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EVOLUTION OF THE FOLK DEVIL:
A SOCIAL NETWORK PERSPECTIVE OF THE HYBRID GANG LABEL

by

CHRISTIAN BOLDEN
B.S.A.S. Southwest Texas State University, 2003
M.A. Texas State University, 2005

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Sociology
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Major Professor: Lin Huff-Corzine

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ABSTRACT

In keeping abreast of current gang phenomena, this study seeks to comparatively examine structural processes and characteristics of gangs in chronic gang city, San Antonio, and an emerging gang city that would be more likely to have "hybrid" gangs, Orlando. Hybrid gangs have been identified as having organizational processes that differ from traditional gangs; thus, this work will examine these processes that consist of a range of non-traditional phenomena, including cooperation between gangs, members switching gang affiliations, gang initiations, and members leaving gangs. Additional characteristics uniquely associated with hybrid gangs consist of the notable presence of white, middle-class, and female gang members. Evidence suggests that the hybrid gang is more of a socially constructed moral panic than a reality. A limited number of recent studies have indicated that some gangs may better fit into a social network framework rather than a solid organizational analysis. When using the social network framework it becomes apparent that alleged hybrid behaviors are no different from regular gang behaviors regardless of geographic location. Claims about hybrid gangs serve to increase the idea of gang members as folk devils and cause undue concern of normal behaviors.

This work is dedicated to my parents Debra Masey and Thomas Bolden. Your son has risen from the ashes like a Phoenix. There is no limit to what we can do. I love you both.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

A pervasive conceptualization of gangs in the American media and law enforcement rhetoric is one of national, highly organized, violent, drug dealing entities. If this viewpoint were true then it would indeed be worthy of the fear that it inspires. The problem is that research consistently shows that there is little to no validity to this conceptualization (Klein 1995). From the early gang literature continuing to present day research there are no strong indications that gangs are highly organized. However, belief in these monolithic gangs continues to persist despite empirical evidence indicating the contrary, which creates problems in educating people about gangs. Klein (2002) notes that Europeans have failed to recognize the existence of gang problems within their countries because they were basing their conceptualization of gangs on the pervasive erroneous American conception. The irony is that the American conception of gargantuan gangs organized on the national level is not even true within the United States. If the Europeans have misconceptions, how many more people in the U.S. have similar misunderstandings and are taking action based on these faulty beliefs?

The history of attention given to gangs in this country proceeds along a cyclical ebb and flow pattern. Following a heyday of gang research in the 1960s, information about and interest in gangs momentarily waned. Since the late 1980s, the proliferation of gangs from the traditional gang cities of Los Angeles and Chicago into other cities and suburban areas across the United States has became a major focus of law enforcement, media, and researchers (Klein 2006). This

resulted in renewed interest in gangs, a flurry of anti-gang legislation, monetary funding being poured into law enforcement to fight the gang threat, and a firm establishment of gangs as a clear enemy of civil order (McCorckle and Miethe 2002). Despite this fierce reaction, the gang "threat" has not abated. After another brief period in which gangs or possibly interest in gangs waned in the early years of the new millennium, resurgence occurred toward the end of the decade. Indeed, the most recent report from the National Gang Center, a research hub collecting gang data from law enforcement agencies, indicates that the prevalence of gangs as a problem in 2007-08 is the highest it has been since 1997-98. Nearly half of the agencies reporting state that the gang problem is getting worse and less than ten percent reported that it was getting better (Egley, Howell, and Moore 2010).

Regardless of the actual danger that gangs present, the perceived threat or problem that they present is very real to the general public and therefore easily manipulated. As Klein (2006) pointed out, the demonization of gangs allowed law enforcement and prosecutors to set their own agenda. Accordingly, whenever crime becomes a focus for a particular area, gangs are one of the easiest folk devils to blame.

In 2006, Orlando, Florida, a city known for its vast array of theme parks including Disney World, Sea World, and Universal Studios, gained national attention for another reason. An unexpected extreme spike in homicides propelled the county into the top ten areas with the highest homicide rates and earned the city the dubious honor of being the 11th most dangerous city to live in the United States (Information Please 2008). Authorities frantic to explain what happened, were quick to point an accusatory finger at gangs. In 2007, I attended a seminar on

gangs for the general public put on by the Orange County Sheriff's Department. Although the seminar was on a university campus, the presentation was given by a gang unit officer, not an academic. The seminar consisted of a slide show containing dramatic media clips first of gangs in Los Angeles and Chicago, followed by a string of media clips of gang incidents in the local area. I noticed that the dates of the clips spanned the last eleven years, yet strung together one after another constructed a more frightening picture. The session ended with the officer warning us that though we thought we were safe on campus, the gang members were waiting beyond the campus borders to rob, rape, and kill us. Having grown up in San Antonio, a traditional gang city, and being familiar with the gang literature through teaching university courses on gangs, I knew this was a gross exaggeration and obvious attempt at a moral panic (Cohen 1972), which seemed to work as the fellow attendees talked amongst each other about how they had no idea things were that bad and how fearful they had become.

One year later, after sociologists were granted access to law enforcement data, it was found that gangs had nothing to do with the homicide spike, and the only major crime that they contributed to was auto-theft. Ironically, in another seminar, with academics and grassroots community leaders, the same law enforcement agency gave another presentation. This time the information was very precise, localized, and not exaggerated. Interestingly enough, the presenter felt the information was for academic ears only and had the media barred from the presentation.

Something else mentioned in the first presentation seemed to be causing panic on a much grander scale as well. On a national level, the later part of the new millennium's first decade saw an increase in the number of gang members and gangs reported by law enforcement (Egley,

Howell, and Moore 2010). This upswing coincided with a new purported reason to fear gangs- they had evolved into "hybrid gangs," which law enforcement were unfamiliar with, therefore making them significantly more problematic. Hybrid gangs are described as having:

> ...members of different racial/ethnic groups participating in a single gang, individuals participating in multiple gangs, unclear rules or codes of conduct, symbolic associations with more than one well-established gang (e.g., use of colors and graffiti from different gangs), cooperation of rival gangs in criminal activity, and frequent mergers of small gangs. (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2004: 200)

More and more law enforcement agencies began reporting this phenomenon, specifically as characteristic of late-onset gangs or gangs that appeared in cities post-1990 (Starbuck, Howell and Lindquist 2001; 2004), and it began entering the collective knowledge of the mainstream. In 2008, the History Channel's series *Gangland* aired an episode called "Sin City." This episode, set in Las Vegas, Nevada, highlights hybrid gangs as an evolutionary advancement and emphatically states that multiple associations amongst gang members of different gangs is more deadly, but never explains why.

Here again, familiarity with gang literature led to viewing this information as more hype than anything else as these gang behaviors were not new. The only thing new about them was the constructed presentation of them as more modern and threatening. McCorkle and Miethe (2002) argue that it is much easier to create concern about a new problem or new development than it is to maintain concern about a sustained problem. In this case the "gang problem" which may have been losing its luster, was bolstered by this new situation of gang evolution.

What gets lost in the rhetoric about hybrid gangs is that the specified behaviors are not in and of themselves threatening. The process of creating folk devils out of gang members bypasses the basic understanding that they are still human and therefore subject to the same social processes as other people. Gang members do not exist in vacuums; they interact with people in their social arena who are often members of gangs other than their own in conflict and cooperation. Associations between members and the inclusion of affiliates may confuse outside observers regarding who is actually a member of a gang or which gang the person is a member of, causing considerable consternation specifically for law enforcement, but this is a direct result of long-standing disregard for non-criminal attributes of gangs.

Indeed, this situation causes a lot of excitement, because it has not been discussed on a large scale. However, this by no means indicates that the phenomenon did not exist previously. When examining available literature, several researchers have reported these behaviors well before their debut in the law enforcement lens. The continued emphasis of law enforcement on understanding gangs as stand alone exclusive organizations may explain the subsequent confusion about what is being called hybrid gangs. The dominant perception misses what underlies the structure and outward functioning of these groups: the relational characteristics between gangs and members.

The new moral panic surrounding hybrid gangs is like much of the other rhetoric regarding gangs- highly suspect. The purpose of the current research is to examine the validity of claims regarding hybrid gangs through the gang member's perspective using in-depth interviews with current and former gang members in two counties, Orange County, Florida, where gang

activity has been reported only in recent decades and the other, Bexar County, Texas, which has a much longer lineage of gangs. These interviews are supplemented by a social network survey, historical information, and extant literature on gangs.

The subsequent chapter examines literature on gangs concerning gang migration, gang typologies and structural processes, hybrid gangs, and gang behavior concerning initiation into the gang and leaving the gang. In the third chapter I explain why the constructionist perspective is the most appropriate when examining the hybrid gang phenomenon. Chapter Four provides the methodological detail for this study. The essence of the current research is to examine the underlying processes, relationships, and interactions of gangs and gang members, and whether these aspects are normal functions of gang networks or evolved hybrid gang characteristics. Klein (2006) sums up qualitative research on gangs as consistently showing a lack of organization and cohesiveness. This in itself indicates an opening for a gang member's relationships to cross into other arenas. Therefore qualitative in-depth interviews concerning possible connections and social network analysis, which examines relationships between individuals, are the most appropriate for investigating the social processes of the gang**.**

The fifth chapter details descriptive elements of my findings about origins and reasons for city to city migration of respondents and the level of involvement the participant had in the gang, the information that emerged regarding gender, race, and social class, and detailed discussions and typologies concerning initiation or entrance to the gang, and the process of leaving the gang. Chapter Six provides an overview of gang affiliations and detailed analysis of relationship ties amongst differing gangs and gang members of various affiliations. Chapter

Seven further exams networks with a discussion of the purposes and effects of gang social networks. The following discussion in Chapter Eight critically assesses the validity of the "hybrid gang" concept and presents the argument that the phenomenon is an incorrect social construction. The final chapter concludes with an overall summary, a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the study, policy recommendations, and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In spite of the sizeable body of academic literature on gangs, the social processes of gangs remain clouded by general misconceptions. These misconceptions may be fed to the general public by law enforcement or the media or by misconstruing academic research. It also may be a result of the primary adoption and ownership of "gangs" as a topic for the academic discipline of criminology. While there is nothing generally wrong with the ownership of the subject, the reification of gangs as criminal groups may have led to neglecting the sociology of gangs and social processes. The following review of extant literature discusses what is known about the extent of gang migration and misconceptions regarding the subject. Organizational aspects of the gang are then reviewed beginning with the underlying components of gang typologies and the limits of those typologies and continuing with a discussion of changes, splintering, and hybridity, which are all situations that make classifying gangs as organized groups problematic. In line with issues of organization, myths about the processes of joining the gang and leaving the gang are challenged by empirical literature.

National Gang Migration

One of the faulty characteristics of common perceptions regards gang proliferation or migration as the growth of a gang across the country. Earlier understandings of gangs included the idea that gangs are unified organizations with branches across the nation (i.e., the idea that every Crip gang in the U.S. is connected). There is certainly a national gang situation in the U.S. with law enforcement reporting gang problems in 2,900 districts and consistent counts of over 500,000 gang members across the U.S. (Egley, Howell, and Major 2004), with the vast majority of this proliferation occurring post-1980 (Klein 1995). Law enforcement agencies such as the FBI assumed that gangs from the chronic gang cities of Los Angeles and Chicago were purposely migrating to expand the drug trade to other cities. But a survey of local law enforcement agencies did not support this assumption. Much of the gang proliferation was the result of home or locally grown gangs not strongly influenced by migration (Maxson 1998). Although there were gang migrants from Los Angeles and Chicago, most had not moved with the intention of recruiting new members but instead to escape the harsh gang landscape or because of displacement due to government destruction of crime-ridden neighborhoods (Laskey 1996). Another possible cause of the proliferation was the dissemination of gang culture through movies and music. Music artists such as Snoop Dog and The Game make their gang affiliations very clear in their songs, sometimes the music encompasses dances like "Crip Walking" or lyrics explicitly glamorizing gangs, which further serves to make gang-banging culturally mainstream (Morales 2003; Grascia 2003). Movies such as "Colors," "Menace to Society," "American Me" and so on have also spread information about gangs and more specifically gang culture, attire,

symbols, and behaviors to mass audiences, thus implicating the movies in contributing to gang proliferation (Knox 1999; Przemieniecki 2005). These findings led scholars to the alternate explanation that rather than emerging as parts of national criminal organizations, homegrown gangs adopted the names, colors, and symbols of popular gangs without having any connection to them, as if they were brand names (Klein 1995).

Structural Typologies

Research has consistently presented gangs as marginally or very loosely organized, and widely varied in activities in which they engage. These findings have led to differing ways in how scholars have interpreted gang structures. For example, in a national survey of 385 police agencies, 45 percent indicated that the typical gang was loose-knit and 47 percent noted no formal structure in typical gangs (Wiesel 2002). However, Wiesel (2026) also reports regional differences in gang structure with police indicating more loosely structured delinquent gangs in the Southeast and Midwest, more violent gangs in the West, and more income-generating gangs in the Northeast. Smaller cities were more likely to have delinquent gangs, which engaged in criminal activity but had little involvement with drugs. Furthermore, violent gangs and drug selling gangs most often did not have consistent leadership or a highly structured organization.

Wiesel (2002) takes an unusual step and includes in-depth interviews with members of the Black Gangster Disciples and Latin Kings in Chicago and Lincoln Park Piru and Logan in San Diego. Consistent with stereotypes, the Black Gangster Disciples and Latin Kings had

extensive organizational structure. In accordance with most literature, the San Diego gangs had little structure and members considered the group to be friendship/kinship networks. While some gangs appear to be highly organized, an extensive amount of research indicates that most gangs are not as highly organized as generally believed (Klein 1995; Decker and Van Winkle 1996; Huff 1996; Decker, Bynum, and Weisel 1998; McCorkle and Meithe 1998; Fleisher 1998; W. B. Miller 2001).

Attempting to make systematic sense of gang organization has led to a plethora of gang typologies. Although these typologies may be useful in identifying characteristics of a gang at the time of the study, they present the assumption that the gang is static. Typologies focusing on particular criminal activity do not capture the social processes of the gang or a particular gang's relationships with others. Some of the typologies rely on precarious variables such as amount of drug use and type of crime engaged in (Fagan 1989; Huff 1989; Taylor 1990), which have extreme within-group variation and are not stable over time. Nevertheless, categorizing gangs is something scholars have spent great effort doing.

To elaborate, Fagan's (1989) typology concentrates on drug involvement and identifies "party gangs" that use and sell large amounts of drugs, "serious delinquent gangs" that are heavily involved in crime but have little involvement with drugs, and "drug gangs" that are smaller and business oriented in narcotic trafficking. More generally, Huff (1989) identified three types of gangs based on criminal activity and drug use. "Hedonistic gangs" are only concerned with drug use and having a good time; beyond drug use, they only engage in minor property crimes. "Instrumental gangs" commit crime for economic gain, and may use alcohol

and marijuana but rarely stronger substances. Finally the "predatory gang" uses crimes against persons as its modus operandi. These gang members engage in robberies and muggings, and they are likely to abuse highly addictive substances. Both Fagan's (1989) and Huff's (1989) typologies are similar to Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) typology of delinquent subcultures with "party gangs/hedonistic gangs" fitting nicely into the category of those groups who are trying to escape reality called "retreatist" subcultures. "Drug gangs/instrumental gangs" match the "criminal subculture," which is concerned solely with making money. At first the "conflict subculture" (Cloward and Ohlin 1960) seems different from "serious delinquent/predatory gangs" because it is concerned with gangs that aim to be the strongest in physical prowess in comparison to other gangs, but ultimately aggression is the characteristic shared by all of these types.

Using a different perspective, Taylor (1990) bases his typology on motivations for the gang to exist. Members of "scavenger gangs" have nothing in common, except for the need to belong and to survive. These groups engage in whatever spontaneous crime suits their fancy at any given moment and membership consists of people with low self-esteem and few achievements. Territorial gangs are characterized as claiming exclusive ownership of a "turf." Taylor (1990) assumes that the sole purpose of territoriality is to protect a gang's drug business. Finally organized/corporate gangs have systematic organization and hierarchical structure. Membership is based on an individual's value to the group and crime is committed to attain a goal, rather than for fun. Taylor (1990) argues that scavenger and territorial gangs are

evolutionary stepping stones to the organized/corporate gang. While the evolutionary argument may be an intriguing approach, it is hard to support due to the lack of longitudinal gang studies.

Regardless of organizational structure or type, gangs tend to be criminal generalists (Weisel 2002), or, using Klein's (1995) terminology, cafeteria-style offenders. They do not specialize in any specific crime but pick and choose criminal activity as opportunity arises. Although limited by focusing only on Mexican-American gangs in San Antonio, Texas, Valdez (2003) provides a typology that further bridges gang structure and social network dynamics. The least common was the "criminal-adult dependant gang," which is a highly organized group that is focused on earning illegal income usually through drug sales. Adults outside of the gang provide the group with weapons, drugs, stolen merchandise, protection, and extensions to their criminal networks. Valdez (2003) notes two subtypes of this category. One of the subtypes is a family network in which the adult criminals are closely related to the gang members. The other subtype is dependent on a prison gang which exerts control over the street gang. The "criminal non-adult dependent gang," is also concerned with economic profit, but on an individual basis (e.g., personal drug dealing) rather than a centralized one. These groups are not connected to any adult criminal element. There are also two subtypes; a highly organized subtype with committed membership, and a loosely organized subtype with weak leadership.

The most common type was the "Barrio-territorial gangs," which were criminal generalists, loosely organized, ritualistic, and randomly violent except in the case of turf disputes. There was also no adult criminal influence and criminal activity was committed on a personal basis. Finally, the "transitional gangs" are groups that are either growing or having

organizational breakdown. These groups tend to center on a charismatic leader, are only semi-organized, have individual based criminality, and may gain drugs and guns from adult criminals. A subtype of the transitional gang is school-based groups that are geographically dispersed, therefore are only active when school is in session. Valdez's (2003) typology demonstrates the importance of gang member relationships with adult criminals or adult criminal groups in determining street gang structure, but could be extended further with social network analysis by examining actual relationships between different street gangs.

Another typology that is perhaps too extensive and overly focused on criminal justice is Knox's (2006) threat analysis, which requires information that may be difficult to assess or ascertain such as type of weapons used, meeting resources, leadership forms, income sources, and membership commitment. While all of this information would certainly be valuable, actually obtaining it could be difficult without ethnographic data or intensive law enforcement investigation.

Klein (2002) provides a typology with more utility using five gang structures based on the more attainable and stable variables of age range, length of existence, subgroups, territoriality, and number of members. This typology includes the following:

- The Traditional Gang: exists for more than 20 years; is made up of several hundred members who identify strongly with a territory; includes a wide age range of members; contains several named subgroups, commonly delineated by age
- The Neotraditional Gang: exists for less than 10 years; includes 50 to several hundred members who are territorial; possibly, although not necessarily, consists of subgroups

- The Compressed Gang: exists for less than 10 years; consists of up to 50 members who possibly, but not necessarily, identify with a territory; does not contain sub groups; includes members representing a relatively small age range
- The Collective Gang: exists from 10 to 15 years; consists of 100 or more members with no subgroups; includes members representing a relatively large age range
- The Specialty Gang: exists for less than 10 years; consists of less than 50 members whose territory is based on either residence or crime specialty; does not consist of subgroups; includes members representing a variable age range

The variables in Klein's (2002) typology are easier to assess and any shift in nominal or numerical values simply places a gang in another category instead of causing confusion or ambiguity about which description best fits the gang.

While all of these typologies provide valuable information, they are limited in their static nature. They have underlying assumptions that gangs are stable rather than dynamic and most do not take change or relationships into account. Taylor's (1990) typology does address changes in gangs from an evolutionary standpoint. However, the evolutionary theory is not only difficult to support without longitudinal data, but Taylor's (1990) evidence points to something besides evolution. For instance, Taylor (1990) gives the example of a gang called "The 42" during the 1930s, which was characterized as a scavenger gang. Many of the "42s" were eventually incorporated into Al Capone's mob. This example would demonstrate Taylor's (1990) evolutionary argument if the "42s" became Al Capone's mob, but that was not the case. Instead some of the gang was incorporated into an already existing criminal organization. Thus,

understanding the relationships between groups becomes more relevant to understanding gang processes and structural change. Social network analysis may be a better tool for capturing this dynamic.

Taking Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) argument about how delinquent subcultures arise into account, the relationships between groups may be an intricate part of a gang's development. "Criminal subcultures" are gangs or groups that arise when there are adult criminal elements in the community. The adult criminals mentor, model, or teach behavior to younger people, pointing yet again to the import of examining the relational aspect of gang membership. Examining gangs and gang members through a social network perspective will take our knowledge beyond drug use, crime type, and other descriptive variables to information regarding how gang processes differ between gang types and how different gang types interact with each other. Social network analysis contributes to our knowledge by explaining how changes in categories come about looking at connections between different groups and their activities. It also explains how gangs increase or decrease in size by investigating whether smaller gangs get absorbed into larger ones or if friendly relations between gang members result in mergers of gangs? Finally, it enables an analysis of the micro dynamics of member relations that result in the formation of subgroups.

Changes and Splintering

Answering the aforementioned questions, if only with specific gangs, may give us insight as to how a gang changes. The dynamic gang processes of changing, merging, or splintering of gangs have rarely been examined in considerable depth. Most authors have been cursory on the subject and there has been little in-depth investigation. The information that has been gained concerning these processes was obtained while scholars investigated gang structures and whether or not they had changed over time.

