control of a bottle neck of pathways is power (Burt 2005, 7). As this is not the case then we can conclude that the network has more than one person in a position of power. As has been already stated, these belong to Bischof, Murphy and Herbert.

A further measure indicating the structure and operation of the network is the average path distance. That is, how easily it is for members to make contact or exchanges with others. In this case the *average distance among reachable pairs = 1.000*. This means that amongst those people who are connected, on average they only need to travel one path/edge to reach another player they are not connected to. This finding is likely a feature of the relatively small size of the network. However, it does point to the fact that there is little distance between actors and therefore it is unlikely that those involved, even those on the peripheries were not aware of the activities.

Figure 3 (Corrupt Support) extends the visual representation provided in Figure 1 where it was noted that corrupt relations provide a foundation for the overall network. A more isolated and focused view of this tie reveals a point of fragility within the Joke. First, there were two networks of corrupt support: support between QLB officers and support between police and bribers. Second, the link between the two groups was provided by Bischof and Murphy. Given that corrupt support was essential for the Joke to operate the reliance on the position of Police Commissioner and a relationships facilitator like Murphy shows that the Joke was extremely brittle.

A deeper interrogation of the network reveals that there exists a level of reciprocity between particular players. Reciprocity indicates that there is a two way, or reciprocal, relationship between actors. This reciprocity gives the network or the set of actors engaged in this behaviour a higher level of robustness, thus re-enforcing the actions. While reciprocal relationships can mean the exchange of like for like, in this case reciprocal ties between network actors are not ties of the same relationships. Bookies, gamblers and prostitutes paid bribes were made in return for protection, by Licensing Branch officers, of their illegal activities. Individual QLB officers who were members of the Joke would take payments of about £20/month from their "own" Starting Price bookmakers (SP Bookies) from all over Queensland and even over the NSW border (Herbert and Gilling 2004, p.55). The payments would be passed to a person known as the 'organiser' who would distribute the money both within the QLB and to key senior officers outside the Branch. Payments were not equal and the size varied with the importance of the officer (Fitzgerald 1989, p.32, Herbert and Gilling, p.52). The

organiser kept a list of the payers and their phone numbers and ensured there was always a Joke member on duty who could warn payers of upcoming raids.

Licensing Branch officers shared their bribes with senior police in return for an assurance that there would be no effective investigation of their illegal activity, thus ensuring the protection and perpetuation of the Joke. The reciprocity was not necessarily provided on a one to one basis, but rather was ongoing and purposeful. For example, Herbert collected bribes and distributed them to the officers who would protect the bribers. Thus some of the bribers do not have reciprocal links with Herbert and likewise the Unknown Licensing Branch Officers do not have reciprocal links with bribers. The reciprocity was provided by the network rather than the individual. Nonetheless there are strong reciprocal links in the centre of the network between police officers. This is because the protection provided by senior officers was directly reciprocal and embedded in the layers of trust exhibited within the network.

Two different systems of trust operated: within the Licensing Branch officers could trust each other sufficiently for separate people to collect bribes and others to provide protection, while protecting the Joke was a more exclusive affair where the corrupt senior police did not trust others to provide the protection. Reciprocal relationships are the corner stone of the network. If they could be disrupted then the *raison d'être* of the Joke would cease to exist. If the Licensing Branch could not protect the illegal operators then they would not bribe them and if the senior police could not protect the Joke then they would not receive their share.

The Joke did not operate completely below the radar and relied on corrupt support when allegations of corruption arose. An example of the system of support can be demonstrated when the most serious threat to the Joke occurred with the National Hotel Inquiry in 1964 (Gibbs 1964). One of the staff of the National Hotel, a pub in central Brisbane, told an opposition politician that the Hotel provided free alcohol and meals to Bischof, Tony Murphy, and Bauer in return for them turning a blind eye to prostitution and after-hours sales of alcohol. Despite two employees coming forward to give evidence in support of the claims, the Inquiry did not find any proof of wrong-doing. This was assisted by officers, such as Herbert, and other witnesses such as Shirley Brifman, a prostitute who had worked at the National Hotel, giving false evidence before the Inquiry. Joke members were also willing to take direct action to protect themselves. This mainly took the form of discrediting or professionally destroying their enemies, but on rare occasions more serious action was taken. For example, in 1971, Shirley Brifman made claims to the media that she had perjured herself before the National Hotel Inquiry and spelt out the corruption that was occurring. Brifman was subsequently interviewed by Queensland police officers, and in 1972 charges were laid against Tony Murphy for perjury. But this case fell over when Brifman died of a drug overdose a month later. Unsubstantiated allegations have been made by Brifman's family that Tony Murphy forced Brifman to commit suicide (Fitzgerald 1989, p.34).