An intriguing contribution to the extant knowledge on the subject comes from Weisel, (2002) whose interviews portray mergers such the Black Gangster Disciples forming from the combined gangs of the Black Disciples, Gangster Disciples, and High Supreme Gangsters. Interviews in San Diego also revealed that Logan splintered into "Logan Trece" and "Red Steps" as the gang grew larger and natural boundaries emerged. Unfortunately more detailed information about these mergers and splinter groups was not provided. Spergel (1990) argues that splintering develops from internal competition or if more criminal opportunity becomes available. Decker (1996) points to the rise of violence in causing splits. Monti (1993) argues that it is the lack of control over larger gangs that cause them to split and that age-graded cliques are like gang building blocks that can merge, dissolve, and reassemble. Weisel (2006) views the process of merging and splintering through organizational theory, arguing that a path to organizational equilibrium explains why some groups dissipate and others break off from larger groups until a stable number of organizations is reached. This theoretical approach explicitly

ignores the gang member worldview in favor of the assumption that gangs can be called organizations.

Organizations or Networks

The gang members in Weisel's (2002) study saw the gang as a friendship network, which is consistent with the findings of Fleisher (2002). Furthermore, though Yablonsky (1973) has been attacked for his depiction of the gang as sociopathic and violent, few have paid attention to his concept of the gang as near-group. Yablonsky (1959) reports that gang members had no measurable number of members, no definition of membership, no specific roles, no understood consensus of norms, and no clear flow of leadership to action. Weisel (2002) places the particular gangs studied in an organizational context because they portrayed orientation towards goals and organizational continuity. However if gangs lack the vast majority of organizational aspects as pointed out by Yablonsky (1959) can they really be considered organizations?

Viewing gangs in an organizational context forces categorical boundaries that may only exist in the mind of the outside observer. As gang characteristics noted by Yablonsky (1959) indicate, there is much more fluidity to gangs and gang members, and gang boundaries may be much more porous. The organizational viewpoint may also lead to an ecological fallacy of assuming that members of different gangs engaging in activity together means gangs are working together. Finally, this idea ignores the viewpoint of gang members that gangs are kinship/friendship networks. Confusing or misinterpreting the relationships of gang members may have led to the present label of "hybrid gangs." Viewing gang processes from a social

network viewpoint clears up this confusion by distinguishing relationships among gang members, as well as among gangs.

Hybrids

Largely untouched by academic researchers, the "hybrid" gang phenomenon has been discussed primarily by law enforcement agencies such as Missouri's Kansas City Police Department (Starbuck et al 2004). The "hybrid" gang is not a new term or idea. It was initially used by Thrasher (1927) to describe gangs of mixed race/ethnicity, but in the modern era the term encompasses many other characteristics as well. Different than most traditional depictions of gangs, which described gangs as being comprised mostly of lower class and minority males, police in many jurisdictions are starting to report hybrid gangs. These gangs in late onset localities (post-1990) have a greater mix of race/ethnicity, with an increase of white youth, the presence of more females, and a larger proportion of middle-class teens (Howell, Moore, and Egley 2002). Additionally, it appears that members may switch gangs or participate in multiple gangs (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2004). For example, in San Antonio, eight out of 15 former gang members interviewed had switched gangs or belonged to multiple gangs and two gangs had switched their entire allegiance (Bolden 2005). Although San Antonio agencies have reported gangs since the 1950s, the gangs appeared to have the same "hybrid" characteristics that were being pointed out in emergent gangs.

Cooperation between gangs that are sometimes rivals is also noticed by law enforcement as is the mixing of gang symbols from Chicago and Los Angeles based gangs. Just as these

gangs are engaged in cafeteria-style offending, they are selecting characteristics of different established gangs. This gives further credence to the idea that gangs have now become popular brand names (Klein 1995). The use of the term hybrid gangs to describe groups that have more fluid membership and non-traditional membership (Starbuck et al. 2004) is an illustration of etic methodology, which is the imposition of an outsider's (i.e., law enforcement) interpretation of a phenomenon. Alternatively, using emic methodology (Hagedorn 1998) or understanding phenomenon from the respondent's point of view, or, in this case, the gang member's point of view explains gang fluidity and non-traditional membership as elements of a social network system (Fleisher 2002; Weisel 2006).

Here, the idea of self-identifying oneself as a member of a particular gang becomes relevant. Fleisher (2002) argues that self-nomination as a gang member refers to both an attribute and a relational aspect of membership. Gang research tends to examine membership as an attribute and neglect the relational component. However, it is of great import that self-nomination is a statement of having a particular relational status to other people. Fleisher (2002) used social network analysis to examine the nature of gang member relationships between females and how these affiliations affected gang participation. In explaining a gang member's ego-network, which is the people that an individual directly interacts with on a regular basis, Fleisher (2002) found many members had relationships with people from other gangs than their own. Furthermore, while gang members certainly associated with other members of their gang, in his study none of the gang members knew all of the other members in their gang. The members who knew the most members in their gang only knew ten percent of the members in

their gang. The gangs studied ranged from large Midwestern gangs such as the Gangster Disciples and Vicelords, to an independent gang called the Fremont Hustlers. It would seem that his conclusions may not be as relevant to smaller gangs, but Fleisher was revealing that individuals knew, interacted with, and hung out with several other gang members, in different gangs, rather than exclusively with people who identified themselves as being in the same gang.

The actual ego-networks of each gang member, or the people they regularly interacted with, were fairly small and often included members of other gangs. Fleisher (2002) argues that the status of gang membership provides social capital and being included in the social networks of other gangs would further increase someone's social capital. While Bolden (2005) notes that gang members often referred to positive interactions with members of other gangs, Decker et al. (1998) provide one of the only studies that actually examined relationships among gangs. Studying 26 Gangster Disciples and 18 Latin Kings in Chicago, as well as 20 members of Logan Heights and 21 members of Lincoln Park Piru in San Diego, Decker et al. (1998) found that relationships with other gangs was very common. All of the San Diego gang members reported maintaining relationships with other street gangs, while 80 percent of the Gangster Disciples and 75 percent of the Latin Kings maintained these types of relationships. Furthermore, all of the Latin Kings and Logan Heights members maintained relationships with prison gangs. 87 percent of the Gangster Disciples and 75 percent of the Lincoln Park Piru also maintained relationships with prison gangs. Although some would argue that gang alliances are brittle (Monti 1993), they do not deny that gangs assist each other in varying ways. Decker et al. (1998) provide us with

evidence that in spite of often being overlooked, gang relationships are common and these networks may be an important part of the gang experience.

With data from a gang task force in New Jersey, McGloin (2007) also provides evidence that gangs are more aptly described as social networks, and rather than being structured organizations, the gang boundaries are dynamic and opaque. Also using social network analysis Papachristos (2006) did not find cohesion in gangs as a whole, but strong cohesion in subgroups of the gang. These ego-networks were responsible for specific crimes and behaviors indicating that crimes are ego-network related rather than gang-related or motivated (Fleisher 2002). This is an alternate interpretation to the idea of organizational cooperation between rivals in hybrid gangs (Starbuck et al. 2004). Using social network analysis can help clear up the ambiguities in determining whether individuals or whole groups work together. It can also examine whether the "hybrid" label is relevant from the gang member's perspective or if it is a misinterpretation of kinship/friendship networks.

Initiation

The fluidity of gang membership causes problems for categorizing people as gang members. To be included in a category, researchers often used specified characteristics and traditionally people have assumed that initiation was the line of demarcation in being considered a gang member. However, empirical evidence has indicated that beliefs about a requirement of violent or criminal rituals to join gangs and the myth of blood-in, blood-out, which means that gang membership lasts until death, are misconstrued and erroneous. Inclusion in the gang can

occur simply by hanging around with the group or having friendship or family network ties (Spergel 1995).

Although particular gangs may have established indoctrination rituals (Padilla 1992; Vigil 1996), the premise that initiation is the penultimate demarcation line between gang association and gang membership is faulty. Fleisher (2002) found no formal process of recruitment or systematic initiation procedures. People were considered gang members simply by virtue of knowing, being related to, or hanging around gang members. Only nine out of 54 of the gang members studied went through a formal initiation process. Bolden (2005) also found that an initiation ritual was unnecessary and often not used in determining gang membership.

Understanding that initiation does not delineate membership in conjunction with a social network will help clear up ambiguities about whether "temporary" members, who are marginally committed and only involved for a short time period, "situational" members, who are marginally committed and only hang around for specific activities such as partying (Vigil 1988), "adjunct" members, who participate in gang activity part-time due to holding some form of legal occupation (Taylor 1990), and affiliate members should be included in the gang. This question has plagued law enforcement and researchers alike, but is clearly answered with a "yes" if using the social network standpoint because gang membership is considered as a relational aspect.

Leaving

Another dynamic of gang processes that is not often studied is leaving the gang. Although there is an erroneous popular belief that it is impossible to leave a gang, most gang members do eventually leave the gang. Leaving the gang occurs for various reasons but primarily because a close friend or relative is killed or because a major life transition such as marriage occurs (Decker and Lauritsen 1996). Ex-gang members indicated that the process of leaving the gang was fairly calm and non-violent because the other gang members were friends and family who did not hold the desire to leave against them or that gangs were so loosely organized that members fading out of the network was not of major concern. This smooth transition again points to the importance of the relational aspect of gang membership.

Therefore reinterpretation of gangs as social networks rather than organizations may explain what we know about leaving the gang. Contrary to colloquial belief, gang membership is not "for life." Most gang members mature out or leave the gang without adverse consequences (Decker and Lauritsen 1996; Fleisher 1995; Bolden 2005). Thornberry (1998) reports that for most people the duration of gang membership was one year or less in Seattle; Denver; and Rochester, NY. Rather than simply leaving a structured organization, people are leaving a social network. Spergel (1995) also argues that youths are not as strongly attached to the gang as believed and most will eventually "mature" out. Examining the process of leaving the gang through a social network perspective will help to explain the ease or difficulty of the transition as well as how the process plays out.

Although there are a few detractors, the bulk of gang research indicates that gangs in emergent cities are primarily the result of locally grown groups who adopt cultural artifacts of nationally known gangs. These late onset-gangs, or gangs that appeared post-1990 are often labeled as hybrid gangs suggesting that their behavior is significantly different from traditional gangs. This law enforcement concept of hybridity explicitly ignores the academic literature that previously indicated that gangs were not monolithic, solitary structures but were indeed more fluid social networks. This fluidity allows not only for structural changes at the group level, but for more complex relationships not limited to one's own gang at the individual level and for processes of entering and leaving the gang that were much more pervious than what is commonly imagined. As the hybrid gang concept disregards academic literature, I feel it is appropriate to use a critical constructionist approach in examining the concept coupled with a social network analytical frame to assess gang member relationships.

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

Many theoretical standpoints exist concerning the origin and generation of gangs. In this study, however the focus is on the social processes of gangs and the representation of these processes by authority figures. I contend that the gang members and their behaviors are demonized in the popular culture, through the discourse provided by law enforcement and the media. Gang problems and more specifically gang behaviors are represented as moral threats to society and this leads to overreaction in response to gangs. The concern over hybrid gangs is disproportionate therefore I utilize a social constructionist perspective to discuss the "hybrid" gang phenomenon. I then contend that these hybrids behavior are normal and turn to social network analysis, as a theoretical and methodological frame, to discuss why this is the case.

Social Construction and Moral Panics

As people discover things about their social world, they create language to describe what they discover. Words can imply specific connotations but these words do not describe objective facts but rather the subjective perceptions of the people who invent the words. Other groups of people may create completely different words and different connotations to describe the same exact situation. This process of using language to describe our perceptions is referred to as the social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann 1966).

Two of the primary schools of thought in the constructionist theoretical camp are the strict constructionists and contextual constructionist. For the strict constructionist, objective

reality cannot be determined and the scientific community has no better claim to reality than anyone else. The only thing to be studied from this perspective is how things come to be constructed (Aronson 1984). For the contextual constructionist, objective threat or harm can be determined, but what is of import for research is whether the concern over the issue is disproportionate to any actual threat (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). Concerning the current study, the behaviors of "hybrid" gangs can be assessed; therefore I will be using the contextual constructionist framework.

There have been several studies with resulting arguments that gang threats are often socially constructed (Meehan 2000; Meyer 1999; McCorkle and Miethe 1998; Schaefer 2002; Zatz 1987). From a constructionist perspective, the only criteria for something to be considered a social problem, is that people define it as such (Lowney 2008). There is no objective standard to evaluate the identified problem. For instance, though gangs have long been considered a social problem, the objective threat that they present is much more opaque. How is the gang problem evaluated? One could argue that it is measured by recording the number of gangs and gang members that are reported by law enforcement, but the fluctuation in reported numbers does not in itself represent more societal harm or an increased threat. Nor is there a particular numerical bar set at which the gang threat becomes more of a problem or less of a problem, it is all based on how authorities represent the current situation, whatever that might be.

To understand how gang issues are socially constructed, it is important to examine the relationship of law enforcement to gangs. Although authorities may create and maintain moral panics, this may not indicate intentional malice. Moral entrepreneurs, crusaders who insist that

certain members of society are behaving immorally and thus should be punished, and rule enforcers, those who do the punishing, may really believe in what they are doing or their social position may be strongly invested in the maintenance of the panic (Becker 1963). This process with law enforcement construction of gang behaviors often has political overtones, or results from police subcultural practices rather than academic information on gangs. Some studies attempt to detract from the constructionist argument but ultimately end up bolstering the social constructionist position.

Katz and Webb (2006) found that gang units were subjected to little direction and control. Most units lacked policies, procedures, rules, and even mission statements. Officers were given extreme autonomy and little supervision. Furthermore, there were no specific measures of performance evaluation for gang unit officers. Most of the officers received little or no formal education or training thus many patrol officers were thrust into the investigative functions of the gang unit without knowledge of how to do their jobs. Several of the officers did not know how to use the computerized gang databases characteristic of their unit. Even more frightening was the common occurrence of these poorly trained officers being called on by judges or community leaders as expert advisors concerning gangs. According to Katz and Webb (2006), the testimony of gang unit officers was largely based on strong cultural beliefs rather than any informed, empirical data. To what extent are these cultural beliefs presented as official data to the media and to researchers?

Katz and Webb (2006) oppose the perspectives of Archbold and Meyer (1999), McCorkle and Miethe (1998) and Zatz (1987) who argue that gang units were created because of

moral panics rather than objective threats. Katz and Webb (2006) reject the social constructionist perspective because they deem police data on number of gang members and number of gang-related crimes as objective criteria confirming an objective threat. The authors' argue however, that this objective threat was not what spurred the creation of gang units, rather it was public and institutional pressure as well as a "mimetic" (Dimaggio and Powell 1991) process, which suggests that in situations of uncertainty, organizations mimic the practices of similar organizations.

They found no consensus in any city as to the nature and magnitude of the gang problem. The only pattern identified was that internal stakeholders saw the problem as diminishing, and external stakeholders believed the problem was worsening. Although complex computer applications now exist, no statistical analysis other than a basic count of gang members has been conducted to clarify these issues. Katz and Webb (2006) conclude that gang units are not in a position to efficiently or effectively deal with the gang problem and serious restructuring and reallocation of police funds are in order.

Katz and Webb's (2006) rejection of the social constructionist perspective raises empirical questions derived from their own research and arguments. There are two points of contention that I will address. I argue that the objectivity of their "objective" criteria needs further qualification. Secondly, though institutional or mimetic theories may fit the creation of gang units, the data indicating a lack of consensus as to the nature and magnitude of the gang problem lend support to the social constructionist stance.

The authors conclude that police data representing number of gang members and number of gang related crimes demonstrate an objective gang problem. This assertion operates under several unqualified assumptions. First, extensive literature exists concerning the lack of consensus on what constitutes a gang or who is a gang member (Ball and Curry 1995). It is interesting to further note that some police officers believed that the word gang was simply political rhetoric (Meehan 2000). From the late 1970s to the 1990s in a mid-western town, police units that normally patrolled youth activities would gain the label of gang unit during election years, but the label would suddenly disappear when the election year was over with a declaration that the gang problem was solved. Youth also expressed the same sentiment saying that police attention and police dogs would go away after the election. Newspapers would subsequently report no gang problems in the following years and the police would tell citizens that they could no longer afford to respond to calls about youth disturbing the neighborhood (Meehan 2000).

Katz and Webb (2006) never clarify how the units they studied defined gangs or gang members. Definition is extremely salient to determining the extent of a gang problem. A primary factor is the inclusion or exclusion of gang associates in the number of gang members. Of the cities they studied, only Las Vegas made a clear distinction between gang members and associates when counting gang members. The inclusion of associates could severely inflate the number of gang members. A survey conducted with police departments in Texas cities found that there was no uniform definition for gangs and gang members, and individual departments established their own definition. Furthermore reported gang membership could vary by factors of 2 or 3 depending on inclusion or exclusion of gang associates (Stanley 1992). Therefore the

numerical depiction of gang members is partly based on the subjective definitional decisions that police departments make. Other than a footnote concerning associates, Katz and Webb (2006) fail to address the issue of associates in establishing "objective" criteria.

The officers and authors' also used gang-related crime as objective criteria in demonstrating the reality of the gang problem, which also has problematic issues- the first being the subjective determination of a crime as gang related. Meehan's (2000) analysis of calls to the police showed instances of citizens' questionable labeling of gang activity. For instance, a call about youth playing tag football under a street lamp was labeled as gang related. An issue of more salience was that dispatchers labeled events as gang related even when not designated as such by the caller. The implication is that law enforcement with duties involving gang activities are more likely to label incidents as gang related.

Albuquerque, New Mexico was the exception in this instance because they did not collect data on gang-related crimes due to definitional issues. An extreme effect on the numerical count of gang-related crimes occurs because of definitional choice. Crimes defined as gang related because a gang member committed them will result in a higher count than crimes defined as gang-related because they were gang-motivated. Maxson and Klein's (1990) study of homicides in Los Angeles showed that using the gang-motivated definition reduced the number of gang homicides by 50 percent. Ironically, Katz and Webb (2006) only discuss this as the reasoning that Albuquerque's chief uses for not collecting data on gang-related crime, but fail to see its relevance to their own criteria of objective measures. The authors do not discuss definitional decisions of other units; therefore it is unknown to what extent gang-related crime

counts are boosted by definition. Taking into context Wells and Weisheit's (2001) findings, that gangs in rural areas had almost no correlation with crime rates, the implications of who is defining danger can be misleading.

Katz and Webb's (2006) analysis revealed that there was no clear consensus or sophisticated measurement of the magnitude and nature of the gang problem. This supports the theoretical position that the gang problem is socially constructed. Regardless of what the numbers illustrate, police officers and external stakeholders are adamant that the gang problem is worsening.

The subjective reality of the gang problem should not be dismissed as easily as Katz and Webb (2006) do in "Gangs in America." Katz, (2001) himself, noted in a previous study of the construction of a gang unit in a mid-western city, that the worst incident that led to the creation of the gang unit was a fistfight during which an officer trying to break it up was knocked down. In another situation that Meehan (2000) describes, the community result was largely benign; with police knowing that the gang problem was mythical they used tactics like "brooming," which entailed making loitering youth move to other locations where people wouldn't complain about them. In other cities, this was not the case. Schaefer's (2002) study of Bloomington, Indiana for instance, describes the damage that moral panic can cause. After two men were arrested for selling drugs to college football players, Bloomington police were told by police departments of larger cities that the incident was indicative of gang migration. Outside law enforcement agencies informed Bloomington about graffiti and clothing that were indicators of gang activity. Rather than using crime as an indicator of gang activity, the police assumed the prevalence of

certain types of clothes were indicative of large amounts of gang activity. The media has also been responsible for social construction of problems using apparel as an indicator in other locations (Ogle, Eckman, and Leslie 2003).

As a result of the clothing scare, the police department and the press panicked, saying that mass gang migration was centered on Bloomington with the objective of making it a drug market. Despite that fact that the police recorded only one instance of illegal weapon possession and three incidents of fist fighting, the newspapers claimed that the gang migration had arrived, the city was immersed in the drug trade, and violent youth roamed the streets with semi-automatic, high-caliber weapons. Even with the lack of real criminal activity, the higher authorities responded to the fear with militant police tactics, sending officers barging into homes to arrest people for possession of marijuana, often humiliating them by not allowing them to put on clothing (Schaefer 2002).

Contrary to the position of Katz and Webb (2006) more literature implies that police and media socially construct gang problems, internalizing subcultural beliefs about the subjects and extemporizing these beliefs as if they were experts on the topics. The danger here is that the law enforcement entities have power to affect social systems and are influential in getting other people to internalize their ideas, making beliefs real in their consequences (Berger and Luckmann 1996). Another element involved here is the "gang experts," who make a business around "educating" police and communities in emerging gang cities about the dangerous gangs (McCorkle and Miethe 2002). These experts travel around showing slide shows of gangs in

Chicago and Los Angeles, suggesting that gang presences in the emerging location are serious problems that require serious responses (Klein 1995:163).

Taking cultural climate and context into account also implies a relationship between gang problems and socially constructed reality. San Antonio, Texas has been identified as having gang problems since at least the 1950s (Klein 1995). This would slate San Antonio as a chronic gang city. However, in the early 1990s, San Antonio officials applied for and were selected as one of the five sites in Spergel's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program (Spergel, Wa, and Sosa 2005) under the guise of being an emergent gang city. After the program was implemented it was discovered that San Antonio had many multi-generational gangs, which made little sense under a premise that an emergent gang cities problems began post-1990. The discrepancy was glossed over with an insufficient explanation that San Antonio was a mix of a chronic gang city and an emergent gang city. Although, gangs had existed for a significant amount of time in San Antonio prior to 1990, it is interesting to note that city officials began advertising the situation during the era in which gangs were receiving national attention as a social problem and federal money was being poured into anti-gang initiatives.

Returning to the law enforcement gang seminar that I attended, the officer made a claim that after the 9-11-2001 terrorist attacks, a large portion of gang unit officers were reassigned to anti-terrorist task forces, which allowed the gang threat to go unchecked. Coincidentally, it was during this time that the number of gangs and gang members reported to the National Youth Gang Center were the lowest since the organization began collecting data. After the war on terror

lost its momentum, officers returned to gang units, and the numbers of gangs and gang members began to increase, suggesting that the problem was again worsening. Did the numbers really fluctuate or was it result of officer assignments and interest?

The gang problem at this time may have also lost its luster or allure as not many were paying attention to it. Joel Best (2008) explains that when social problems organizations lose the interest of the general public they engage in a process of domain expansion, or creating new problems or more reasons that their organization is needed. Accordingly, around the time of gang units reforming, a new gang threat- the hybrid gang- came to the forefront of attention.

McCorkle and Miethe (2002) argue that gang situations are taken a step further in the social problems process and placed into a category referred to as moral panics. Moral panics are distinguished from other social problems in that particular behaviors associated with certain groups of people become the focus, whether these behaviors are real or not does not matter so much as the belief that they are real (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). These groups of people become demonized or "folk devils," who begin to be seen as inherently negative, therefore any positive attributes they may have are completely ignored and their behaviors become exclusively bad (McCorkle and Meithe 2002).

Stanley Cohen (1980) popularized the term moral panic in describing the overreaction of law enforcement and the media to a situation where two groups of British youth, the Mods and the Rockers, grew restless with boredom and engaged in inconsequential rowdiness and minor vandalism. The representations of the event were over exaggerated and the youth quickly began being depicted as folk devils or enemies of moral society.

I believe it is fair to argue that gang members have become longstanding American folk devils, who are often viewed as animalistic and void of humanity. In examining motifs of gang initiation rites in public discourse, Best and Hutchinson (1996) argue that false urban legends such as gang members hiding under cars and slashing ankles or killing people who flash lights at them, remain popular motifs because people prefer attributing random violence to clandestine sinister groups than actually acknowledging the mundane, rational reasons for people harming each other. Positive attributes or pro-social behaviors of gang members are usually ignored or bypassed with rhetorical arguments that any positive behavior is only a veil to hide more insidious intentions. Even neutral or normal behaviors are described as pernicious attributes. This idea of hybrid gangs, for instance, only indicates that gang members are just like most other members of society, in that they have relationships in multiple social circles. Beyond the atypical hermit and social isolate, how many people only interact in one social arena? Although individuals may have primary loyalties, they interact with many different groups, family, classmates, workmates, social clubs, so on and so forth, all of which take a slice of a person's attention and loyalty. Yet, when a gang member engages in this same behavior, it is depicted as a threatening, and described as gang evolution into more sophisticated criminality.

The second aspect of the moral panic is that the generated concern or anxiety about the situation is completely out of proportion to any objective threat that the focus of the anxiety may actually present (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). In the case of hybrid gangs, the rhetoric that hybrid behaviors lead to more dangerous gangs is unfounded. The only major reported consequences of the situation is that law enforcement is more confused about how to categorize

gang members, which is a situation that does not call for the hype and concern that has been generated. There is a general public consensus, that these folk devils are a moral enemy however and therefore increased and disproportionate hostility against the selected deviant group occurs. The media plays an important role in disproportionate coverage of violent crimes and inflammatory language that further dehumanizes the gang member (McCorkle and Miethe 2002). The media and the police have a symbiotic relationship in that the police are the sole crime definers and provide the media information for coverage of violence. The presentation of data from the sole source framed in a particular package of impending threat by the media ensures the public support of law enforcement and belief that more funding for these hero protectors from the threat are needed.

The final aspect of the moral panic is that levels of concern fluctuate. As previously noted anxiety and interest about gangs increased in the 1960s, decreased in the 1970s, increased again in the late 80s and 90s, decreased in early years after 2000 and increased again in the later years after the millennium. It seems, that gangs as a social problem, and more specifically hybrid gangs fit quite well into the moral panic framework.

There are three primary theoretical models used in describing moral panic creation. In the Grassroots model, the creation is at the activist level, people in the general population attempt to derive attention for a situation. The Elite model argues that the people in high echelons create panics to deflect attention from real problems. The most popular model, which is more useful for this study is the Interest-Group model. Here, middle-level power structures such as the police

and media have vested interests in creating and maintaining moral panics (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994).

Law enforcement may really believe in the moral rightness of their entrepreneurship; however this stance coincides with strengthening their status positions in society. The role of police in being the sole definers of crime for the media, results in the media presenting law enforcement beliefs as objective reality to the public. The public then panics and support for strengthening law enforcement is gained. Meanwhile, regardless of the actual behaviors of gang members, they have already become iconic folk devils. When interest in the folk devil panic wanes, law enforcement must expand their domain or redefine the threat to renew interest. The following graphic illustrates the roles that are played in this model.

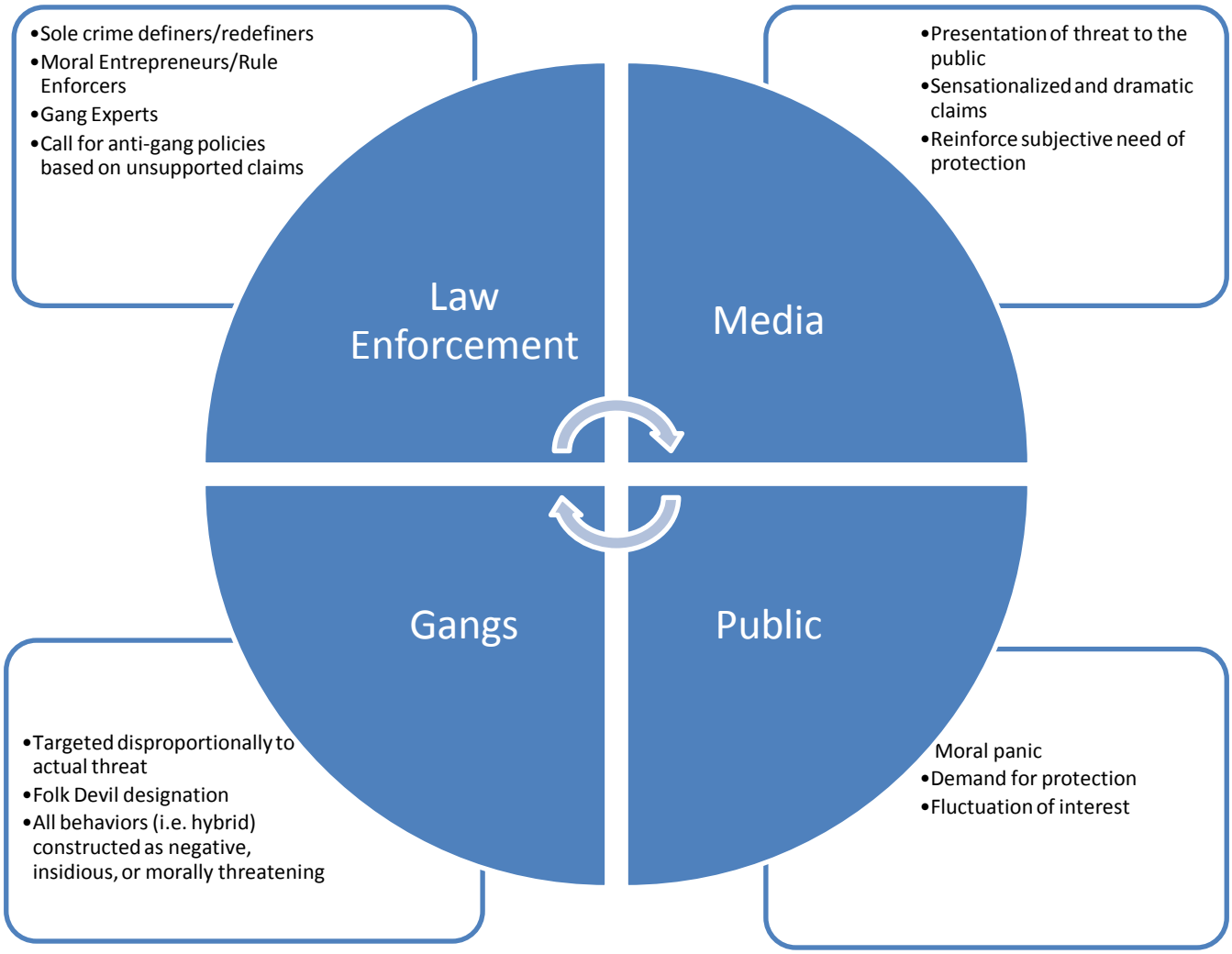

Figure 1- Interest Group Model of Moral Panic

Media involvement and public reaction are at this time beyond the scope of this study. What can currently be assessed are actual gang behaviors and law enforcement claims and

viewpoints of those behaviors. To examine the behaviors in question, I now turn to social network analysis.

Social Network Analysis

Theoretical Framework

Examination of what law enforcement call hybrid gangs is in its infancy and as of yet has not received serious empirical investigation. Whether gangs have actually changed or these processes have previously existed and been overlooked, the "hybrid" gang label implies fluid membership between gangs, a lessening of violent events in joining and leaving gangs, more interaction among gangs and a selective mix of identifying elements of well-known gangs. These gangs are also claimed to be late-onset (post-1990) gangs that are characterized as having an increase in females, an increase of whites, and an increase of middle-class youth. These apparent differences challenge many previously used assumptions of gangs as social islands with impermeable boundaries.

A considerable amount of literature informs us that gangs tend to not be highly organized structures but rather loose conglomerations of clique structures (Decker and Curry 2000; Fleisher 2002; Klein 1971; Klein and Crawford 1967; Papachristos 2006). These conglomerations are not highly cohesive as a whole, albeit stronger cohesion occurs amongst particular cliques. These smaller cohesive cliques dilute the influence of the overall gang in favor of the immediate people that an individual interacts with. Lerman (1967:71) describes the gang subcultural unit as "a network of pairs, triads, groups with names, and groups without names." What has not been

discussed in the literature, with the notable exception of Fleisher (2002; 2006), is who is actually in these particular cliques.

If these smaller cohesive units are in networks, then the most viable framework for examining gang member relationships emerging from previous literature is social network analysis. Social Network Analysis is both a theoretical framework and a methodological approach. From a theoretical standpoint, people belong to intricate webs of social relationships that influence their lives in a myriad of ways and affect occupational chances, general opportunities, and perceptions of world (Simmel 1955; Papachristos 2006; Wellman 1983). Up until this point social network analysis has rarely been used to study gangs. Klein and Crawford (1967) and more recently, McGloin (2005; 2007) and Papachristos (2006) have used this framework to examine cohesion of members within a gang, finding that there were cohesive subgroups or cliques but not strong cohesion in the gang as a whole. Fleisher (2006) used nomination of friends to identify ties between members of different gangs such as the Gangster Disciples, Vicelords, and Stones, which are sometimes rivals. Fleisher argued that affiliation in the same categorical gang was not sufficient to foster sentiment between members. Even if members hung out with each other, they often indicated preference for other friends that were not a part of their own particular affiliation. Preference was also related to the social capital created by network relationships. Social capital in networks make more actions and opportunities available (Papachristos 2006). Fleisher (2006) argues that even though belonging to a gang provides a level of social capital, gang member relationships are based more on the expanded social capital that a connection provides rather than affiliation with a particular group.

Fleisher (2006) explains that the use of other methods to study gangs has resulted in the concept of the bounded group. Although it makes obvious sense that gang members like most other people in society interact in many different social circles and utilize agency in choosing who to associate with, therefore are not bounded by the gang per se, the conventional depiction of the gang member as the folk devil allows for easy disregard of viewing any behavior of the gang member as normal. Ironically, Cotterell (1996) comes to conclusion that interactional behavior between gang members is actually more fluid and less stable than other adolescent cliques. Cliques are the people who spend time hanging out together. Usually adolescents belong to many cliques with different sets of friends in varying contexts, such as sports teams, neighborhood friends, school friends, so on and so forth. In gangs, however, membership provides the individual with the social capital to more freely move between cliques. Based on the findings of Vigil (1990) and O'Hagan (1976), Cotterell (1996: 33-34) describes gangs as "a series of changing microsystems. The individual joins one group for a time, then leaves, and rejoins or moves on to another."

Ayling (2009) who views gangs as organized criminal networks theoretically argues that the weak links between gang network hubs or "loose couplings" make the gang functionally resilient against both law enforcement suppression and attacks from other groups. Damage done to one hub or clique will not destroy the entire network. Furthermore, the clique type network removes the sluggish and burdensome chain of command, allowing members enough freedom to instantly act and have improvisational responses to immediate concerns. Using police data,

McGloin (2005) identified particular gang members as "cut-points" or the only connection or intermediaries between the different cliques within a gang.

Papachristos (2006) challenges Fleisher's (2006) characterization of gang membership as relational attributes and argues instead that they are social groups based on the patterned actions that are caused by relational ties. Fleisher (2006) explains however that methodological choice will cause this discrepancy, and indeed Papachristos uses (2006) police data to examine gang networks. As the present study uses qualitative interviews, it expands on Fleisher's work, which was conducted with female gang members, by not only identifying ties among male and female members of different gangs but also the nature and consequences of those ties in regard to "hybrid" gang processes, such as belonging to multiple gangs, switching gangs, and fluidity of joining or leaving gangs. The social network of the gang member allows for expansion of social capital and expanded opportunities in the urban arena.

Methodological Approach

Although network studies are usually quantitative examinations of group density and degree centrality of individuals in the group, this study seeks to focus on the qualitative aspect of network ties. A divide in the application of this analysis is the study of ego networks and whole networks (Johnson 1994). As it is often used in studying urban populations, the proposed study will be concerned with the ego network. This framework looks at one individual's (J) set of relationships with others rather than the interacting people within a whole network. (J) is the ego and the person at the other end of the relationship is referred to as the alter. Therefore who (J)

knows and how (J) knows them is examined and if these relationships provide (J) with aid and emotional support they are considered a part of (J)'s ego-network (Johnson 1994; Burt 1980).

The unit of analysis is the relational ties in the ego-network. Stated more simply, who does the subject hang out with, and what is the etiology of the relationship. If gangs are the bounded social groupings that they are often believed to be, then aside from family members, gang member ego-networks should only include members of their own gangs. Thrasher (1927/1963) stated long ago that the dyad and triad cliques were far more important to the individual than the gangs as a whole, and the individual would choose these close associations over the gang. Lerman (1967) backed this argument with further empirical evidence that action occurred in dyads or triads more than the overall group, and that ultimately gangs were networks of these smaller cliques. If gang members express individual agency as argued in choosing who to spend time with, then their ego-networks can expand beyond their gang affiliation to members of other affiliations, which provides a significant challenge to previously held notions of solid gang social boundaries.

As law enforcement actions and rhetoric concerning gang and gang activity has often been exaggerated or unfounded, there is sufficient evidence to suspect that they hybrid gang phenomenon is a socially constructed concept of gang evolution aimed at reigniting the fear of the gang member as an American folk devil. Even if the behaviors of hybridity in question are real, they do not justify the concern that they are being given. Alternatively, both common sense and previous literature would indicate that the lack of cohesion in gangs and the regularity of interaction amongst different social cliques would point to viewing the gang as a social network.

Hybrid gang behaviors are no different than the normal behaviors of conventional people in their day to day networks. Because of past negative depictions, gang member behaviors are readily assumed to be deviant or insidious. Ultimately, the hybrid gang phenomenon is a socially constructed moral panic. In the next chapter, I explain the methodological dimensions of the study in greater detail.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

The present study is a qualitative exploration of gang member relationships using in-depth interviews and social network analysis. This study aims to expand upon gang typologies and Fleisher's (2006) work of identifying ego-networks that cross so-called gang boundaries by examining what ties between members of different gangs mean for gang processes. In other words, how much do ego-networks contribute to gang relations regarding multiple gang associations, switching gangs, initiations, and leaving the gang? This study uses qualitative interviews of current and former gang members in two counties and a social network survey of a former gang network in one of the counties to understand the nature of these social relationships and to examine whether or not gangs are bounded by affiliation. Furthermore, this endeavor investigates whether interaction among gang members of different gangs is a new phenomenon, identified by law enforcement as gang evolution, or if the label of "hybrid gang," is a social construction in law enforcement and media rhetoric.

Definition

In any study of gangs, the first issue to be addressed is the definition of gang. This issue has inspired much debate, primarily around whether criminality should be included in the definition or not (Ball and Curry 1995; Bursik and Grasmick 2006). For practical purposes and for the sake of advancing gang research, I will use the Eurogang definition of the street gang, which is "any durable, street-oriented youth group whose involvement in illegal activity is part

of its group identity" (Klein 2006:4). This definition has been agreed upon and used by several prominent American and European gang researchers, thus allowing for comparative research. For purposes of operational definition, self-nomination as a gang member will also be validated by using the Klein's (2001; 2002) previously stated typology of Traditional, Neotraditional, Compressed, Collective, and Specialty gangs.

- The Traditional Gang: exists for more than 20 years; is made up of several hundred members who identify strongly with a territory; includes a wide age range of members; contains several named subgroups, commonly delineated by age
- The Neotraditional Gang: exists for less than 10 years; includes 50 to several hundred members who are territorial; possibly, although not necessarily, consists of subgroups
- The Compressed Gang: exists for less than 10 years; consists of up to 50 members who possibly, but not necessarily, identify with a territory; does not contain sub groups; includes members representing a relatively small age range
- The Collective Gang: exists from 10 to 15 years; consists of 100 or more members with no subgroups; includes members representing a relatively large age range
- The Specialty Gang: exists for less than 10 years; consists of less than 50 members whose territory is based on either residence or crime specialty; does not consist of subgroups; includes members representing a variable age range

Several questions in the interview schedule validate this self-nomination by placing the network of the respondent into one of Klein's (2002) categories. The respondent's are asked

about how many people belong to the group that they are in, the average age and age range of the people in the group, how long the group has been in existence, if the group is territorial, if there are subgroups, and about the typical activities of the group. All of the respondents provided enough information about these topics to be placed in the typology, albeit imperfectly. Several gangs deviated from at least one variable in the typological categories. In this scenario, I defaulted to the closest categorical match. It should be noted that the information on these variables are estimates of the respondents and therefore may suffer from any perceptive buffers (i.e. not knowing all the members of the gang) that prevent the participant from presenting an overall picture of the gang (See APPENDIX A: GANG INDEX for a breakdown of each gang by variable).

There were also two respondents who considered themselves gang associates rather than gang members. People who are not fully affiliated with gangs create a quagmire for those attempting to determine the membership of a gang. Words such as affiliate and associate are used to refer to these individuals (Vigil 1998). However, the line between these individuals and other gang members is thin and often transparent. I choose to not exclude them from the analysis for the following reasons:

1) Not being a member of a gang does not preclude a person from engaging in delinquent or criminal acts with gang members- (See Hagedorn's treatise on the "homeboy" category of members, 1994).

2) Any outside group will not differentiate between the supposed associate and the larger group.

3) Law enforcement officials label this individual as a member if he is encountered with the group and especially if they are caught committing crimes together.
4) Associates/Affiliates may be what McGloin (2005) refers to as “cut points” or key intermediaries between different cliques; therefore they may be very important in examining gang networks.

The reasons stated above make the difference between associates/affiliates and members almost negligible to any outside observer, be it law enforcement, social researchers, or other gangs. It can be argued that this type of individual is not likely to initiate attacks on other people; however, their known and flagrant association with targeted folk devils also makes them a target. A report from the Texas Attorney General's office (Stanley 1992) concerning a gang survey given to Texas cities showed that reported gang membership could vary by a factor of 2 or 3 due to the issue of associates/affiliates. The report noted that there was no uniform definition for what a gang is or who is in it (Stanley 1992). Each police department establishes its own definition. Cities like Houston, Texas made a point of excluding associates/affiliates, while others like El Paso and Corpus Christi included them in their gang files as associate members (Stanley 1992).

Area Demographics

Previously, Texas has been identified as the state having the 2nd highest number of gangs and the 3rd highest number of gang members (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 1999). A state summary on gangs in Texas in 2001 reported 97,600 gang members

(Abbott 2001). The author of this summary cautions that many of the reports overlap and sometimes the reporting agencies are making educated guesses rather than using solid statistics. It has also been reported that Florida was one of two states with the largest increases in gangs from 1970 to 1995 (W. B. Miller 2001). A 2007 report from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement gave an estimate of 721 gangs in Florida. Use of statistics from this report was also cautioned as only 45 percent of Sheriff's offices and 32 percent of Departments of Public Safety responded to the survey (Bailey 2007). Although, the problems with these statistics make their current validity questionable, the National Gang Center stopped reporting specified state and city level demographics.

Two metropolitan regions in these states, San Antonio/Bexar County, Texas and Orlando/Orange County, Florida were selected as the sites for this study based on several criteria. It is reported that hybrid gangs are more likely to be in emergent gang cities (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001; 2004), which are cities where gang problems occurred post-1990 (Howell, Moore, and Egley 2002). To ascertain whether or not alleged hybrid gangs are different from other gangs, it is important to compare an emergent gang city with a chronic gang city. One of the explicit goals of the Eurogang Program is to conduct comparative studies (Weerman, Maxson, Esbensen, Aldridge, Medina, and Gemert 2009). It is also beneficial to expand on knowledge of gangs, in places that have not been abundantly researched.

Orlando, Florida did not begin reporting any significant gang presence until the late 1990s, making it an emergent gang city. Other than evaluations of a gang prevention program, Gang Resistance Education and Training program (GREAT), implemented at certain schools in

Orlando, there have been no other studies about gangs in the city or county (Esbensen, Deschenes, and Winfree 2004). Even so, as discussed in the introduction, the spike in homicides during 2006 and 2007 was initially blamed on gangs. In late 2007, an article authored by a writer for the Orlando Sentinel, one of the city's major newspapers, made unsubstantiated claims that there was a surge in gangs in the Central Florida area, and that the gang members were responsible for the violence and crime in general (Pacheco 2007). Lack of empirical knowledge on gangs in the area, status as an emergent gang city, and unsupported claims concerning gang activity make Orlando an ideal site for research into hybrid gangs.