Figure 2 allows us to make some conclusions about Hypothesis 1, namely that membership was based on shared characteristics and this occurred differently for two

groups within the network. Firstly, membership of the group providing protection to the illicit gambling operators was based on holding a position within the Licensing Branch and passing a vetting process by Herbert, the organiser. Membership of group that protected prostitutes was based on trust built on years of companionship in the QPF and that fell to Bischof and the members of the Rat Pack, Murphy, Lewis and Hallahan. Protection of the Licensing Branch fell almost exclusively to the power of the Commissioner, Bischof and his successor, Norwin Bauer. The latter place was based on the monopoly of power over investigations into the actions of police officers. Note that there is not a path between Bischof and the Licensing Branch officers. The SP Bookies and prostitutes were protected via the provision of warnings about raids; the protectors protected the bribers from the actions of their honest compatriots. Conversely, the Commissioner did not provide protection to the Licensing Branch through action but via the omission to act on clear indications that something was amiss within this branch of the Force.

### *Identifying Key Actors*

The following map demonstrates a further vulnerability of the network in the form of its key players. The map identifies the key actors by the size of the boxes for each player. The three largest boxes are Frank Bischof, Tony Murphy and Jack Herbert. Potentially the removal of one or all of these from the network could disrupt or end the Joke.

Bischof was not present in the network for the duration of the period under review. Bischof was made Police Commissioner in 1958. He had been a member of the

Joke for some years and used his position of authority to support its continuation (Fitzgerald 1989, p.31). He retired and was replaced by Norwin Bauer. This event did not disrupt the network because Bauer was already a member of the Joke and maintained the supervisory and protective role of his predecessor. Jack Herbert likewise took over this position from a string of former organisers. Herbert was transferred to the Licensing Branch 1959 and stayed till 1974 (Fitzgerald 1989, p.32). Herbert was made the organiser in 1964 because he kept the phone numbers of SP Bookies up to date (Herbert and Gilling 2004, p.52). Once in this position he also became responsible for initiating new members to the Joke (Fitzgerald 1989, p.33). When he was away Herbert's wife Peggy used to take new phone numbers from SPs and pass them on to other officers. According to Herbert, half of the QLB officers were members of the Joke and most of their wives knew they were (Herbert and Gilling 2004, pp.53-54). Herbert could conceivably be replaced just as he had replaced a previous organiser. Murphy, on the other hand, played a more significant role. His power in the network was dependent on his relationships rather than his position. He held this influential role while serving in a number of jobs both within and outside the Licensing Branch. It appears his function was as a relationships facilitator. Thus he would not easily have been replaced by another corrupt officer backfilling his position. The only possible successor with similar relationships was Terry Lewis. Murphy's removal would have severely disrupted, if not ended, the network.

The network also benefitted from a further layer of political alliances which could legitimately frustrate attempts to investigate or terminate the Joke. The primary player

was the Queensland Police Union of Employees (QPUE). There is no evidence that the union executive were aware of corrupt activity but the QPUE always took the stance of defending members against allegations of corruption and consequently obfuscating the actions of those who tried to bring change to the Police Force (Fitzgerald 1989, p.35). In the National Hotels Inquiry, the QPUE provided legal support to 88 officers who were named by investigators (Fitzgerald 1989, p.34). Further support came from the Premier of Queensland, Johannes Bjelke-Petersen, who made a political alliance with the QPUE. The Premier did his best to stop change occurring in the QPF in return for the public support of the QPUE and police officers for his hard-line law and order policies (Fitzgerald 1989, p.36). Once again there is no evidence that Bjelke-Petersen had knowledge of, or received any payments from, the Joke.

### **Network Disruption**

The “Joke’ network was not indestructible and it only took ‘a few good men’ to bring it down. The first of these was Allen Hodges who upon becoming Minister of Police in May 1969, began instituting changes in the QPF in accordance with a review conducted by South Australian Police Commissioner, John McKinna. One of his first reforms was to replace Bauer as Police Commissioner with Ray Whitrod, a non-Queenslander. Whitrod was a righteously honest officer who tried to clean up the Queensland Police Force and modernise its operation. This annoyed the rank and file membership and created an immediate and long-lasting conflict with the QPUE and by association, the Premier. One of Whitrod's reforms was to set up the Crime Intelligence Unit (CIU) under Gulbransen

with the power to investigate police and specific instructions to keep watch on the QLB (Fitzgerald 1989, p.38). He also transferred Tony Murphy and Terry Lewis to country postings away from the action of the Joke (Fitzgerald 1989, p.43).