San Antonio on other hand, is in an interesting position because gang problems were reported at least since 1950 (Klein 1995), making it a chronic gang city. However, to be selected as one of the sites chosen for Spergel's Comprehensive Community-Wide Approach to Gang Prevention, Intervention, and Suppression Program, officials represented the area as an emerging gang city, despite evidence to the contrary (Spergel, Wa, and Sosa 2005). In pop culture, San Antonio made its debut as a gang hot spot by being represented in a song "Just like Compton" by gangster rapper DJ Quik. The song lyrics cite Oakland, California; St. Louis, Missouri; and San Antonio, Texas as being on par with Compton, California (the birthplace of many of the original Blood and Crip gangs) in gang activity. Gini Sikes (1997) also chose San Antonio, alongside Los Angeles, and Milwaukee as the cities to write about in her dramatic journalistic portrayal of girl gangs in the book *8 Ball Chicks.* Spergel et al. (2005) cited San Antonio as the drive-by capital of Texas in 1993, and the city was selected as one of only five sites in which Spergel's program was implemented. Despite all the interest in San Antonio, there has been very little gang research

beyond Spergel et al's (2005) Comprehensive Community-Wide Program evaluation and Valdez's (2003) categorization of Mexican-American gangs. As a city with a chronic gang history, and a more established gang reputation, but without an abundance of research on the area, San Antonio also serves as an ideal comparison site to Orlando.

Using the Eurogang's City Level Data instrument, the following information (Alamo Area Council of Governments 2008; University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research 2007) was obtained for its possible contribution to the social-structural factors that may influence gang growth. Although a wealth of data has been included, all variables have not been obtained for each site. See Table 1 for a brief overview of demographics.

Table 1- County Demographics

Demographic	Orange County, Florida (2007)	Bexar County, Texas (2008)
% White	51.8	33.5
% Black	21.3	7.4
% Hispanic	20.4	54.7
% Under 18	25.9	27.9
Median Household Income	$40,604	$38,432[a]
% Under the Poverty Level	13.2	17.3
Total Population	1,043,447	1,555,592[b]
Number of Current Gang Members	2,400	8,504
% Gang Members within Total Population	0.2	0.5[c]

[a] based on data from 2006
[b] based on data from 2004
[c] percentage provided is only an estimate as population is based on data from 2004 and number of gang members is based on current data

Orange County, Florida

According to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research (2007), as of 2005, Orange County's population was 1,043,437 with the largest portions in its

unincorporated area (677,185) and its county seat Orlando (217,567). There was a population density of 1,150 people per square mile. Distribution by sex is nearly equal with only .6 percent more females. Distribution by race was 51.8 percent white, 23.1 percent Hispanic, and 20.4 percent black. There was a fairly equal distribution by age range with 25.9 percent of the population below age 18 and 27.4 percent aged 18 to 34. Minority groups had a higher proportion of their populations less than 18 years of age. Blacks had 31.4 percent under 18, and Hispanics had 30.1 percent compared to whites that had 21.3 percent of their population under age 18. The population change from 2000 to 2005 was an increase of 147,093. The natural increase (births minus deaths) was 40,943 and net immigration (from the U.S. and international) was 106,500. In 2004 there were 4,895 dissolutions of marriage with a minimum of 3,355 children affected by these dissolutions.

Concerning the economy, the major employment sectors were accommodation (food services) providing 90,395 jobs (15.2 percent), retail trade providing 66,857 jobs (11.2 percent), administrative services such as waste management and remediation providing 64,961 jobs (10.9 percent). No other sectors contributed to more than ten percent of employment in Orange County. The unemployment rate in 2005 was 3.6 percent (19,843) a decrease of .9 percent from the previous year. The median household income was $40,604. 13.2 percent (128,027) of the population was considered in poverty, 30,000 of whom had children. In all, 15.1 percent of households were female-headed.

There were 209 public schools in 2004-2005. Half of school age children were eligible for free/reduced lunches. There were also 166 non-public schools. In 2006 only 47 percent of

students taking the mandatory statewide exam passed the reading portion of the test. In the 2003-2004 school year, there were 15,833 non-promotions, 39.5 percent of which were black students, 30.5 percent Hispanic students, and 26.6 percent white students.

Politically, there are more Democrats than other political entities registered to vote in Orange County. There was a 73.5 percent voter turnout in the last presidential election. Although, there were more votes for the Democratic presidential candidate, there were more votes for the Republican gubernatorial candidate in 2002. About a quarter of the county's expenditures were on public safety.

In 2005 there were 64,732 index crimes, 17.2 percent of which were violent. The crime rate was 6,164.9 per 100,000 people, which is a two percent increase from the previous year. There were 6,544 youth referrals for delinquency in 2004-05, a decrease of 3.8 percent from the previous year. The major portions of referrals were of 16-17 year-olds (45.5 percent) followed by 13-15 year olds (42.2 percent). In regard to males, youth referrals were disproportionately for black youth (47.2 percent) followed by whites (29.2 percent) and then Hispanics (20.9 percent). Referrals for females followed the same pattern with 47.1 percent for blacks, 32.9 percent for whites, and 17.6 percent for Hispanics. There were 954 violent youth offenders, 64.8 percent of which were referred for assaults. There were a total of 30 violent teen deaths for 2004. There is a gang enforcement unit for the Orange County Sheriff's Office with four officers, and a gang unit in the county seat, Orlando that was re-established circa 2008. The county gang unit reports 70 gangs and 2,400 gang members in the area (Orange County Sheriff's Office 2008).

Orlando's major growth and population boom came after Walt Disney's theme parks were built in the mid-1960s. The area now has more theme parks than any other place in the world. These attractions provide many service jobs that bring in migrants both foreign and domestic. These service occupations typically pay very little and accordingly half of the children in the county qualify for free or reduced lunch. Notably there are more Hispanic and Black youth than are white youth. The service economy also makes the area a very transitional place. Along with the major aspect of tourism, the service jobs are not careers, creating a lot of turnover.

Assuming that "hybrid gangs" are valid, and not constructed, they may be explained by macro-social factors rather than an assumption of gang evolution. In places like Orlando, where expansion and growth was more recent in comparison to other cities, and where the population is more transitional, than you would not expect long-standing gangs, with traditional territorial boundaries and loyalties. People do not live long enough in these areas, and neighborhoods have not existed long enough for these types of social structures to be established. Thus, if hybrid gangs are real than they should be expected in cities like this due to social factors.

Bexar County, Texas

According to the Alamo Area Council of Governments (2008), as of 2006, the population in Bexar County was 1,555,592. This is an 11.7 percent increase from the year 2000. The county seat is in the city of San Antonio, which is now the 7th largest city in the United States. In 2005, the sex distribution is close to equal with 2.4 percent more females. The racial distribution was 88.2 percent white, although only 33.5 percent of these are non-Hispanic, 7.4 percent black, 1.9

percent Asian, and 1.1 percent American Indian or Alaskan Native. 10.9 percent of the population was foreign born. Regarding age, 27.9 percent of the population was under the age of 18. In the 2006-2007 school year 10 percent of high school age students dropped out. The general trend has been 41 percent of Hispanic students and 34 percent of African-American students dropping out.

The largest employment sectors in Bexar County are healthcare and bioscience, supplying 108,275 jobs, which amounts to 1 in every 7 employed people working for this industry. Hospitality is the next largest sector with 94,000 employees (1 out of 8 working people). San Antonio has two Air Force bases and one Army base making military personnel a significant presence in the area. Two other Air Force bases were closed and have now become major economic centers. The unemployment rate in Bexar County is 4.9 percent. In 2004, the median household income was $38,432 with 17.3 percent of the population in poverty.

Altogether there were 8,755 violent index crimes in 2006, which is down one percent from 2005. However, it should be noted that there was a 34 percent increase in the number of murders. There were 325 juvenile referrals for violent offenses in 2006, which is up 11 percent from the previous year. This does not include misdemeanor assault for which there were 936 incidents up two percent from the previous year. In 2004 the rate of teen violent deaths was 56.1 per 100,000 and juvenile arrests for violent crime were 80 per 100,000.

San Antonio has a police gang unit. Bexar County's gang unit was disbanded in 2005 but reinstated as the Project Safe Neighborhood Anti-Gang Unit in 2007. As of 2007 there were 8,504 reported gang members, 1,389 of which were juveniles. In Texas, people may be

considered adults at age 17. The racial/ethnic distribution of gang members was 6,535 Latin, 1,308 black, 656 white, and 5 other. There is a significant gender disparity as 8,056 of the reported gang members are male. During the same year 3,109 criminal offenses were considered gang-related, 678 of which were violent. If a documented gang member is involved in the crime, the incident is considered gang related in Bexar County.

At the same time San Antonio was experiencing a primarily Hispanic population increase in the 1980s, it was suffering from major economic setbacks due the Texas oil and gas industry going bust, and the Savings and Loans crisis (Spergel et al. 2005). As a result, federal money was used to build low-income housing projects, while youth social programs lost funding to other needs that were deemed more pressing (Sikes 1997). This increased racial segregation with Latinos in the west and south, and blacks in the east, as well as exacerbated the amount of bored, disenfranchised youth. This was a recipe for an increase in the gang problems that were already there, or at least an increase in the attention that they would get. San Antonio gangs being related to poverty and residential segregation would be expected to have chronic gang attributes, as people would be more attached to areas and neighborhoods.

Orlando and San Antonio provide striking counterpoints in demographics and societal influences that may affect gangs. It should be expected then that Orlando and San Antonio gangs would be significantly different concerning hybridity, with Orlando gang members demonstrating more hybrid behavior. If the hybrid gang is a social construction, than the behaviors of Orlando and San Antonio gangs are more likely to be similar.

Research Questions

This research attempts to identify the specific nature of social ties of gang members to members of other gangs or criminal elements that will help to explain the characteristics known as "hybridity," such as being a part of multiple gangs, switching gangs, cooperation between gangs, joining the gang, leaving the gang, changes in gangs, gang splintering and gang merging. Since hybrid behaviors are allegedly characteristic of gangs in emergent gang cities it is expected that hybrid gang behaviors will be found more in an emergent gang city than in a chronic gang city. However, if there is no differences in behavior then the data support the stance that hybrid gangs are a socially constructed moral panic.

RQ1: Is the social network of the gang member bounded by the gang or does it expand to other gangs or criminal groups?

RQ2: How does the social network of the gang member affect membership in a gang?

RQ3: Do gang members believe there is a substantial presence of female, white, and middle-class gang members?

RQ4: Is there a difference in hybrid gang behaviors between an emergent gang city and a chronic gang city?

Data

In this study, 48 in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 current gang members, 20 former gang members, and 13 ambivalent respondents who straddled the line between being active and being former. Former members were asked questions in regard to the time that they were active, although information about post-gang status became relevant in the case of ambivalent respondents. All respondents were over the age of 18. The choice of in-depth interviewing was made because it goes beyond the worldview of law enforcement to understand the perspective of gang members. Rather than rely solely on the observations of outsiders about gang behaviors and subsequent interpretations about these behaviors, it is imperative to find out directly from the individual their views of their own relational ties. In-depth interviews supply a wealth of knowledge and the adaptability to explore informational avenues that arise. This adaptability leads to a richer understanding of the subject. With the ego-networks of each individual being one of the primary foci of the research, the individual respondents have the most extensive knowledge about who they interact with, how often, and why.

The interviews were conducted in Bexar County, Texas, which has San Antonio, a chronic gang city, as the county seat (Klein 1995) and Orange County, Florida where Orlando, an emerging gang city, is the county seat. It has been purported that hybrid gangs occur in emerging gang cities rather than chronic gang cities (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001; 2004). Overall 26 interviews took place in Bexar County and 22 interviews were conducted in Orange County. The semi-structured interview schedule was constructed based on two primary goals. The first goal was to make the study comparative by the standards of the Eurogang

Program. Core questions, which are questions necessary for research comparison, were adapted from the Eurogang Youth Survey. The adapted questions establish that the respondent is or was in a group considered a gang, and ask about the gender make-up of the group, average age, age range, racial/ethnic make-up, territorial behaviors, descriptions of territories, length of the group's existences, and the description of sub-groups should they exist. Due to IRB restrictions, there were a few Eurogang core questions that were not able to be asked directly as they had to do with criminal behavior. This was dealt with by asking general questions about the group's activities. Ultimately all interviewees reported both mundane and criminal/delinquent behavior.

The second goal of the interview schedule was to examine gang networks and alleged hybrid gang behaviors. Respondents were asked about relationships between their groups and other groups, and about the presence or absence of their personal relationships with members of other gangs. Indications of relationships among gangs and between members of different gangs were expanded upon by probing questions as to the nature of the relationships, the response of other gang members to these relationships, whether these ties were abnormal or common, and the respondent's general feelings concerning these relationships. To further ascertain network effects or hybrid behaviors questions concerning the possibility, regularity, and consequences of fluid gang behaviors such as switching gangs, belonging to more than one gang, and the process of joining and leaving the gang were also asked. Examining the process of joining and leaving serves two functions for this study. First, a claim is made about hybrid gangs having unclear rules and codes of conduct. Since there are no specifications as to what this means, examining rules for joining and leaving, two process that are certainly a part of gang behavior, serves as a

proxy for rules and codes of conduct. Secondly, if behaviors such as switching gangs and being and having multiple affiliations are in question, it also lends import to understanding the process of joining and leaving the gang (for the complete questionnaire see APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE).

In-depth Interviews

Entrée to former gang members in Bexar County has already been gained in a previous study (Bolden 2005) and these were utilized to gain more interviews through snowball sampling. This process was convenient in that I already had contact information of a possible participant. The respondent agreed to participate and then contacted another potential respondent. The process was relative smooth. It was my explicit intention to seek recommendations from interviewees for potential respondents who are in or were formerly in other gangs, representing some form of network tie between the first respondent and subsequent respondents. This strategy was more successful in Bexar County than in Orange County. In Orange County, there was one primary gatekeeper, also a respondent, who connected me to five other respondents. Beyond that, there was a single string of three interviews and then two other interviewees that linked me to a subsequent respondent. All other interviewees in Orange County were either introduced to me through a non-gang affiliated friend/family member or contacted me directly. In San Antonio, contacts in the former Sa Town Blood network resulted in 11 interviews. One respondent in the same network provided access into two other networks resulting in a three- person string and two-person string. Other snowball chains resulted in strings of five people and three people.

Comparatively, in Orlando there were nine interviewees that were to my knowledge not connected to other respondents, while in San Antonio there was only one.

Because the time available for me to be at the San Antonio site was limited, the final seven interviews were obtained by a trained field worker. The field worker was a college educated former gang member recommended to me by a former colleague. The worker became familiarized with the interview schedule and practiced interviews prior to going into the field. The worker was briefed on the purpose and goals of the study as well as ethical regulations and consent. While transcribing these interviews, there were some notable issues in that three of the interviews there was strained rapport resulting in a considerably sparse amount of information obtained. There were also instances where the worker did not follow up or probe on issues which I would have. These problematic sequences were the initial ones, and better rapport and richer information were obtained in the latter interviews.

In Orange County, entrée was gained by word of mouth from students in my college courses that were acquainted with potential respondents and further snowball sampling was utilized after interviews had been attained. Between community colleges and a university, I typically taught between five and eight college courses per semester, with total enrollments between 200 and 500. For each class, I would announce my study and explain that I was interviewing current and former gang members and that I was not law enforcement and was not interested in causing legal trouble for potential respondents. Inevitably, students who had friends or family members that were potential respondents came forward and offered to connect me to these individuals. In some cases the respondents were actually students in my class. In these

instances, the students waited until the course was finished or let enough time pass so that they felt assured that I had no intention of harming them. From the resulting interviews, I asked for nominations of more potential respondents. This sampling strategy was purposive with the intention of gaining access to more white and middle-class respondents. All interviews took place in neutral settings agreed upon by the researcher and the respondent, which usually was a restaurant. Meeting places were agreed upon through phone conversation. At the interview the respondents were given a consent form that they did not have to sign, and issues of confidentiality, risk, and consent were also verbally explained. The interview sessions lasted anywhere between forty-five minutes to two and a half-hours. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed as soon as possible. The tapes were then destroyed per IRB instruction.

Respondent Demographics

Of the respondents in Orange County, Florida, there were 19 males and 3 females, who ranged in age from 18 to 47, with racial/ethnic backgrounds including white, black, and Latino. For the Bexar County, respondents there were 20 males and 6 females, who ranged in age from 21 to 59, diversified in racial/ethnic backgrounds between white, black, Latino, and mixed race/ethnicity. All females in this study are Latina save one who is mixed Black and White. The Orlando respondents tended to be considerably younger than those in the San Antonio area. Only Latino respondents were in the 36+ age range. Racial/ethnic distribution between sites was fairly

equal except that all of the respondents of mixed race/ethnicity were in San Antonio (see Table 2 for a demographic breakdown).

Table 2- Respondent Demographics

Race/Ethnicity	Orange County, FL	Bexar County, TX
Black	**7**	**7**
Afro-Caribbean/West Indian	*2*	
18-24	*6*	*1*
25-35	*1*	*6*
Latino	**13**	**12**
Costa Rican	*1*	
Cuban	*1*	
Mexican	*3*	*12*
Puerto Rican	*7*	
Venezuelan	*1*	
Female	*3*	*5*
18-24	*8*	*1*
25-35	*3*	*9*
36+	*2*	*2*
White	**2**	**3**
18-24	*2*	
25-35		*3*
Mixed Race/Ethnicity		**4**
Black/Mexican		1
Black/White		3
Female		1
25-35		4

Respondents from the extensive age range between 18 and 59 provided this study with a comparison of gang behaviors in relation to claims about hybridity across five decades. Furthermore some of the respondents participated in gang activity over multiple decades. Table 3 lists the number of respondents who participated in gang activity during particular eras.

Table 3- Era of Gang Tenure

Era	# participating in gang activity
1960s	1
1970s	4
1980s	3
1990s	27
2000s	26

Note: At least three respondents participated in gang activity for 3 or more decades.

Social Network Survey

Due to my entrée into one particular group, the Sa Town Bloods, being more extensive, a social network survey was developed with the help of the first four respondents of the group that I encountered. This was a former network that existed from 1992-1998. That this was a former network is beneficial to the study because the information presents an overview of the respondent's entire tenure in the network and this overview should be relatively static. Furthermore it illustrates a network from an earlier time period than the current era in which hybrid gangs are being described. The four members listed all of the people that they believed to have been in the group. The list of members was then drawn up with questions about whether the person taking the survey knew the selected individuals, how close they were to these individuals, how often they hung out with these individuals, what was the actual affiliation of the person, and what was the person's status in the gang (See APPENDIX C: STB SOCIAL NETWORK SURVEY). Blank spaces were left in case respondents wished to add someone else to the list. The initial survey identified 27 people. Three were eventually added bringing the total to 30 people, 11 of whom were located, interviewed, and surveyed. Although these people were listed

as part of the group, their categorical affiliations varied to the extent that 10 different named gangs were represented in this network.

Data Analysis

Interview Component Coding

Analysis of the data began with open-coding through the system laid out by Strauss (1987). Specific smaller questions relevant to this study's research questions were asked of the data. The emerging information from this data was examined in more detail, and filed according to themes that emerged. Duplicate copies of transcripts and color codes were used to sort out thematic information. As coding became narrower, particular themes began to solidly emerge.

In reviewing transcripts of the in-depth interviews, five types of patterns were examined- Frequencies, Structures, Processes, Causes, and Consequences (Lofland and Lofland 1995). Frequencies refer to how often the particular aspect of interest occurs. Thematic coding for frequencies were gang affiliation, gang demographics, membership type, and levels of gang activity. Structural patterns are typologies of behaviors. Most of the frequency themes were assessed through manifest coding, or basic counts of appearances in the data. The exception to this was membership type in which latent content had to be pieced together. Unless the person identified themselves as a particular, which did occur though not often, membership type was determined by age of joining the gang, length of time in the gang, identification with gang, and activities that the person participated in (Vigil 1988; Stanley 1992).

Typologies were emergent patterns that became apparent in this research and consisted of social network ties and initiation methods. Processes are explanations of the order of elements that lead to structural components. The origin and extent of alleged hybrid gang behaviors was the only coded theme in this category. Causes refer to the reasoning behind events. Thematic coding for Causes included respondent's reasons for city to city migration, reasons for leaving the gang, and the reasons for white, middle class, and female gang participation. Lastly, Consequences are the outcomes of particular behaviors, and the only code for this category was gang networks and social capital.

Network Survey Component

The relational aspect of gang membership was examined using the ordinal variable of how often member (j) hung out with other selected members. This was recoded as (1) for indications of members hanging out together often or all of the time, and recoded as (0) for indications of hanging out with another member occasionally, rarely, or never. Combined with the data regarding the actual categorical affiliation of the people in the network, a visual representation of regular interaction patterns between members was created. This recoded sequence was used in the social networking software UCINET to create a networking diagram for the study. These diagrams clearly show regular interaction between members of different categorical gangs.

Reliability and Validity

The measures in this study provide strong validity, as the information comes directly from gang connected individuals and not from outside observers. The in-depth interviews allowed for detailed understanding of gang processes, clarification concerning any misunderstandings and the freedom to explore pertinent information that may have been missed by other methods. The methodological triangulation also served to strengthen the validity of the study by verification of networks through multiple measures. The network survey allowed the respondent to nominate the individuals that they regularly interacted with rather than relying on police data for the information as has been done in other network studies (Papachristos 2006; 2009). The self-nomination of the respondent as a current or former gang member was also reinforced through the adapted Eurogang survey questions.

As with most qualitative studies, there may be issues with reliability. The study was done through a snowball sampling technique which may result in heterogeneity in respondents. However, I do not believe this to be the case as the respondents were very diverse in age, race/ethnicity, and most important to this study, gang affiliation. The study was also conducted in two specific metropolitan areas. Every city has a different history and set of social circumstances, therefore this study may not be completely generalizable to other cities.