These developments alone would not have been enough to close down the Joke. The outer layer of support mobilised with the QPUE and the Premier openly opposing the new Commissioner. The QPUE, with Bjelke-Petersen's acquiescence, advised its members not to cooperate with CIU (Fitzgerald 1989, p.38) and actively opposing Whitrod's reforms and denied his allegations of corruption in the QLB (Fitzgerald 1989, p.36). But the removal of Bauer, Murphy and Lewis meant that the corrupt support network was broken; the new police commissioner was not only a non-member of the Joke but actively opposed corruption, also both the relationship facilitator, Murphy, and his only possible replacement, Lewis, were geographically isolated from each other and the Joke. But the end of the Joke came when appointed Bill Osborne as head of the QLB. Osborne had been a member of the Branch for 10 years and knew how the Joke worked, even if he was never a member. Osborne informed Herbert that the Joke had to stop. The members had to comply because Osborne's knowledge of the system meant they couldn't trick him and keep the Joke going (Herbert and Gilling 2004, p.74). Herbert and others transferred out of QLB in 1974 (Fitzgerald 1989, p.38) Herbert went to the Public Relations Office and retired medically unfit 3 months later. The Joke couldn't continue without a senior officer involved (Herbert and Gilling 2004, pp.74-75). Future research will discuss the return of corruption, known as the Second Joke, when the corrupt support

network was re-established by the appointment of Lewis as Police Commissioner in Whitrod's stead, and the reappointment of Murphy to Brisbane.

## **Implications**

The analysis conducted in this article makes it possible to reach clear conclusions about the nature of this particular police corruption network after testing the five hypotheses. The review has shown that the corrupt police network, while organised, nonetheless exhibits a different structural and functioning to conventional organisation and other criminal networks.

Hypothesis 1: the network will only extend to those who can be trusted through association with a common denominator, was supported. Membership of the three groups of protection were determined by a position in the Licensing Branch and passage of a vetting process, existing membership in the Rat Pack, or, in the case of protecting the Licensing Branch, possession of the position of Police Commissioner.

Hypothesis 2: A small number of individuals will broker arrangements between the illicit operators and the police, was not supported. While Herbert conducted the day to day operation of the Joke, individual officers independently brokered connections and took payments which they then passed to Herbert. Thus there was a low level of control over the operation of the network; a point which will be returned to under Hypothesis 4.

Hypothesis 3: the structure of the corruption network will mirror the hierarchy of the police force thus it will have a high density, was disproved. Other than the necessity of having the participation of the Police Commissioner, there is almost no mirroring of the police hierarchy in the structure of the Joke network.

Hypothesis 4: The structure will be highly centralised reflecting the pyramidal structure of the QPF. This will be reflected in long average path lengths as communication follows the network will have a high rating of centrality. Both average path lengths and centrality did not indicate the reliance on the chain of command in the operation of the network. There was no single authority over the network which was a diffuse group of individuals providing support on an ongoing basis based on ad hoc relationships.

Hypothesis 5: Social network analysis can identify key actors within the network that can be targeted to disrupt or close down the network's activity, was supported. Three individuals played the major roles in the Joke: Herbert, Murphy and the Police Commissioner. These identifications matched the vulnerability of the network demonstrated by history. Herbert was dispensable as he was already simply a replacement for a number of previous organisers. Murphy was more important because he was the facilitator and his position could only be taken by Lewis. Finally, it was essential that the Joke have the Police Commissioner as a member. When Whitrod was made commissioner and he transferred both Murphy, and his replacement Lewis, the Joke closed down.

This network is unique for criminal networks as it exists within an organisation. Whilst it is well recognised that organisations contain networks, the research on criminal networks is able to examine groups that by necessity exist independent of another non-criminal organisation (Morselli 2001, 2003 and 2009, Morselli and Roy 2008). The Joke was operated by members of a legitimate organisation, namely the Queensland Police Force. This created considerations for its operation that did not exist for criminal groups. A criminal enterprise needs members that can perform specific tasks, for example, a drug smuggling enterprise needs technical skills for preparing drugs, operating sea or air craft, and brokerage agents with connections for purchase and sale (Thompson 2008). The members of the Joke needed brokers but they also needed to include and placate key people not because of the skills or their ability to broker bribes, but because of their position within the Queensland Police Force and their power to close down the corrupt network. These individuals were more than brokers; they extorted the operation by holding it for ransom. The prime example of this was Frank Bischof the Police Commissioner.

Another unique aspect to this group was the layers of protection provided by the network. The Licensing Branch provided corrupt support in the form of protection for the bribers, namely the operators of illegal gambling and prostitution. The senior police then provided corrupt support in the form of protection for the members of the Licensing Branch. The Premier and QPUE provided legitimate political support and protection as a by product, to the senior police.

There are three avenues for further research based on this project. The first is to determine further strengths and weaknesses of the networks via organisational theory and establish practical strategies for detection, investigation and prevention within the police service. A further step will be to map the Second Joke. This will be followed by network analysis of the corrupt networks investigated by the Wood Royal Commission in New South Wales (Wood 1997) and the Kennedy Inquiry in Western Australia (Kennedy 2004).

When the project is complete the methodology can be repeated in other jurisdictions. For example, there are a plethora of inquiries into police corruption in the United States of America which could be examined. The project could be also be repeated in other corrupt networks. Many non-policing public officials with significant decision making powers can also act in a predatory manner, for example, licensing, housing, and other agencies in which an official has the ability to affect the livelihood or basic standard of living of their clients. An immediate opportunity would come from the New South Wales ICAC investigations into corruption in Rail Corp (Independent Commission Against Corruption 2008). The findings of this research can be used for further projects to determine preventative and investigative strategies that could be applied to all government agencies.

## **Conclusion**

This article is the commencement of a project to analyse police corruption networks in Australia. It has covered the initial study of the Joke, a bribery network operating in Queensland from the 1950s to the 1970s. The network was examined by testing of five hypotheses developed from the literature on criminal networks. They were based in part on the proposal by Morselli (2009) that the nature of a network would form within the culture of the environment in which it operated. If this were true in this circumstance then the operation of a corruption network within the structured hierarchy of the Queensland Police Force should reflect this hierarchy in its operation. This was found to not be the case in this Queensland instance. Similarly, another hypothesis that secrecy would require that a small number of individuals act as brokers with the bribers was also discovered to be untrue for the Joke. Two hypotheses were supported: membership of the groups within the Joke were based on shared characteristics; and, the use of social network analysis tools correctly identified the vulnerabilities within the network, namely, the participants who, if removed, would disrupt or close down the network.

This study has demonstrated that the 'Joke' exhibited many of the characteristics of a 'dark' network. A set of internal norms ordered relations and behaviours allowed for the formation of a loose membership extending to higher levels of police and political authority. Entrenched by implicit and explicit support the Joke was hidden within the legitimate operation of the Queensland police service. By uncovering the patterns of relationship, composition and key actors network analysis has provided those responsible

for the policing of corrupt police networks. In short, network analysis provides a way to move beyond intuition to informed decision making.



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Figure 2: Reciprocal Relationships

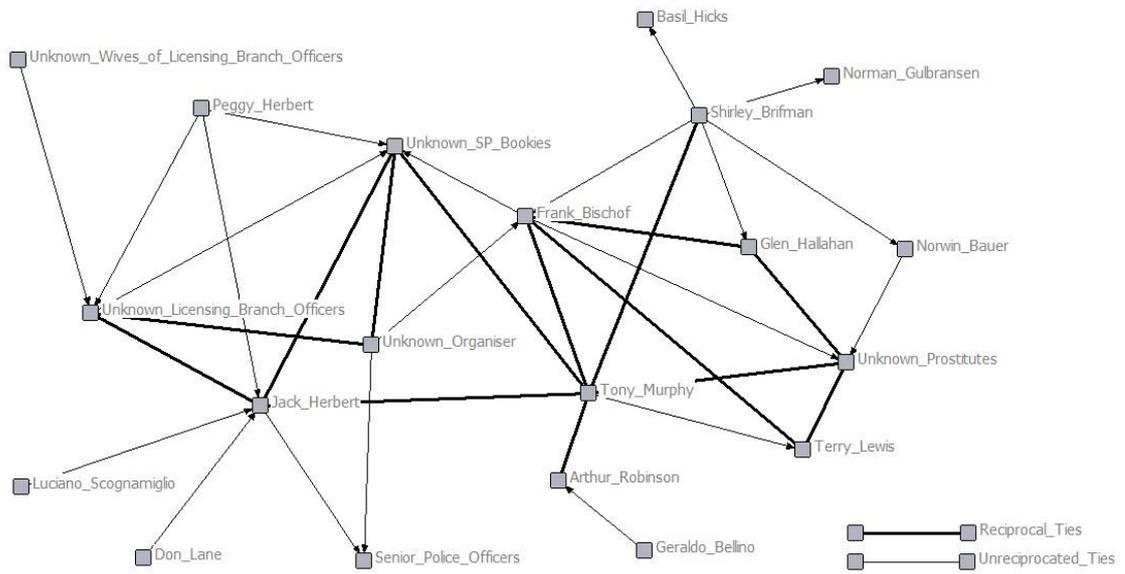


Figure 3: Corrupt Support