Methodological Issues and Reflexivity

Several issues of note arose during the process of this study, most of which occurred at the Orlando site. Unlike with the Bexar County respondents, gaining rapport with the Orange County participants proved much more difficult. Details that were seemingly minor such as the way I, the interviewer, was dressed proved to be a severe impediment towards gaining rapport in a few of the interviews. There were only two interviews in which the respondents refused to answer certain questions. It was learned in debriefing afterwards that the way I was dressed caused wariness and defensiveness. Coming directly to interviews from teaching classes in a college setting, I was clothed in a dress shirt and tie. I was informed later that my attire was off-putting, and caused immediate distrust in the respondents. After this, I always kept a t-shirt and jeans in my car to immediately change for an interview. Beyond this, general wariness of the interview process and fear that I may be a law enforcement agent hampered the study considerably and consumed large quantities of time.

Data collection for the Bexar County site took only three extended weekends, while collection for the Orange County site took a year and a half. It took many phone calls and a lot of patience to gain interviews in Orlando. Often, communication would last several months before the individual felt comfortable enough to participate in the study. Just as often, an interview would be scheduled and the person would change their mind and back out at the last minute, usually without informing me. Due to this situation there was a compromise in one interview where the respondent insisted that the gatekeeper, a former respondent, who introduced me to the possible participant, be present during the interview. In this situation, I explained that I could not

guarantee confidentiality on the part of the gatekeeper. The respondent indicated that there was more trust for the gatekeeper than for me and still insisted on the person staying. The presence of the gatekeeper at the interview may have had both positive and negative effects. On the negative side, the respondent may have not told the entire truth about certain situations due to social desirability bias. On the positive side, the gatekeeper's presence alleviated the fears of the respondent considerably. Furthermore, the gatekeeper indicated to me afterward that the respondent had left out some important elements of a particular story, which makes intuitive sense in retrospect considering social desirability bias.

The primary issue in the San Antonio site was the use of a field interviewer to include the last seven respondents. These interviews are sparse in comparison than the others, as the field worker did not pursue all of the leads that came up during the sessions. However, the field interviewer was a female and was thus able to gain access to more female participants, nearly doubling the females in the sample for this study. Although there were methodological anomalies at both sites, these differences caused positive results as well as negative.

Strengths and Limitations

The strengths in this study lay in its methodological triangulation and wealth of knowledge derived from the qualitative in-depth interviews. The study participants were from a non-institutionalized setting. The respondents were diverse in age, race/ethnicity, gender, and gang affiliation. This age diversity allowed for comparison of gang behaviors across generations.

The study explored gangs in two metro areas that have not been well researched. Furthermore, the study is comparative not only of the two research sites, but follows the Eurogang protocol allowing for comparative information with other Eurogang studies.

Due to a snowball sampling technique the study is not generalizable to other places. Furthermore, some methodological setbacks occurred with the use of a field worker and my fashion faux pas that impacted the quality of some interviews. Although one complete network was accessed, entrée to more large networks would have been ideal. As a word of mouth snowball sampling technique was used, it is quite likely that some potential respondents who heard about the study did not choose to participate, and these non-participants may have been qualitatively different than the people who chose to share information with me.

This study uses the Eurogang nominal definition of a gang and validates self-nomination of gang membership through Eurogang protocol. In-depth interviews took place in the Orlando metropolitan area and the greater San Antonio area, followed up by a social network survey with a particular group in San Antonio. The purpose of this research is to examine whether or not the hybrid gang and related behaviors are real or socially constructed and if valid, whether or not these behaviors occur more often in emergent gang cities. The following chapters describe the thematic elements that were discovered in this research to answer the aforementioned questions starting with general descriptive findings followed by a detailed look at gang member ego-networks. I then move to critical assess hybrid claims and briefly examine what the study contributes to information on gang diversity. Gang networks are then addressed followed by

detailed chapters on initiation and leaving the gang. I conclude with a summary of findings, a discussion of the import of this research and policy implications.

CHAPTER FIVE: GANG MEMBERS AND GANG CHARACTERISTICS

Migration

Although the work of Maxson (1998) and others have indicated that gang proliferation results more from local homegrown gangs than it does from gang migrants, who are typically looking to escape the gang environment (Laskey 1996), there are other researchers who insist that the gangs expand through migration with the explicit purpose of spreading the gang or controlling drug distribution. This process has been called the importation model (Decker and Van Winkle 1996), gang franchising (Knox, Houston, Tromanhauser, McCurrie and Laskey 1996), or gang colonization (Quinn, Tobolowsky, and Downs 1994). Information from the respondents in this study supports the work of Maxson (1998) and Laskey (1996). Although there were 22 gang migrants, their relocations were related to leaving the gang, or non-gang related at all as opposed to purposeful franchising of the gang. Migrants who did remain involved in the gang lifestyle were more likely to be absorbed into local gangs than attempt to establish their original gang in the new location. Table 4 lists the reasons for migration as indicated by the migrants in this study. Notably, migration was more prevalent to the Orlando area than to the San Antonio area.

Table 4- Reasons for Gang Migration

Reason for Migration	Orange County	Bexar County
Escape gang life	7	
Retire from gang	2	2
Family move	2	3
Educational training*	5	
Occupational move	2	
State mandated		1
Gang colonization		1

*One respondent in this category was considering gang colonization

Florida is often thought of as a state for vacation escapes and retirees. It seems that it is no different in relation to gangs, as gang members seem to seek out Florida, or at least Orlando, Florida as a place of refuge to escape gang life, reduce gang activity, or retire from the gang. Table 5 shows the places of origins for the gang migrants. The places of origin were varied, but the majority migrated from Chicago, California or New York.

Table 5- Origins of Gang Migration

Place of Origin	Migration to Orlando	Migration to San Antonio
California		
Compton	1	
Los Angeles		3
San Diego	1	
Torrance	1	
Illinois		
Chicago	5	2
New York		
Brooklyn	2	
Bronx	1	
Buffalo	1	
Long Island	1	
Other		
Albuquerque, New Mexico		1
Atlanta, Georgia	1	
Birmingham, Alabama	1	
Houston, Texas		1
Jacksonville, Florida	1	
Jamaica	1	

Not surprisingly most migration to the Orlando area occurred from areas on the East coast, while migration to San Antonio came primary from the West. Chicago funneled migrants to both areas, but more ended up in the Orlando site.

Membership Type

As with many other aspects of gangs, actual membership status is also an unclear realm of gang dynamics. There have been several typologies of member types and even former member types. The central members of a gang are often referred to as *core* members. These individuals engage in more violence and drug use than other members, they also get involved

earlier, joining between ages 10-14 years and leave the gang later, after age 22 (Stanley 1992). This group interacts the most frequently in the gang environment and each individual's self-concept or identity is completely focused on the gang. The initial core members of the groups are often called *O.G.'s, Original Gangsters*, or founders, and older members of Latino gangs are called *Veteranos* (Vigil 1988; Reiner 1992).

Peripheral members are regular components of a gang, however they do not engage in as much violence or drug use as core members. Peripherals usually join between ages 14-18 years and leave after age 20. Their identity with the gang is strong, but there may be other things besides the gang that the individual deems important (Vigil 1988; Stanley 1992).

Other member types are *temporary* members, who are not very committed to the gang and only remain involved for a short period of time, *situational* members who are those that are in the group, but only engage in specified activities (i.e. selling drugs, but not involved in violence), and *fringe/affiliate* members who are people that hang around with group but are not seen by the others as fully committed members of the gang. There were also *auxiliaries*, which are groups of people that support the gang in a myriad of ways and are identifiably connected with the group but not fully included into the main component of the gang (Vigil 1988).

Membership type in Table 6 was determined using direct statements from the respondents or the age of entrance, current gang inclusion status, admission of criminal activity, and identification with the gang during the person's gang tenure.

Table 6- Membership Type

Membership Type	Orange/Seminole County, FL	Bexar County, TX
O.G./Veterano	1	2
Core	5	9
Peripheral	13	8
Temporary/Situational	1	2
Fringe/Affiliate	0	2
Auxiliary	2	3

With close to half of the sample being migrants from other cities, some may interpret this as evidence of gang proliferation through migration. This argument however would exemplify the social construction of neutral or positive behaviors on the part of gang members as something more insidious. Only one gang member mentioned intent to establish a gang presence, and another the possibility of doing so. The remaining respondents migrated for very rational, mundane reasons. The fact that so many respondents came from so many different cities including the notorious gang hubs of Los Angeles and Chicago contributes to the understanding of gang behaviors across geographical space. The diversity in city of gang origin creates a new comparative dimension for the study. That the respondents were also diverse in the type of level of gang membership allows for a better picture of gang behaviors from more standpoints. The spectrums of social networks of those strongly connected to the gang to those weakly attached to the gang are included in this study. The unexpected diversity of the sample serves to supplement the study.

White and Middle-Class Gang Members

The assertion that hybrid gangs in late-onset cities have increased gang populations among whites and middle class cannot be completely assessed by the present research. Despite a sampling strategy in the Orlando area in which snowball sampling connections were made through college students that would predicate an increased likeliness to encounter white and middle-class respondents, this was ultimately not the case. Although most respondents indicated that there were white gang members, more indicated that the composition of whites in gangs was little to none than indicated that there was an increase in their presence. In the majority of cases, the white gang members were described as coming from the same economic backgrounds as members of other racial/ethnic groups.

> **Ghost:** *In San Antonio in particular a poor neighborhood wouldn't necessarily be a black neighborhood. You can have a poor neighborhood and have plenty of white people and black people and Hispanic people. And poor people in general are faced with the same problems, where you know dad is going to be out working two or three jobs trying to, trying to get it, and mom is going to be distracted by this and that you know. If anything, you got your mom taking care of you, but you don't have a real solid family structure and poor people gotta work more than rich people. I don't know why, but that is what it is. So as long as you don't have family all together, kids naturally are going to want to find family somewhere else. And in the poor neighborhoods, you got a lot more going on, there is a lot more pressure and there is going to be gang banging.*

However, some respondents did indicate gang involvement from the white middle class.

> **I:** *How often did you see white gang members?*
>
> **Caribe:** *When I went to Long Island there was a couple of sets that is in New York.*
>
> **I:** *Why do you think white's join gangs?*

Caribe: *I don't know. We have nothing in common. It might just be cool up there, like, part of something or try to act hard. I am not really sure what they were thinking. But that is probably it though, just join a type of crew, belong to something or do something.*

I: *You said you don't have anything in common. What was different about them?*

Caribe: *Flatbush, the block I grew up was called the "wastelands" because there was nothing on there except for abandoned houses, and my building was on the corner. I went to Long Island and their houses are like four of my apartments on the first floor only, you know what I mean. It was a real nice neighborhood, a real nice neighborhood. All of them had Corvettes, yeah, but they was as hard as I was according to them.*

I: *The white gang members that you saw, how would you describe their backgrounds?*

Hound: *There was a lot that just come in, you know, I used to question them all of the time. Like, why did you come down here and get into the stuff that we getting into? Cause we, I didn't do it just for fun, like a hobby. To me, this was a survival type thing. I was wondering…like you living good. You go home to your big old house but you come down here?*

I: *So there were some from different backgrounds? Some from the middle class?*

Hound: *Some were even upper class.*

I: *Why do you think they got involved, those from the middle or upper class?*

Hound: *I feel it was, some of them was rebellious. It fit the way they were feeling towards a lot of things going on in their life. Some of them, like I said, just wanted to fit in.*

Their perceived reasons for joining were also similar to that of other gang members. Some members did come from a middle-class background, but this was not very common. The perceived reason for middle-class participation from others was the influence of hip hop culture and general acceptance.

Jet: *Just because it was a black fad, they were doing it for the fad. A lot of them rich white Crips would have a lot of money were doing it just to be cool or whatever, for friends like that.*

Joker: *When I see rich, rich, preppy boys join a gang just because they know they have money and the gang members know they have money, so they're the first ones to put up the money to you know buy the drugs, or buy whatever they need and all that, so they get accepted, but to them they feel accepted, to everybody else, we're just using them.*

Prince: *I think white people join gangs cause they listen to a lot of rap and it kind of glorifies the thug life that they want. They want to be cool; they want to be a part of something. I think they listen to a little bit too much rap nowadays.*

Hyte: *Yeah, the more hip hop culture has been embraced by the world, everybody is a gangster now, it don't matter what race you are.*

Mixer: *Because of hip hop. There is more white people listening to rap music. They're liking the swag that black people have or Mexicans.*

The stated reasons of gang members of middle-class background did not attribute influence from hip hop culture. Instead they shared a distinct commonality of absent parental figures.

Vegas: *My dad had to travel. He wasn't around…ever.*

I: *How would you describe your family's economic situation growing up?*

Colt: *I was probably middle class I guess.*

I: *Did that have anything to do with your affiliation?*

Colt: *The economics that…no. I mean maybe somewhat, like my dad passed away during that whole time, so it may have had something to do with it, but not how much money they made.*

Mixer: *When I first started banging, my pops wasn't there a lot because he was in the military so he was in Korea. We lived an average life.*

The respondents in this study did not provide a significant amount of evidence indicating increased participation in gang life from whites and the middle class. From what was gathered however, it appears that other gang members assume rebelliousness, being cool, and the influence of hip hop culture is what drives white and middle-class gang participation.

Respondents who characterized their selves as having a middle-class background distinctly indicated the absence of a father figure. This stems back to older gang theories such as Miller's (1958) ideas concerning lower class delinquency. The key to this explanation was masculinity. In Miller's (1958) discussions it is pointed out that the male parent is either absent or if present does not fully participate in child-raising. As a result, male youth did not have real depictions of what it meant to be a man. Therefore, they looked for understanding of masculinity amongst their peers, who ironically, were suffering from the same cognitive dissonance. Ultimately, exaggerated forms of masculine ideas were practiced amongst these male youth groups, with the belief that these behaviors defined manhood. Although Miller (1958) was discussing delinquency among the lower social classes, there is no reason that these same ideas cannot be applied to the middle class currently.

Another theoretical framework created by Vigil (1988; 2006) argues that people who become gang members are marginalized on multiple sides through the breakdown or ineffectiveness of social control agents. Families are the primary agents of socialization and disruption of families through poverty, single-parenthood, early parenthood and culture clashes between immigrant parents and Americanized children create marginalization. The education system also marginalizes by tracking minorities and lower-class children in slower learner classes or interpreting their behavior as disruptive, as well as segregating them and corralling them in inferior schools. Finally, law enforcement attempts to control these marginalized youth who are not conforming, setting up an adverse, hostile relationship. Being marginalized by multiple social control agents leaves youth with street socialization and street subcultures as their

only option. Vigil (2002) finds qualitative support for this framework with Mexican-Americans, Blacks, Vietnamese, and Salvadoran gang members in Los Angeles. Freng and Esbensen (2007) found partial quantitative support as well along the lines of educational and street socialization variables, but ironically the theory was most predictive of whites becoming gang members.

As the labor market has shifted and more and more parents are required to be away from home for a longer time in the middle class as well as the working class, it is possible that males in the middle class may be searching for definitions of manhood as their parental figure is not present to provide them with that definition. Decades ago, Lowney (1984) studied a middle-class gang and identified absent parental figures due to divorce or both parents working outside the home in all of the members. Exacerbating the situation of absent role models, the readily available media are bombarding youth with skewed cultural perceptions of hypermasculinity in much of the music and entertainment. It is not a far-fetched idea that some middle-class youth may be buying into these definitions of masculinity.

Gender

Females made up a small portion of this sample (N = 9). However, more than two-thirds of respondents in both sites indicated that females were very much a part of the gang. While the small sample of females makes any major pattern difficult to assess, it is still important to examine the experiences of the participants. Some research has purported that the gang environment is an attempt to escape constraining futures (Campbell 1990). Although female gang membership may have future detrimental effects (Moore and Hagedorn 1996; Portillos

1999; Jody Miller 2002), in the gang member's worldview, membership may be liberating (Chesney-Lind 1993; Nurge 2003).

The liberation hypothesis did not resonate with female participants in this study. None of the female respondents indicated a fear of what their future held, however, they did see gang life as an escape from negative experiences at home. A more recent examination by Miller (2001) found three overlapping pathways women followed into gangs, neighborhood/friendship exposure, gang-involved family members, and problems with the family. Miller's (2001) discoveries resonated with the information presented by respondents in this study with one addition. Women in this study cited four primary reasons that they joined gangs and believed these to be the primary reasons for the participation of other females in gangs as well: having a romantic relationship with a gang member (3), being a part of a gang related family (2) or having really close gang friends (2), and escape from negative home environments (2).

> **Curly:** *A lot of guys join to be hard, like just to get that respect…that title. But girls do it just to do it. Like cause they don't get along with their mother, or their family, they just, like I told you, that's like a family. Like other than your own family, that's your back up.*
>
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>
> **I:** *Why did you join your gang?*
>
> **Sky:** *Just everybody that I went to school with and that I hung out with that is what they were doing at the time and I, I decided to go and do the same thing too. My mom was always out in the streets so…but my grandma raised me…but I still wanted to be out there like she was.*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *Why do you think females join gangs?*
>
> **Dama:** *Popularity, boyfriends, lack of uh…not having a good home background, a way to escape.*
>
> **I:** *How would you describe the backgrounds of female gang members?*

> **Dama:** *Not the good parental* (super) *vision, not good parental* (super) *vision from their parents. Parents not caring about them. They are finding it from their boyfriends or guy friends or other female friends that would them into a group and draw them in.*

If entrance to the gang was due to a romantic relationship or having a male family member in the gang, then once that person was removed either through death, incarceration, or dissolution of the relationship, the female respondent left the gang. Personal social networks and the support they provided took primary import in the membership of females in gangs.

Although there was not an abundance of data obtained concerning white, middle-class, and female gang membership, some important information was still obtained. From the perspective of others, cultural dissemination or more specifically the mainstreaming of gangster rap and hip hop culture was directly responsible for white and middle-class membership. From the perspective of middle-class gang members the key reason cited for gang participation was the absence of a father figure. This finding gives slight support to certain aspects of Miller's (1958) and Vigil's (1988; 2006) theories even though they were focused on different social classes. The modest data on female gang members support Miller's (2001) assessment of female pathways into the gang with the additional important element of romantic relationships.

Initiation

A large part of the romanticized mythology of gangs is the concept of "Blood in, Blood out." This is the idea that the only way to join a gang is to spill blood and the only way to leave a gang is to die. There is very little empirical research on either subject but considerably less concerning initiation. Two studies explore the initiation ritual in detail with specific gangs (Padilla 1992;

Vigil 1996), and others refer to initiation as a taken for granted assumption, with statements proclaiming that all documented gangs have initiation ceremonies (Curry and Decker 2003). These ideas are very presumptive and untenable. Considering the variation in gangs, statements such as "all gangs" have initiation ceremonies seems difficult to support. Even if the statement was somehow true, what is explicitly missed here is that there is no statement purporting that all gang members have to go through an initiation ceremony. Indeed, in support of previous research (Spergel 1995; Fleisher 2002), the respondents in this study overwhelmingly indicated that although initiations were a regular aspect of the gang, not every member had to go through an initiation.

Entrance into the gang encompassed three categories: Fighting initiations, criminal initiations, and non-violent entry. Each of these categories consisted of several subcategories.

Fighting Initiations

Fighting initiations consisted of being *jumped in/rolled in, beat backs, walking the line, 1 on 1s, free for alls, and checking*. The violent initiations were the typical rituals that the public has become aware of. The process of being *jumped in/rolled in*, which was when several members simultaneously assault the initiate for an allotted period of time, was by far the most common type. The person under assault had to stand his or her ground and fight back.

> **Spider:** *I was surrounded by about 5 guys who all started to kick my ass. I got to fight back, some of them were pretty big, and pretty heavy fists too I remember. Luckily for me it happened at school so the teachers came before they knocked my ass out, so that happened you know it was just like that.*

> **Southpaw:** *It was about 8 guys, they all just ganged up on me and started pounding down and if I made it through I was alright, if I died, I died.*
>
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>
> **Mixer:** *Yeah, I got beat up…well, I wouldn't say beat up. I got jumped by five people. They show respect, I stood my ground. I wasn't trying to lay down, trying to take hits or shit like that. I stood up and I was swinging on them. I did get knocked down, but as soon as I got knocked down, I tried my best to get back up while I was getting hit. I started swinging…yeah, I got jumped in.*

One variation of this was the *beat-back*, which Padilla (1992) referred to as the "V-In," a similar scenario to being jumped in except that the initiate was not allowed to fight back.

> **I:** *Did you go through an initiation?*
>
> **Apostle:** *Yeah, a beat-back. I got beat in by three people. Can't pay back.*
>
> **I:** *Can't hit back?*
>
> **Apostle:** *Can't hit back, just gotta take it.*

In *walking the line,* members of the gang would line up on both sides of the initiate. The inductee would have to travel through the corridor of gang members while they punched and kicked. The goal was to make it to the end of the line.

> **Boxer:** *I was handcuffed and they put me in a line. They put me, they put me like two rows of eight. Eight people had lined up on both sides of me and I had to make it all the way to the end without falling to my knees.*

In *1-on-1* initiations, the inductee only had to fight against one other member of the gang. These rituals typically lasted longer than a jump in/roll in or the opposing fighter selected for the induction was one of the largest or toughest members in the gang.

> **Rocket:** *Yeah, so we fought for five minutes and then after that, I had to, he was one of the biggest kids in the set, so I had to fight him and then after being beat down from him, was initiated and you know after that they accepted me.*
>
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Violet: *It was just me and one other girl. Her and her brother are the ones that brought the Vicelords here to San Antonio and they asked me if I wanted to be a part of it, because of course my boyfriend was and I said yes! So she just pretty much knocked me out (laughs) and that was it, we hugged and that was it.*

Free-for-alls occurred when several new members were being inducted simultaneously. Instead of the current members of the gang jumping the new members, the initiates would all have to fight each other at the same time.

Dama: *Yeah, it was me and about five other of my homegirls there and with the set that were the best friends of mine now. We all did get a roll in together; we just kicked each other's ass. Seemed like a good 10 minutes, but probably lasted maybe two or three.*

Lastly, *checking,* was a variation of the 1-on-1 fight. All other forms of fighting initiations occur as a one-time ceremony. *Checking* on the other hand can occur over a long period of time. In this situation, all current gang members can fight the inductee, one-on-one at their leisure. The initiate has to prove that he or she is ready at any time to get down for the gang, so members will unexpectedly "check" the newcomer, until the person's willingness and heart is proven to all members of the gang.

I: *Did you go through an initiation?*

Esoteric: *Yeah…hell yeah.*

I: *Can you tell me about it?*

Esoteric: *About 6, 7, 8, 10 times. They my cousins you know what I mean so every time I claim my set they dust me off* (fight me)*, like show us what you talking about, and why not. So I never got a once and for all final one.*

Aztec: *I got whipped a lot of times…I got whipped like 3 or 4* (times), *but that is just the way it is, you know, you just fight. It's not only initiation, it's just there. You know, somebody is coming from your gang and says "you know what, let's go throw blows"…Ok, you, know the guy's about 6 foot something tall but you still have to go to work.*

Criminal Initiations

These types of initiations are self-explanatory. In these situations, the inductee had to commit a specified crime as instructed by other members of the gang which included but were not limited to stabbings, robbery, and drive-by shootings. Sometimes the initiate would have to commit a series of crimes referred to as "missions" to be accepted into the gang.

> **Curly:** *I had to do five missions. Each mission was something different. I had to complete each one. Somebody had to be there with me when I was completing them and make sure that I passed them and if I didn't I would do it over or they would give me another mission to do.*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *Did you go through an initiation?*
>
> **Bear:** *Yeah, I had to put in work, like rob.*

Non-Violent Entry

The respondents in this study clearly indicated that not every gang member had to go through a violent or criminal initiation. Subcategories for non-violent entry included being *blessed-in/born-in/crowned-in, walked in,* or an *original.* Different names were used to describe the same phenomenon so being *blessed-in/born-in/crowned in* referred to the same situations with very slight variation. If a well-respected or high ranking individual in the gang vouched for a person then said person was given a pass and did not have to go through an initiation. This process of *blessing-in* was usually only done for relatives of the respected or high ranking individual, for girlfriends and wives of gang members, or for individuals transferring to other gangs in the same affiliation. Being *crowned-in* was a synonymous term for the event used by the Latin Kings.

Furthermore, it was a common belief that any child born to a gang member was automatically a part of the gang and did not have to go through an initiation.

I: *Did you go through an initiation?*

Rok: *No, not me, because of the simple fact of who I knew. I was a part of initiation ceremonies; I was definitely a part of that. I actually participated in them, but me personally having to go through one, I didn't have to.*

I: *Do you consider that being blessed in?*

Rok: *Exactly*

Chill: *That is what they're called, blessed in. They do that with family members. Just like your cousins or someone like that. Like, my cousin, he was blessed in.*

I: *Did you go through an initiation?*

Joker: *When I was up there* (Chicago)*, no, cause the original person who made it is family, so I was really just blessed in. They, you know, as long as they kept telling me, just kept telling me "why don't you come with him,""why don't you come with us," and then I said "alright, I'm down," it's all I needed. Just took me under the wing after that.*

Smokey: *My Y.G.* (Young Gangster/Second in command) *that's right now used to be my Y.G. from my old set ESP, and he said, "yo, let's go to this set, since you already showed me that you was a true soldier and a true boony and all that, I'm just gonna bless you in." Bless me in means that I don't have to get my beat down again.*

I: *Did everybody go through a similar process?*

Patos: *Except for the females, everybody but a female or you know if you're family of somebody in there, a lot of times you don't really have to get your ass whipped if that person's high up, then you'll get in just like that.*

Babyface: *The reason I got in at a young age was because I didn't have to fight anybody, or I didn't have to cut anybody because that is basically it. You either get jumped in for 31 seconds by three people, if not you have to cut some random person on the face, if not do anything else. But I was blessed in by my brother because my brother was an OG. So him being that, I didn't have to do nothing, I was just blessed in.*

I: *Did you go through an initiation?*

Silk: *Since I was crowned in, no.*

I: *So not everybody goes through an initiation?*

Silk: *No*

I: *So crowned in is like…*

Silk: *Like being blessed in. I know all the knowledge like that…I know everything. I was always with them. I'm like the little sister so that's how they crowned me in. But most people either fight to get in, kill to get in, they're either in or they're not, or if your father or your mom if their like born as King… then no matter what, that makes you Queen or King, because of your parents.*

Very similar to being blessed in is getting to *walk-in.* Two types of people received *Walk-ins.* These occurred with individuals who had incredible street reputations that required no subsequent testing.

I: *Does everybody go through an initiation?*

Bear: *No, not everybody. It kinda depends on, are you somebody who is really just out there going crazy? Beating people up, robbing, stealing, doing crazy stuff and everybody know it. And if he came in, he wouldn't have to go through that initiation because everybody knew he was already doing it.*

The other type of *walk-in* gets at the ambiguity in who is considered a gang member. When considering gang associates the lines of inclusion are often blurred.

Hound: *…they was affiliated, they even put in work at times, 'cause if they was with us and we got down, they got down with us.*

I: *You mentioned something about people who kind of just hung around. How did you feel about those people who are temporary, or not fully affiliated?*

Apostle: *Me, personally, I felt just as close to them as I did the other ones. Cause even though they weren't a beat in member, they were still willing to do whatever we had to do you know what I mean.*

Ultimately, some long-time gang associates who had grew up with, fought alongside, or participated in activities with the gang members were given *walk-ins*. In this type of entry a declaration is made that this person is a part of the gang, the declaration goes unchallenged and the individual is accepted as part of the group.

> **Blitz:** *I didn't get rolled in, but I kind of like, I was there for a lot fights that did happen, so it was like, I guess I am in you know what I mean. Cause when I asked to be in it, then I was down, and we did a lot of bullshit and I was down right then.*
>
> ---
>
> **Jenga:** *There's some people who didn't get jumped in because they've done things for the gang before that we didn't really talk about but they did things to where the Diablos* (older clique) *said they didn't need to get jumped in. You know, so that is how it went.*
>
> ---
>
> **Hoops:** *I started little, born boxing. When I was coming up, everybody that was in the set, we all went to school together, we all come together, your house, my house, mommy, daddy, brother, sisters, you know almost like the mafia movies you see in New York or whatever, you it is just everybody knows each other. There is no question about, I ain't even gotta initiate you, I already know what's up, I fought you a million times in elementary school.*

Finally, initiation rituals were not required for many of the *original* members or creators of a gang.

> **Ghost:** *…when the group founders you know, you comin' up with some of them, it is not like…you are not going to initiate something, you don't have to initiate yourself into your own idea.*
>
> ---
>
> **Stripe:** *I am what you call a founder for one of my groups, the Latin Dragons. An OG is the better term they use. I don't use it. I'm just the founder, the originator, of the founders of my organization. I'm one of the guys who set up the by-laws and everything, the administration, how the government was working. So we were never initiated, the original fifteen guys. After the fifteen, first, maybe first, second generation guys…after the second generation we started putting an initiation on them, giving them a violation to come in and stuff like that, but it's not necessarily always that, from what I hear. Some people get blessed in. Blessed in is the word they use. Where you know, somebody high in authority will say, there's this guy, and he doesn't have to go through any of the things*

that everybody else has been through. My word is good enough to make sure that this guy is one of us. And they call that a blessing.

While it is quite clear that a variety of initiation rituals of the violent and criminal genre seem to be mainstays of gang processes, it has also become evident through this research that non-violent/non-criminal entry into a gang is very common as well. This is a phenomenon that has been ignored or has not been seriously addressed in prior research. Although the respondents were well aware of the different methods of joining a gang, there seemed to be a pattern as to the popularity of methods by region. In this study fighting initiations were more popular with the local San Antonio area gang members and gang migrants from California. Criminal initiations were more popular with the local Orlando area gang members and gang migrants from New York. Interestingly, while described by members from all places, non-violent entrance into the gang was primarily among gang migrants from Chicago and New York. The following table is a break down of the method of gang entry for the respondents in this study.

Table 7- Methods of Gang Entry

Method	Orange County	Bexar County
Fighting Initiations		
Jumped in/Rolled in	5	14
Beat-back	3	1
1-on-1	1	2
Free-for-all		2
Checking		2
Walk the line		1
Criminal Initiations		
Series of criminal missions	3	
Robbing	1	
Stabbing	1	
Unspecified	1	1
Non-Violent Entry		
Blessed in/Crowned in	6	
Walk in	1	2
Original/Founder	3	2
Associates NA		2

Note: Some respondents belonged to more than one gang and may have had more than one initiation.

Leaving the Gang

There seems to be some confusion about gang members leaving the gang, which makes sense due to the conflicting messages that are broadcast. Myths such as a blood in-blood out or the requirement of killing a family member to leave a gang still abound in the media and police folklore (Curry and Decker 2003). Even academics contribute to the confusion. For instance, in Delaney's (2006) textbook on gangs, there is a section about research indicating that people do leave gangs. Later on in the book however, the author makes unsubstantiated claims such as "Crip gang members are generally members for life" (Delaney 2006: 181), using only the

anecdotal evidence of Snoop Dog and Stanley Tookie Williams to support the claim. Despite the popularity of myths and sensationalized claims, the academic research that exists on leaving the gang, indicates that not only is it possible to leave, the process of doing so is fairly uneventful (Decker and Lauritsen 1996). Only three former gang members in this study indicated that they suffered violence when leaving the gang.

There were several respondents in Central Florida who did not consider themselves a part of the gang but at the same time expressed a belief that it was impossible to leave the gang. This contradiction led to very ambiguous views of gang membership and along with obstacles to transitioning into a conventional lifestyle, this ideology may have contributed to the ambivalence of membership status. One of the most common methods of leaving the gang or escaping the gang, for those who believed that they could not leave, was migration or flight to another city or state. **Silk** portrays this contradiction.

I don't consider myself in, but yea I'm still in. Cause once you're in you can't get out.

Silk further expresses her method of escape and subsequent ambivalence

> **I:** *So you said at the very beginning that you don't consider yourself in anymore, in what way do you not consider yourself in?*
>
> **Silk:** *Well first, I moved out of New York cause there was too much drama, too many things happened. After my best friend got shot in the head, my mom, we all came over here and like I got away from everything and I just, I guess when people ask me, sometimes I admit to it, and sometimes I don't because its nobody's business, but I just don't consider myself in it no more cause I already left the pack and I don't want to return to it.*

Escaping the Gang

Flight to a different geographical area was a very common theme of escaping the gang environment.

> **I:** *So you said you were no longer involved. How did you go about leaving that behind?*
>
> **Patos:** *Nobody knows where I'm at, in that sense, none of them know where I'm at.*
>
> ---
>
> **Sinister:** *I got out of prison and then I came over here, because it is the only way that I could get out. Not get out of the gang, just get away.*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *So you said you left the group and you left it by coming down here?*
>
> **Caribe:** *Yup, there was really no other option.*
>
> **I**: *So how did that go over with everybody?*
>
> **Caribe:** *I didn't tell I was moving, I didn't tell nobody. As soon as I graduated, I was up there for a week, I was packing my stuff on the low. I didn't even tell anybody I was packing (laughs).*
>
> ---
>
> **Stripe:** *Nine times out of ten you are either dying or leaving the state or the city of where your group is at.*

While on the surface it may seem that flight indicates fear and avoidance of gang retaliation for leaving the group, the actual reason may be altogether different. In considering the accounts of both former and current gang members, even the ones who believed that they could not leave, there did not seem to be much fear of retribution.

> **I:** *Do you think they will do anything to you?*
>
> **Joker:** *No, nothing whatsoever. Once you got enough reputation out there, you just don't…everybody just wants to stay away.*
>
> ---

Patos: *If they see me, they will, but I mean that's my fault, that's my bed. I have to lay in it, but I mean all I can do is pray.*

Spider: *I actually, I officially dropped my rag, which is what they called it, in prison, and I told the Bloods in prison that I was done, I was through. So they could do whatever they needed to, and they didn't do anything. They just turned their back on me and said don't ask them for any help or anything like that and they left me alone and that was it.*

Hammer: *I mean I took off my shirt, I was ready to get beat down. And it would've been worth it to me to be out of here. And I told them no matter what, when I leave tonight, that I'm done and it's over with and I don't want to hear anything that I didn't get jumped out because I was letting them know right then, "let's do this right now, I don't care how; it has to happen tonight, I was leaving- I'm out."*

If one is to assume that being a gangster precludes a dangerous lifestyle in which victimization and even death are more likely outcomes than they would be for those in the general population, and the gangster's persona is a portrayal of fearlessness, then why would the gang member fear victimization regardless of who the perpetrator is. It could be argued that persons in the gang may be in a better position to harm the member who wants to leave, but even if that were the case, as evidenced by the respondents, there seemed to be little fear of retribution. If being in danger is not the reason for flight from the immediate area, then why would former gang members feel it necessary to flee the proximity of the gang? It may be that escaping the geographical location of the gang is necessary so that the person will not be drawn back into the gang life as suggested by **Caribe** and **Slick**.

Caribe: *I know these cats are probably going to be like 25 like "yeah, I used to be a Crip." But you really wasn't. If you can say that and you still live in the same neighborhood and you can say you used to be a Crip, than you were never a Crip because there is no way you get out from under that.*

> **Slick:** *I think that is the best way for someone to get out is to have a …it doesn't necessarily have to be religion, but to have a support structure. If not, they are not getting out. It is just too hard.*
>
> **I:** *Too hard because people won't let them, or because they get dragged back into it?*
>
> **Slick:** *You get dragged back into it. I mean, it becomes your whole identity, other people know who you are. If you don't have a proper support system, you get dragged back into it. It is really hard. I'm not saying it can't be done, but…most people are going to need a support system.*

Staying in the same geographic location means that the person will be in close proximity to other gang members. He or she may still have strong emotions for his friends and a long history of connections to these gang members. It may be that those who wish to leave the gang intuitively know that they have to put physical space between themselves and the other members to break this psychological connection. Failure to make the geographical and subsequent psychological break especially without an alternate support system as **Slick** stated will likely result in ambivalent behavior and cyclical patterns of getting dragged back into the gang milieu. Beyond gangs there are countless examples of people being drawn back into situations that may not be healthy for them like a return to drug use or relationships characterized by domestic violence. Familiarity provides a comfort zone to flee to from stressors. If these comfort zones are easily accessible, then this could lead to cyclical backsliding. This situation along with the "for life" ideology purported by gang members may explain a lot of the ambivalence seen in former gang members.

> **Vegas:** *I mean, it's not like, you don't put down your flag, like you never put down your flag, but you are not running the streets constantly, you are like actually living your life, you feel me. But like if it still came down to it, you would still be, you know, down to ride.*

Jenga: *I mean you make a commitment, it's like getting married, and getting a divorce or something, you know it's kind of like…I mean I'd get married and get a divorce, but its different than that, you know, it's not like you have to be there every single day for the gang. You know, so when we do expect something from you it's not too much to just go and show, so other people who leave, like really try to leave, it's a major sign of disrespect, you're disrespecting everybody you got jumped in with, you're disrespecting everybody from all generations. You're just saying, I don't respect you guys, I'm just gonna leave you guys.*

Bear: *Yeah, people left for the most part. If they left, they may not have associated themselves as much as they used to, but if it really came down to it, they would still come and fight or whatever…It's almost like we're brothers. We did all of this together, you just can't leave me out here, especially if I'm by myself somewhere and I get into a fight. You might have left but I'm by myself and you know me and I know you.*

Progeny: *When something happens on the streets and something happens to one of them, that is like you got feelings for, this your brother that you loved all of your life, you know and they get hurt, when you hear about it you gonna feel it…nothing is going to change that.*

Pep: *They wanted me to still mess around and do things and I just didn't man, I didn't want to. They kept coming and bugging me but they weren't threatening me with any kinda ass whooping or killing me or nothing. Not the friends I have. They still wanted me to go out, but it wasn't like that. I wanted to change and I eventually got away from it.*

Mixer: *Man, I had no problem leaving it. The only problem I had leaving it, it wasn't the fact of being in a gang, it was the friends I was leaving behind.*

Blitz: *I don't consider myself a part of an active group, but those are always going to be my buddies, and I think a lot of things through now, but I still have their back.*

The most common method of leaving was a passive strategy in which members simply walked away, or stopped coming around and just faded out of the group. In some cases the person announced to other members that they were leaving; in other cases they did not. Only three of the respondents indicated a violent dispensation as a result of their decision. Two stated that they

were beat up, and that was it. **Bones** was the only respondent who stated that his separation was more violent.

> *But I told people, I was like "yo, man, I am trying to settle on my education, trying to focus, this that, da-da-da; I just can't do this anymore." And I was moving, so they was like "nah, man, you can't get out like that." And I was like "yo, I need this….I been here for you for this long da-da-da-da." So they was like either you get shot or you get stabbed. I chose to get stabbed. I'm still here so…*

Gangs in this study reflected social relationships in conventional society. There are many situations of divorce, and most of them end without violence, however there are occasional occurrences that end tragically. In the same way, there may be some gangs that will not let members withdraw without violent consequences but there are many occasions that are non-violent separations.

Reasons

Ex-gang members gave many reasons for leaving the gang and often credited multiple causes rather than any single one. Like Decker and Lauritsen (1996) leaving the gang due to deaths of close family or friends was a prominent reason for exiting gang networks, a general fear of danger, maturing out or simply wanting a better life, social dissolutions, religious conversion and incarceration.

> **I:** *When did you decide that you wanted to do that* (leave)*?*
>
> **Caribe:** *My cousin died, one of the ones that I was close to. He died and everything was screwed up and I started seeing everything and everybody was acting all reckless.*
>
> **I:** *Was this the one that was part of your group?*
>
> **Caribe:** *Yeah, the one I was close to, the one that was in the same group with me.*

I: *Your friend being killed was the motive that made you want to leave?*

Silk: *Yeah, that was the major thing.*

For females, the primary reason for exiting was having a child. A slightly more commonly cited reason for gang desistance was maturing out, which meant anything from getting married, getting a job, getting an education, or simply growing up.

Joker: *It's a risk you have to take, to tell everybody "look, I'm a be a grown man now, look I'm done with this, I really gotta start doing something for myself."*

Rok: *So I got to the point when I got to my grandmother's house, I was like "this just doesn't make any sense. You got grown people out here fighting kids because of what you wear." So I sat down and talked to my stepfather, and talked to my uncles and everything, and I just left it alone. I even talked to my set, I told different members of my set "I'm done with it." And they had so much respect for me because I was a lieutenant and everything, and they said "well, if you're looking to do something else for the Nation on the positive side, then we gotta let you go." So they looked at it as if, I was going to leave this and do something good for the community. I guess the difference is if you're looking to join, leave, and not do anything, or leave and go to another gang, then it's a problem.*

A few respondents indicated religious conversion or incarceration as the primary reasons they chose to leave the gang.

Rocket: *I went to church one day and the preacher gave a really good…a really good testimony or whatever and then I went to this gang rally and I heard you know what a lot of people went through and I was like you know what, I wanna have a future.*

Slick: *I ended up walking into a church and having a born again experience and that, you know, that really gave me direction at that time and I went back and I told them I*

went to church and gave my life to God. And he said, "I'm going to bless you out, but if I ever catch you gang-banging, I personally will kill you." I never gang banged again.

Jet: *I just left it, I moved along and lived my life and put in jail a lot of times and I just got tired of it, so I figured I just gotta build a life and I moved on.*

Reasons offered for leaving the gang were varied, and there were no particular reasons that stood out more than the others. The most common reasons were gang dissolution/deterioration and maturing out. Those who cited gang dissolution/deterioration explained that the gang simply fell apart, people stopped coming around, or the members became drug users. In the case of maturing out, members wanted to move on with their lives by getting a legitimate job or getting married. The remaining reasons including death or danger to a family or close friend, having children, being incarcerated, and religious conversion are self-explanatory.

Table 8- Reasons for and Methods of Leaving the Gang

Reasons for leaving the gang	**Methods of leaving the gang**
Gang dissolution/deterioration (6)	Passive/Walk away/Fade away (12)
Maturing out (6)	Flight to another city/state (5)
Danger to or Death of friend/family member (5)	Joined the military (3)
Having children (5)	Jumped out (2)
Incarceration (4)	Stabbed (1)
Religious conversion (2)	

Regardless of the reasoning for leaving there were usually no negative physical repercussions. In fact, occasionally the decision to leave inspired others to do so as well. Peer influence, especially from other gang members is often viewed as negative. However, in the case of leaving the gang,

it may be positive. The decision of one member to leave the gang could have a bandwagon effect on other members.

> **Joker:** *Sometimes that'll even happen, where one person wants to leave and be grown and the rest will follow too.*
>
> ---
>
> **Hammer:** *I think there was a lot of us feeling the same way I did, but just nobody said nothing. I know this from when I got out, because a few other people were kind like "Yeah, I'm done too." I don't want to feel like I started anything, but I kinda think I did by speaking up that time.*

Matza (1990) previously discussed this phenomenon in subcultures of delinquency, in which members suffer from status anxiety and therefore refrain from voicing qualms or discontent concerning criminal/deviant behavior. However, once people do begin to openly state that they did not want to be a part of these activities, others begin to realize that they were suffering from a shared misperception that the members were committed to a life of delinquency, when really they had misgivings all along. This process occurs more frequently and becomes easier as more members mature out of the group.

Levels of Gang Activity

Some researchers have taken a very important step in asking what happens to gang members once they leave the gang. Moore (1991) developed a typology of Mexican-American former gang members consisting of *Tecatos* who had become heroin users, *Cholos* who struggled to attain conventionality but kept gang associations and used drugs besides heroin, and *Squares* who successfully assimilated into a legitimate lifestyle. Similar to Moore's breakdown of ex-

gang members, Hagedorn (1994) came up with a typology of male adult gang members. *Legits* were individuals who left the gang and went on to live conventional lifestyles. *Homeboys* referred to people who rode the literal fence between deviance and conformity. They may have held conventional jobs, but due to low educational attainment and a lack of job skills, these were usually low paying jobs. The lack of revenue from these low-wage occupations resulted in continued dabbling in the drug economy. These individuals felt loyalty to and kept in contact with the members of their old gang, which provided the network needed to gain access to drugs. Interestingly enough, homeboys generally disliked having to sell drugs and continued it only out of necessity. Hagedorn found that the majority of adult gang members in his study fell into this category. Hagedorn's other types were people who became addicted to cocaine, referred to as *dope fiends,* and people who chose the drug economy as a career path called *new jacks.*

While Moore's and Hagedorn's typologies go a long way toward understanding life after gang membership, the current study found more complications in adult gang member status situations that are not addressed by Hagedorn or Moore. The respondents in this study fell into five categories.

Active Gang members- were those who claimed current membership and were regularly engaged in gang activity.

Inactive/Retired members- were those who claimed membership but were not engaging in any gang activity. Retired members believed that they had been in the gang long enough that gang activity was no longer required of them therefore they did not engage in any activity. Despite

periods of inactivity, these individuals indicated that if the gang required action from them, they would be more than willing to do whatever was necessary on the gang's behalf.

> **I:** *Did anybody ever take issue with that, with you leaving?*
>
> **Sinister:** *As far as, here is how it rolls, I left, but I am still in my gang. I can come down here and I could start a clique real quick and I am still doing it, I am just expanding, but I didn't come down here to do that.*
>
> ---
>
> **Stripe:** *…because I'm an Unknown inactive member right now. In other words if there comes a time that something should need to be done down here, they could call me up, "we're activating your membership to taking care of this, this guy, this and this or whatever. We need your help down here, do something, we're activating you to set up a business down there, under your name, dah-dah-dah. However they want to do.*

Temporary Hiatus- these respondents considered themselves members of the gang, but temporarily inactive due to being far away from the gang. Members in this category indicated that they would resume gang activity when they returned to their home turf, or if they were ordered to start another gang set in their current location.

> **I:** *Are you still a part of the group?*
>
> **Machete:** *When I go back home yes, but I'm living up here now, but when I go back home*
>
> ---
>
> **Jenga:** *I mean when I go back to California, I'm gonna be with my friends again, so I mean it's not, I mean you'll never stop being a part of it.*

Former members- indicated they had left or denounced the gang, and no longer had any part or association with the gang.

Ambivalent Individuals (see above)- were those who indicated that they were no longer in the gang, however, they kept up regular associations with gang members and like Moore's "Cholos" and Hagedorn's "Homeboys," they straddled the fence between conventionality and deviance.

Most of these individuals had legitimate albeit low-paying jobs or were enrolled in institutions of higher education, but at the same time their lives were entangled with the drug trade, either through selling or using, and many of their associations were with gang affiliated persons. The current status of respondents is indicated in Table 9.

Table 9- Level of Gang Activity

Gang Activity	Orange/Seminole County, FL	Bexar County, TX
Active	5	4
Inactive/Retired	1	3
Temporary Hiatus	2	0
Former	8	12
Ambivalent	6	7

The popular method of reducing gang member behaviors to malicious intent disguises the real social-psychological importance of behaviors and beliefs. The Blood-in/Blood-out myth has previously been debunked by research showing the massive attrition that gangs actually suffer from. Yet these myths are still strongly held not only in popular culture but by reinforcement through gang member rhetoric. This rhetoric has not sufficiently been explored prior to this research.

When gang members say that they cannot leave the gang, the statement is not an indication of fear of violent retaliation by other gang members but a statement of the person's relationship to other people. They may have grown up their entire lives with the same people who not only protected them on the school yard from bullies, but fed them when they were starving or gave them money for bills and perhaps even saved their life. Gang member

relationships can be similar to what other people call family, and actually leaving one's family is much easier said than done. Without creating significant geographical distance between the former member and the other members, there is always a chance of negative events drawing the former member back in or ambivalent behavior in which the person returns to the comfort of known street life when other stresses occur. Ultimately, the gang member's difficulty of letting go of relational attachments only illustrates their humanity and understanding of emotion.

CHAPTER SIX: GANG SOCIAL NETWORKS

Affiliations

There have been virtually no academic examinations of the types of gang affiliations that exist. Most of the information that can be found in gang textbooks either has no citations or comes from law enforcement and independent websites that may have erroneous, outdated, or overly simplistic information. From what can be gleaned there are six primary gang affiliations that are found throughout the United States. Although some agencies still mistakenly continue to believe that these are six gigantic national gangs, they are more of loose confederations of small groups with little to no connection to each other. Deriving from California, are the Bloods and the Crips. Crip groups are not an alliance, and are often as likely to fight other Crips as they are to have conflict with anyone else (Delaney 2006: 184). There are two primary factions of Bloods- The West coast version, deriving from California, which is a loose alliance between different gangs and the New York version, which are called the United Blood Nation (UBN) or East Coast Bloods (Kinnear 2009:185; 188). The UBN has a stricter hierarchy, more centralized authority, and are thus more concerned with the legitimacy of people claiming to be Blood. Whether these two factions get along is a matter of contention. They are often portrayed by law enforcement as a united front, however, at least in my data, respondents indicated differently.

> **Smokey**: …*Cause the West Coast Bloods don't really like the East Coast Bloods that much. Those are the Bloods that we don't get along with. 'Cuz they think, West Side, West Side this, West Side that, man, fuck that, know what I'm saying? I'm East Side Blood. I go over there to Cali right now, I say, you know, I'm East Side Blood, they're*

like, "Whoa, Nigga! Boom! That's what I'd get. I'd be five feet under the ground, or six feet, whatever.

The Blood sets represented by the Bexar County respondents in this study either developed locally or traced their roots to the west coast version of Bloods. The sets represented by the Orange County respondents were either locally developed or traced their roots to the east coast UBN.

Deriving from Chicago are the Folk and People nation alliances. These two affiliations also used to be loose federations of gangs represented by a six-pointed star (Folk) and a five pointed star (People) (Kinnear 2009: 185). For both groups there are two major factions. Another version of the Black Gangster Disciples (Folk) developed out of Birmingham, Alabama and spread throughout the South (Leet, Rush and Smith 2000). Latin Kings (People) also separately developed in New York and spread throughout the East coast. Again, contrary to popular belief, several respondents in this study indicated that these alliances mean very little on the streets and really only come into play in the prison environment.

Joker: *See, in Chicago, you're really looking out for yourself. You could be a Folk and you're always gonna think of People as an enemy and all that, but that's in jail. That's when you have to, like everything breaks down. When you're in the street, it's all about shooting; it's all about you and your family. Everybody else is, they could just go away, it doesn't matter. So when you go to jail though, you could, like say I'm a* (Latin) *Lover, let's say I had a confrontation with a Maniac* (Latin Disciple) *outside. When you get locked up together though, that has to stop. That stops in an instant [snaps] cause now you're a family, you're back in Folk.*

I: *So the alliance is really only, or mainly in jail?*

Joker: *In jail, you look after each other.*

I: *But outside, Folks fight Folks and People fight People?*

Joker: *Yeah.*

The People nation groups represented by respondents in Bexar County were locally generated or traced their roots to Chicago. There were no representations of Folk nation gangs in Bexar County. The People nation groups represented by respondents in Orange County derived from Chicago and New York. The Folk nation groups represented in Orange County traced their roots to the Southern Folk faction or to Chicago.

The other major affiliations are the Surenos and Nortenos, which are Latino gangs deriving from California. Sureno refers to any Latino gang originating south of Fresno, California and they are often represented by the number 13. Nortenos are Latino gangs north of Fresno, California and are often represented by the number 14. These affiliations are not alliances and engage in conflict primarily amongst their own affiliation. The Nortenos are associated with the prison gang La Nuestra Familia, and the Surenos are associated with the Mexican Mafia (Kinnear 2009:192). As is the case with other affiliations, the common misrepresented belief is that the Mexican Mafia controls the Surenos. This seems to be a half-truth that leaves out some important detail.

I: *If the Mexican Mafia is in control, why do the southern groups fight each other?*

Jenga: *You know that is a really good question (laughs). Because there's not too much structure out here, and you know, the way the gang was based, you know, the Mexican Mafia came after, after the gang was based so you figure, you have all the gangs that were based right here and we're fighting each other ok, but all the sudden the Mexican Mafia comes in and wants, they're trying to take over things. Well they can't really stop us from something that we've been doing for many years. You know and we are not gonna be one to you know hold a town meeting and have all the gangs come together and say hey, let's stop fighting. You know that would kind of defeat the purpose of gang banging.*

When I asked **Jenga** about other Sureno groups, he expanded a little bit more on the Mexican Mafia.

> *Cause mainly that's what the Mexican Mafia want to control, cause the Mexican Mafia, the whole point is to have control or make money. They don't want to control who they're fighting with. They want to make sure those drugs are coming in, they're getting money for it you know. As far as guns, I don't think they controlled any of that, cause we pretty much wield and dealt with those.*

The obvious implication here is that the Mexican Mafia controlled the drug economy as it related to the Sureno gangs, but did not get involved in any other aspect of the Sureno gang operations. There were respondents representing Sureno affiliations in both Bexar and Orange Counties, but there were no respondents representing Norteno affiliations.

Relationships at the affiliation level in Bexar County were based on the color of the bandana/rag that gang members wore including

- Black Circle- People, Sureno
- Blue Circle- Crips, Folk, Sureno
- Red Circle- Bloods, People

The Blue circle alliance rapidly dissolved. There were also several Folk, People, Sureno and Independent gangs that used white, gray, green, and brown as the color they represented.

Relationships at the affiliation level in Orange County were largely based on the preference of each individual gang. Bloods and People both claim the 5-pointed star, but may or may not get along depending on the set.

> **Bones** (Blood): *Some stuff happened way back in like the 90s where the Latin Kings and the Bloods started beefing too, so they are under five point but we don't mess with them either, so pretty much everybody is an enemy.*

> **Smokey** (Blood): *Kings are like, my homeboy over there in Kissimmee, he tied flags, like, he made peace with some Kings.*

Crips and Folks both claim the 6-point star and also have a tenuous but somewhat stronger connection than Bloods and People.

> **Apostle** (Folk): *The Crips and Folks had what they called an 8 Ball, and it was the Crips and Folks symbol together, and that was supposed to be an alliance. It didn't always work out that way, even though there was supposed to be an alliance. There would still be Crips that fought with G.D.* (Gangster Disciple) *sets. It wasn't supposed to happen but it did.*

Tables 7 and 8 represent a breakdown of the gang sets, their affiliations, and where they fall in the Klein (2002) typology. Note that several gang members claimed affiliation to more than one gang.

Table 10- Orange County Respondent Gangs

Affiliation	Clique/Subgroup	Type
Bloods		
East Side Piru (1)		Defunct
Five-Nine Brims (1)		Traditional
Killer Gangster Blood (1)		Compressed
Original Five Bloodline (1)		Collective
Nine-Trey Gangsters (2)	SG (1)	Neotraditional
Unfolk Law of Blood (1)		Collective
Crips		
ATF Compton Crips*(1)		Traditional
Grape Street Watts (1)		Compressed
No Fear Gangster Crip (1)		Unknown
Folk		
Folk Nation (1)		Compressed
Gangster Disciples (2)		Compressed
Hoover Folk (1)		Compressed
Latin Lovers (1)		Traditional
Latin Stylers (1)		Traditional
Maniac Latin Disciples (1)	Lady Ds	Traditional
People		
Black P Stone Nation (1)	Terror Town	Traditional
Insane Unknowns (1)		Traditional
Latin Dragons**(1)		Traditional
Latin Kings (2)	Latin Queens (1)	Traditional
	United Gangsters (1)	Neotraditional
Sureno		
South Side San Diego (1)		Traditional
Torrance East Side 13 (1)	Little Rascals	Traditional
Independent/Other		
Cold Springs Posse (1)	Young Guns	Traditional
Lincoln Heights (1)		Neotraditional
21 Guns (1)		Defunct
Young Shottaz (1)		Specialty

*A merging of Acacia Blocc, Spook Town, and Farm Dog Compton Crips
**The Latin Dragons switched to the Folk affiliation

Table 11- Bexar County Respondent Gangs

Affiliation	Clique/Subgroup	Type
Bloods		
Big Time Players (1)		Compressed
Blood Stone Villains (6)		Collective
414 Texas Cobras (1)		Traditional
Kurk Town Piru (1)		Traditional
Rigsby Court Gangsters (2)		Traditional
Sa Town Bloods (7)		Compressed
Crips		
Altadena Blocc Crip (1)		Collective
East Terrace Gangsters (1)		Traditional
Puro Segundo Varrio (1)		Neotraditional
People		
Almighty Vice Lords (2)	Flowers (1)	Compressed
Bad Boyz (2)	Bad Girlz (2)	Traditional
Latin Kings (1)		Traditional
Ruthless Kings (1)		Compressed
Sureno		
Big Time Surenos (1)		Traditional
Florencia 13 (1)	Pee Wees	Traditional
Lil' Watts Sureno 13 (1)		Compressed
Independent/Other		
Alazon Apache Courts (1)		Traditional
Skyline Park* (1)		Traditional
212 Choppers (1)		Traditional

*Skyline Park had an independent and a Crip faction. Currently the neighborhood is now Blood.

Group-Level Relationships

All but a few respondents indicated that their gangs regularly interacted with other gangs. The negative cases were easily ruled out at those indicating no inter-gang relationships were temporary members. For the majority of respondents, positive relationships were usually maintained with other gangs within their affiliation, but there were also many ties between groups that did not share any allegiance. Relationships between gangs were created due to different circumstances including family ties

> **Vegas** (Blood)**:** *We were affiliated with Zoe Pound* (Independent Haitian gang) *because my main, my general... He was born and raised in Haiti until he was like 14 I think***,** *he lived in Haiti and then moved. So he got cousins and stuff that came here and were Zoe Pound and stuff, got into Zoe Pound. So we are affiliated with Zoe Pound and we used to go down there and chill with them and shit.*
>
> ---
>
> **Dama** (People/Black): *There was one main gang that we hung out that would be the Dark Side Reds* (affiliation unknown), *but like I said a majority, a lot of it was all due to family and then a lot of our family was the Bad Boyz and then another part of our family was the Dark Side Reds.*

If we are considering loyalty to social groupings, family usually trumps other groups despite the myths to the contrary in regard to gang members. Hunt, MacKenzie and Joe-Laidler (2000) explain the strong attachment gang members have to their families despite any persistence of family problems. In their study of female gang members they note that many of the young women had both immediate and extended family members that were gang-involved. What Hunt et al. (2000) do not indicate is whether or not these family members were a part of the same gang as the respondent. What becomes apparent in this research is that even if the gang affiliation differs, family ties serve to create gang ties. It is not only family ties that foster friendly relations between gangs but business relationships could foster friendly or cordial ties between groups.

> **Chill** (Crip): *It could be another Crip gang that we did not like at all. They had a bad stretch with us, we all ended up snitching on each other, we got arrested, just…they didn't get my respect. And then there's other gangs, like a Blood gang, which usually we don't get along with, but they sell something that we need, and we got something that they need, so…it's like peace right there.*
>
> ---
>
> **Sinister** (Sureno): *We talked to a couple of gangs but it was more like business things.*

This information fits hybrid claims and may be used as evidence that gangs have evolved and are now working together. The 2007 Statewide summary on gangs specifically states that gangs have given up traditional loyalties to pursue monetary ventures together (Bailey 2007). What is presented here does not suffice as support because there is no evidence as to whether it is a new phenomenon. Furthermore, business monetary ventures between gangs are focused on because of the sinister implications of criminal conspiracy. This focus explicitly ignores other inter-gang relationships that are not monetary in nature. Some groups simply hung out or partied together.

> **Twinna** (Sureno): *We had other gangs that would always be with us, Bad Boyz* (People)*, they were black rag, we had some, there was another gang that was made up by a couple of guys, I just don't remember and some Kliksters* (People)*, but yeah they were always with us.*

Even when gangs where not overly friendly with one another, they also did not always engage in conflict. Gangs also participated in conventional activities such as sports competitions against one another. It is likely that others may be intimidated by gangs and therefore eschew participating in any activity with folk devils no matter how normal the activity is. Therefore gangs are left with each other as sports opponents.

> **Hoops:** *You had the projects, the neighborhoods or whatever, they was all about basketball, you know hooping and stuff. So they would like compete. But just this neighborhood doesn't want to go through that neighborhood, so they would meet like in a neutral neighborhood. They would come out here, and play basketball, because we had a park, a nice little park.*

I: *Can you tell me about the group's relationships with other groups?*

Aztec: *If it wasn't war time, it would be cool, we would play football, and tackle and didn't get rough, and then pretty much all hell would break loose, but we would talk to each other.*

Quite clearly gangs regularly interacted with each other in various contexts and for differing reasons. While this at first may seem to indicate hybrid behavior it is important not that nearly all respondents reported this behavior indicating its normalization in several cities including Los Angeles and Chicago and across time as the respondents discussed gang activities during different eras.

Social Network Ties

In examining the accounts of the respondents in this study, there were a select few examples that could support the hybrid scenario as presented by outside observers. For the most part however, the evidence points to social networks. To discuss this, it is first pertinent to revisit Fleisher (2002), and discuss relational and categorical attributes. In the legal arena, gangs have specified definitions, which are both relational and categorical at the same time. The Texas statute 71.01 (Kinnear 2009) states that a

> "Criminal street gang" means three or more persons having a common identifying sign or symbol or an identifiable leadership who continuously or regularly associate in the commission of criminal activities."

And Florida statute 874.03 (Kinnear 2009) similarly states that a

"Criminal street gang means a formal or informal ongoing organization, association, or group that has as one of its primary activities the commission of criminal or delinquent acts, and that consists of three or more person who have a common name or common identifying signs, colors, or symbols and have two or more members who, individually or collectively, engage in or have engaged in a pattern of criminal street gang activity."

In both statutes the relational and categorical attributes are included and necessary. The relational aspect is that the members engage in criminal activity together, and the categorical attributes are the name, symbols, and colors that they share. In the present research, these definitions became problematic because the people who regularly engaged in gang/group crime, perpetrated such with people who were in other gangs rather their own. One thing that was abundantly clear from this research is that gangs were not "islands in the street" and gang members did not exist in a vacuum or void. Not only did gang members interact frequently with members of opposition gangs, many had very close relationships with these people. Due to an overemphasis on criminality and a lack of emphasis on social processes, little research exists on gang member relationships other than their direct effect on criminality. Relational ties that emerged included kinship, romance, close friendship, casual acquaintance, and criminal partners. 46 of the 48 interviewees indicated that they had these relationships. Kinship between rival gang members was fairly common and did not result in any major problems.

Kinship

> **Mixer** (Blood): *My sister was a Crip. We never banged Bloods and Crips. If we did, we were joking around, we laughed about it. I have other family members that are Crips. I have family members that are Bloods. When it comes to family, when it comes to the*

blood inside your body, that's what is more important. That's always going to come first. You'll never see me fight between that.

Silk (People): *Well it was weird cause my step-dad's son, he's a Blood and my real blood brother was a Crip and then I was Latin Queen.*

Rok (People): *Yeah, I did have some friends that were in different groups and rival gangs. My family actually, my uncle or both of my uncles…they were real big in the Gangster Disciple Nation…but there was a certain camaraderie there.*

As previously discussed, Hunt et al. (2000) explained the import of having gang related family members. Miller (2001) also found that gang related family members served as a pathway into the gang. Neither study addressed affiliation of gang-related family members. The respondents in this study indicated that family ties would trump gang ties. Loyalty to one's own family is usually always established before encountering any other social grouping. It is not difficult to understand that attachment to this primary agent of socialization will remain powerful despite any other influence.

Romance

Romantic relationships also occurred between members of rival gangs. Respondents indicated that this was frowned upon because it usually resulted in some type of conflict, yet many still engaged in the behavior.

Spider: *My group was enough for me because I was really hardcore into it, you know, I really believed in it. I really didn't have friends or close friends or anything like that in other groups, except for females. I was constantly messing with females from other groups, even like Crips, female Crips.*

I: *You actually mentioned quite a few times things about girls. Did you ever mess with girls who were a part of other groups?*

Caribe: *Yeah (laughs), that was a big no-no but…*

I: *Big no-no meaning you were not allowed to do it, or you should not have done it?*

Caribe: *Both actually, because I was doing shit with them, but even if I wasn't allowed to be doing shit, it really wouldn't have been a good idea because I wasn't going to make her my girl, which results in us having problems.*

I: *How many people were doing the same thing?*

Caribe: *Everybody had to do it, they had to do it, you know what I mean?*

Rok: *It was actually encouraged (laughs). The reason why is it would actually make it seem like we were taking over. Like "we're pulling their girls," or "we're pulling all of their people." And it made it seem like we were more superior than the other group. It was a big thing, where if you were able to pull another gang member's girlfriend, their gang is so weak, the girls are coming over to our side.*

No direct literature addressing romantic relationships between gang members of differing gangs was found to explain this phenomenon. The most plausible explanation stems back to general ideas of competition, such as Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) conflict subcultures. Attempts to prove dominance as demonstrated by **Rok** are manifested in stealing women from the opposition. This may or may not explain the female role in this scenario as well. Perhaps the women are also exerting dominance by "stealing" men from the opposition. An alternate perspective is simply the view that the more challenging a romantic option is the more attractive that option becomes.

Close Friendship

Going against the general assumption that gang members would spend most of their time and engage in most of their activities with other members of their own gang, many of the respondents indicated that much of their time was spent with very close friends who were in rival gangs.

I: *That was my next question; I was going to ask if you had individual relationships or friendships with somebody from another gang?*

Pep (Blood): *Yeah, I mean I do to this day. I got a friend outside right now that used to be a Crip.*

Twinna (Sureno): *my brother* (also a part of the same gang) *hung around with one guy who was a Crip, but when he would come around, there was no disrespect whatsoever towards him or towards his people you know or towards my brother's people.*

I: *How about you?*

Twinna: *I have a couple of friends that I met in middle school through high school and still hang around with that are Crips or used to be Crips and it doesn't, it doesn't bother. I mean we play around with each other, but you know, its fine.*

Jenga (Sureno)**:** *My best friend was in a group that we were enemies with…for the most part a lot of the other homies that I knew of had other friends that were gang members, they were from gangs I never heard of.*

Bones (Blood): *My best friend was a Crip…*

I: *You said he was your best friend. What did you do together? Did you hang out?*

Bones: *Everyday. If I wasn't with my crew, I was with him, and he worked with me also.*

That several respondents identified their best friends as members of rival and other gangs has several implications. First, it calls into question the automatic expected animosity between rival gangs and the supposed hatred that is assumed by outside observers. Gang loyalties are not all powerful, overriding forces that remove an individual's agency in making decisions about with whom they choose to associate. Secondly, if these individuals spent large portions of their time accompanied by their best friends, who were in other gangs, it is possible that there are times when they engage in criminal activity together. Should they be apprehended by the authorities

while breaking the law, officers may interpret the situation as "gangs working together" rather than the reality of individuals working together.

Casual Acquaintance

Beyond close friendship and romantic alliances, many respondents indicated that they had several other general friends and acquaintances that were in rival gangs.

> **I:** *Did you have individual relationships with people from other gangs?*
>
> **Boxer** (Blood): *Yeah, I got homies is GDs, BGDs, I got some Five-Deuce homies, Seven-Deuce homies, Deuce-Deuce homies, Hoovers, and my cousins in Houston are some, are Hoovers…I got some gangsters, some Four-Tray Gangster homies out of Arlington. Some of them down here East Terrace Gangsters, you know what I'm sayin', I mean everybody down here, I mean it's just known, I mean it ain't even about what set you claim, it's about what you able to do your own self.* (All sets Boxer named here are Crip and Folk sets).
>
> ---
>
> **Jet** (Blood): *Yeah, I had, honestly, there were some Crips that I hung out with, some Kings that I hung out with, and some other gang members that I hung out that weren't Bloods, you know, it is what it is.*
>
> ---
>
> **Patos** (Folk): *I had a friend that was a Blood, I mean they were rivals. I had a couple of friends that were Blood and they knew I was a Folk and we just kept it separate.*
>
> ---
>
> **Curly** (Blood): *Like, I got a couple of friends that are Crip. I got a couple of friends that are Latin King, but when we're together we don't talk about our own stuff. Like what I do with my set I keep with me, and what they do with theirs…when we're around each other it's like normal people.*
>
> ---
>
> **Smokey** (Blood)**:** *I got a lot of homeboys that are Crips. We known each other for the longest, even though we're different colors, we known each other even before we chose colors.*
>
> **I:** *Can you still hang out with them?*

Smokey: *Yeah, I can still chill with them and shit like that but to an extent.*

Progeny (Crip)**:** *I know homeboys that got partners that is Bloods. It is just different like, you know, you got, you grew up in a certain neighborhood, but you got put onto this gang, you never forgot where you came from, you feel me. So you got homeboys over there too, you got to respect that.*

Here again the respondents are indicating that general friendships and regular interaction with members of rival gangs was not only common, but they did not feel it was in any way negative nor something that was to be kept secret. This clearly establishes that the social network of the gang member is not limited to the gang in which he or she is involved.

Educational Setting

When examining responses and effects on gangs and gang members, societal institutions are often found lacking. The educational setting is no different as it has been implicated in the marginalization of lower class males leading to gang formation (Cohen 1955) and as a facilitator of the drug economy and power structure associated with gangs (Hutchison and Kyle 1993). However, the respondents in this study indicated that the educational function of integration, in this case integration of gang members, seemed to mitigate gang conflict and allow friendships or at least cordial relationships between rivals.

Blitz (Blood): *Yeah, I did actually, I had somebody that was in the Crips and we didn't like hang out or anything. I would, we would talk like in class or we talk, but it wasn't, we weren't out there in front of our groups were had to like you know "screw you or whatever, you know you are a part of that." But he end up, actually died, getting shot…He was in alternative school and I was in alternative school so we were forced to work together. I mean he was in my class, so I had to like work with him which is probably the only reason why I even talked to him. He was in another set, but inside the classroom it was different.*

> **Maze** (Blood): *After finding out that he was a* (Crip)*…we became friends before we knew each other, you know, what each other were as far as gang status, and then to find out that he was opposite. I left it alone, you know, we saw each other at school and made nothing of it, and didn't make it a point to get very close but there was no conflict there.*

> **Apostle** (Folk): *To be honest, I had a friend that was a Neta and he was actually one of their leaders of the Netas. And even though we weren't cool with them because we actually broke out in a big fight with them at school, it was on the news and everything…*
>
> **I:** *So nobody knew that you were friends?*
>
> **Apostle:** *They did. I didn't try to hide it, you know, I'd shake his hand and give him hi-five or whatever.*

Criminal/Conflict Partners

As previously stated, friendships and networks of individual gang members went beyond that of the gang the person was affiliated with. This resulted in cooperative criminal ventures either based on conflict with a shared enemy or based on the drug economy. This type of cooperation could be interpreted by law enforcement as a group level ventures rather than individual relationships between members, which may be an erroneous ecological fallacy. For example, **Hoops** was a part of an independent gang that had its primary conflicts with several factions of Bloods. Even so, he, but not his gang, still had a close friendship and partnership with other Bloods.

> *I had a Mexican friend who was a LRB, La Raza Blood, and I kicked it with him so much that I kicked it with his gang homies, but they didn't come kick it with us. I was always going with them, so yeah I was cool with them or whatever. And they got into it with a gang, DOGs* (Dope Overthrowing Gangsters)*, that we happened to be into it with as well. So you know, we kind of shared in the little ol' beef or whatever.*

Gang members also understood the benefit of expanded social networks concerning the underground economy.

> **Caribe** (Crip)**:** *Yeah, this dude* (Latin King)*, but he died. We were real cool. He was pretty cool. The same things I did with my other homeboys, I did with this dude. He was a little crazier though (laughs).*
>
> **I:** *So you hung out with him?*
>
> **Caribe:** *Yeah, we just chilled, he sold drugs too; we always use to go to the same parties and all that.*
>
> ---
>
> **Jenga:** *You know that is a real touchy subject. You know there's some situations…well first off to answer your question, no, we don't…associate ourselves with other gangs. In the answer to your question there's a lot of things that were going on that were corrupt with that rule, as far as, say you run dry on drugs, you have to go somewhere else to get them. Well you don't really say where you got them, but we all know you went to another gang to get them.*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *So those other groups, did you hang out with them? Party with them? Do business with them?*
>
> **Hammer:** *We did business, from robbing stuff, whether it was houses, cars. A lot of trade goes on in the street. Trades for weapons, if someone needs a TV…and I think we just did it for that reasoning most of them time, just for the business aspect. Just so we could be in trade…Where you meet them is juvenile hall a lot of the times. And when you end up cool with this one guy and they're like "eh, you want to meet my homeboys?" "Yeah, let's meet." And I think we get along pretty good. And then you end up driving or they come down and then it just…mixes. And it's mostly about business, a lot of trades.*

All of the aforementioned relationships are counterintuitive to the popular perception that gang members have this extreme irrational hatred towards opposition groups, but the respondents overwhelmingly indicated a situation that was altogether different from popular perception. Being of an opposition group did not create automatic rivalry and familiarity with rivals may also have also mitigated or decreased violence.

Hound: *Sometimes we saved each other's life; you know what I'm saying. Like, they see me in the car, they be like "Naw, we ain't gonna do nothing." Or if I see him in the car, I be like "hey man, naw, let him make it." So in a way it kinda worked for the better. Even though we was on the opposite side, opposing teams, but that's just how it works.*

Stripe (People): *I've been friends with opposition groups. People in Folks, we would all stay out. At a point, it started getting more advanced, more security, more…you know, you gotta stay around, we gotta have somebody watching the neighborhood all the time, because of this and that. And then you meet the opposition and they're doing the same thing but they're watching you. You watchin', how better to watch your enemy than to be friends with them? So , that's how I kept my eye on the other guys, I was friends with a couple of them. But I grew up with them. So, I mean, there was people you grew up with that was in opposition gangs…we always had open channels of communications with opposition groups.*

Wizard: *When it comes to rivals, if you are cool with me, I'm cool with you. If you give me respect, I'll give you respect. That is how real gangster shit goes.*

Babyface: *Like when I first got here I went to a party, there was about like 50 Blood members and just one Crip.*

I: *and nothing happened to him?*

Babyface: *Nothing happened.*

I: *People were friends with him?*

Babyface: *Yeah.*

Ties between gangs and gang members were quite abundantly represented in this study. At a group level gangs interacted with other gangs in friendly and enemy allegiances based on family ties, business ties, and general friendship as well as competitive sports. Individual gang members had enough autonomy and agency to have close friendships, romantic relationships, general acquaintances, and criminal relationships with members of opposition groups. Interactions amongst gangs were well known and not viewed as negative behaviors. The commonality of

these behaviors supports the argument that hybrid gangs are social constructions as these behaviors were seen in all locations, Orlando, San Antonio, Los Angeles, Chicago, and many other cities and the behaviors occurred through all gang generations from the 1960s to present day. There is nothing new or evolved about these behaviors, they are and have been a common staple of gang society. In the next chapter, I discuss cliques, networks and the social capital that these structures provide.

CHAPTER SEVEN: GANG NETWORKS, CLIQUES, AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Gang Networks

Viewing the gang arena from the gang member's perspective lends itself more towards understanding gangs as social networks (Fleisher 2002; Decker et al. 1998) and being a gangster as a status. Laying the socially constructed concept of hybrid gang aside, and examining ego-networks explicitly addresses outsider (law enforcement/media) confusion. The gang is not the limiting box that others imagine it to be, but is rather the groundwork, or basis for entrance into the grittier forms of street life.

Snowball sampling is often critiqued for the likelihood of the researcher being introduced to respondents who are heterogeneous. In this study the opposite was true. When respondents would introduce other respondents who they often hung around with or interacted with regularly, the new respondents were usually of differing affiliations. For instance, the snowball string that resulted from one of the gatekeepers at the Orlando site resulted in interviews with members from Hoover Folk, Nine-Tray Gangster Bloods, Latin Queens, Young Shottaz Jamaican Posse, and ATF Compton Crips (See Figure 2 below). The gatekeeper was a gang member and interacted with all of the subsequent respondents representing his ego-network. Some of the other interviewees in this ego-network interacted with each other as well. The interaction usually consisted of partying and smoking marijuana. The individuals sometimes knew of the others' affiliation, sometimes did not, but ultimately indicated that they did not care about it very much.

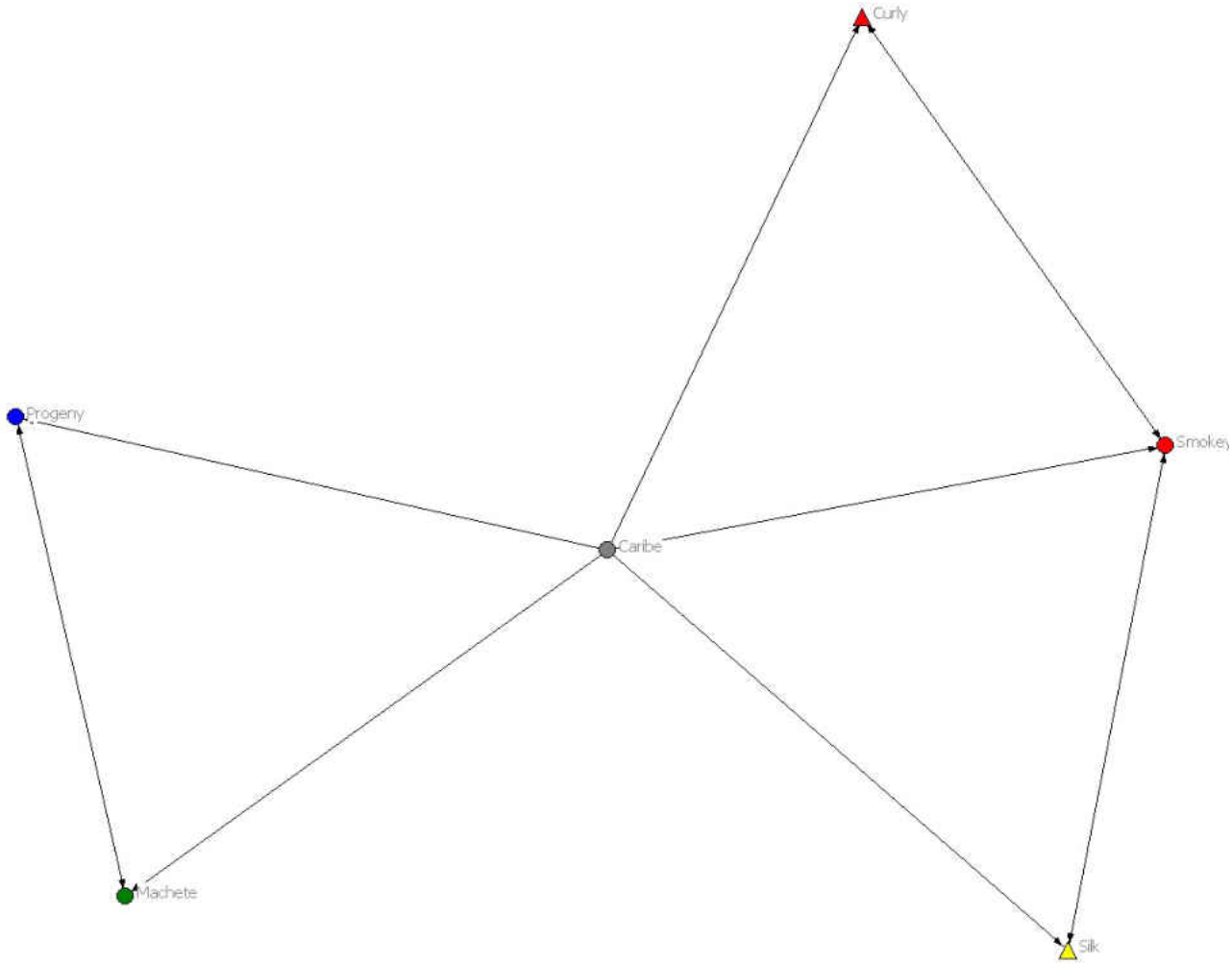

Figure 2- Caribe Ego Network

Grey- Hoover Folk
Red- Nine-Tray Gangster Blood
Gold- Latin Queen
Blue- ATF Compton Crip
Green- Young Shottaz (independent)

Looking at this on a slightly larger scale, the Sa Town Blood network was the same way. Using the social network survey drawn up for this group, it became quite apparent that most of the people in this group did not really know the affiliations of the other members. Most respondents were unsure of most of their friends' affiliations. For them, that the person was around and would back them up meant that they were a homie, and nothing else really mattered beyond that. Figure 3 is a network diagram in which respondents are indicating who they hung out with most often. Circles represent males and triangles represent females in the network. In all there are 10 different colors in the diagram, each representing a different gang affiliation.

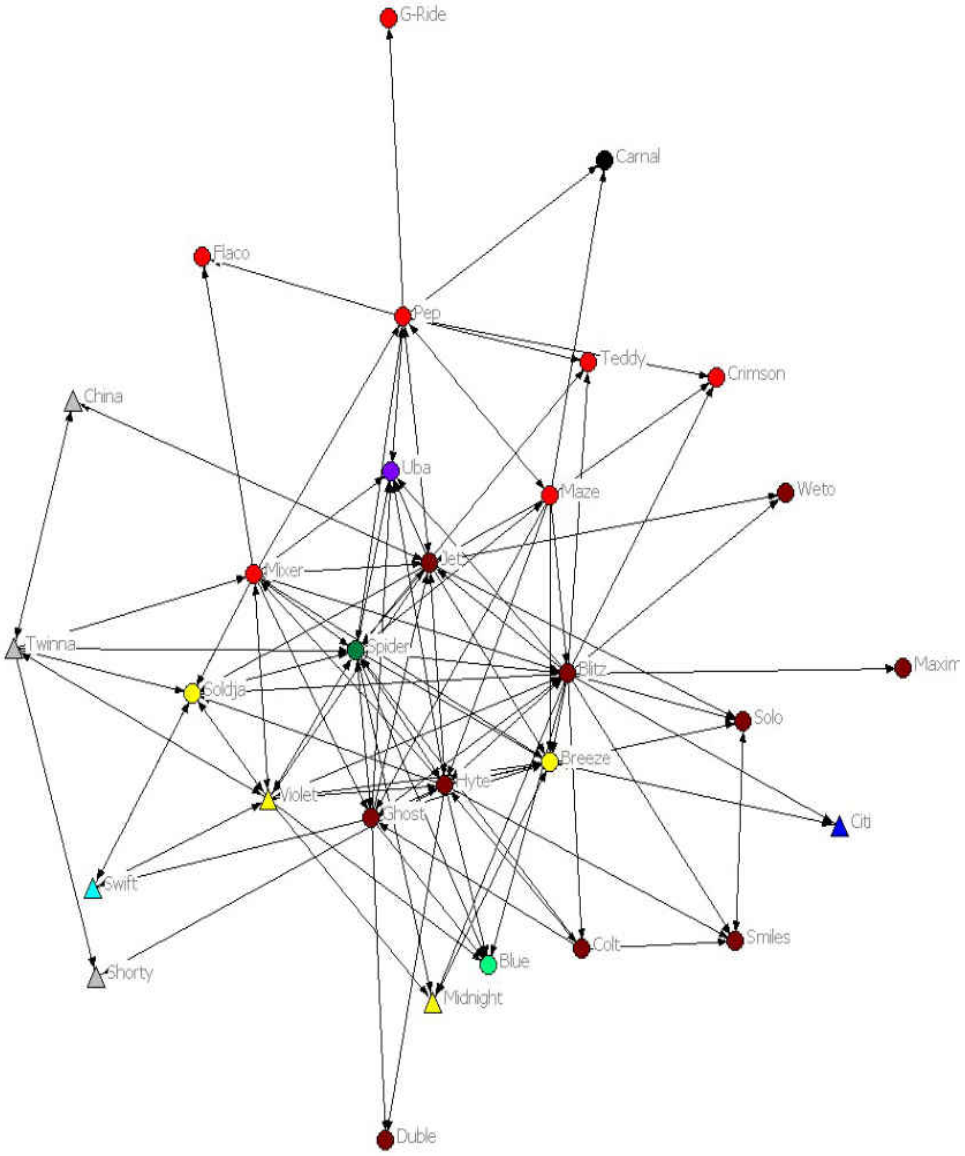

Figure 3- Sa Town Blood Network

Maroon- Sa Town Bloods
Red- Blood Stone Villains
Dark Green- Rigsby Court Gangsters (Blood)
Light Green- Flu Time Piru (Blood)
Gold- Almighty Vice Lords (People)
Black- West Side Varrio Kings (People)
Gray- Lil' Watts 13 (Sureno)
Purple- Altadena Blocc Crip
Blue- Tray Five Seven Crip
Light Blue- Killing All Problems Crip

Although all of these individuals were listed as being a part of the same group, they were of varying affiliations. Most of the gang mixing was a result of the networking processes previously established such as kinship

> **I:** *So those other gangs, did you ever hang out with them or party with them?*
>
> **Pep:** *I hung out with a few of them.*
>
> **I:** *And that was ok?*
>
> **Pep** (Blood): *It was ok; I mean nobody ever said anything about it. I don't know if it ever really got back to the people but I mean I knew people that were Kings and it didn't matter. My brother was a King.*

and close friendship

> **Violet** (People): *Well, once I had, my best friend was a Lady Watt* (Sureno) *so we did everything together really; we were always together, always.*

Most of the remaining connections had to do with romantic relationships and the importance of neighborhoods. The Sa Town Bloods and the Almighty Vice Lords shared a neighborhood leading to a lot of interaction and perhaps the perception of interchanging. The Blood Stone Villains inhabited several adjacent neighborhoods and often interacted with the Sa Town Bloods. **Uba** was the only person who was in this network that was contacted but refused to take part in the study. Other respondents explained that he had a Crip affiliation but then moved into their neighborhood. He hung out with the gang members in the new neighborhood and engaged in more activity to prove himself, however he always wore the colors of his original affiliation.

The Sa Town Bloods are a primary example of gangs not existing in a void, but having regular interaction with gang members of other gangs. Members in the gang did not always know each other. Fleisher (2002) pointed out that gang members knew only ten percent of the members

in their own categorical affiliation, but regularly interacted with members of other gangs. The importance of shared neighborhoods is demonstrated by other respondents as well.

> **Sky:** *Well, like in our neighborhood we had like PSV* (Puro Segundo Varrio Crips) *clique which was blue rag, and then we also had Brown and Proud which was brown rag. So like we always, sometimes we did hang out together, so if they didn't want to be in PSV no more, they would go to Brown and Proud, but you know, it was still kind of part of what we had.*

Twinna was the leader of the Lady Watts 13, the female auxiliary group of the Lil' Watts 13. Even though the group was very small, only seven members, she indicates that the members were still clique like in behavior and did not hang out with all of the other members of the group. Her ego-network of other female gang members (see figure 4 below) also demonstrates the importance of neighborhood networks, as Violet was the only Vicelord in the area and therefore hung around the Lady Watts. Dama and Rollie were a part of an adjacent neighborhood gang that was on friendly terms with the Watts.

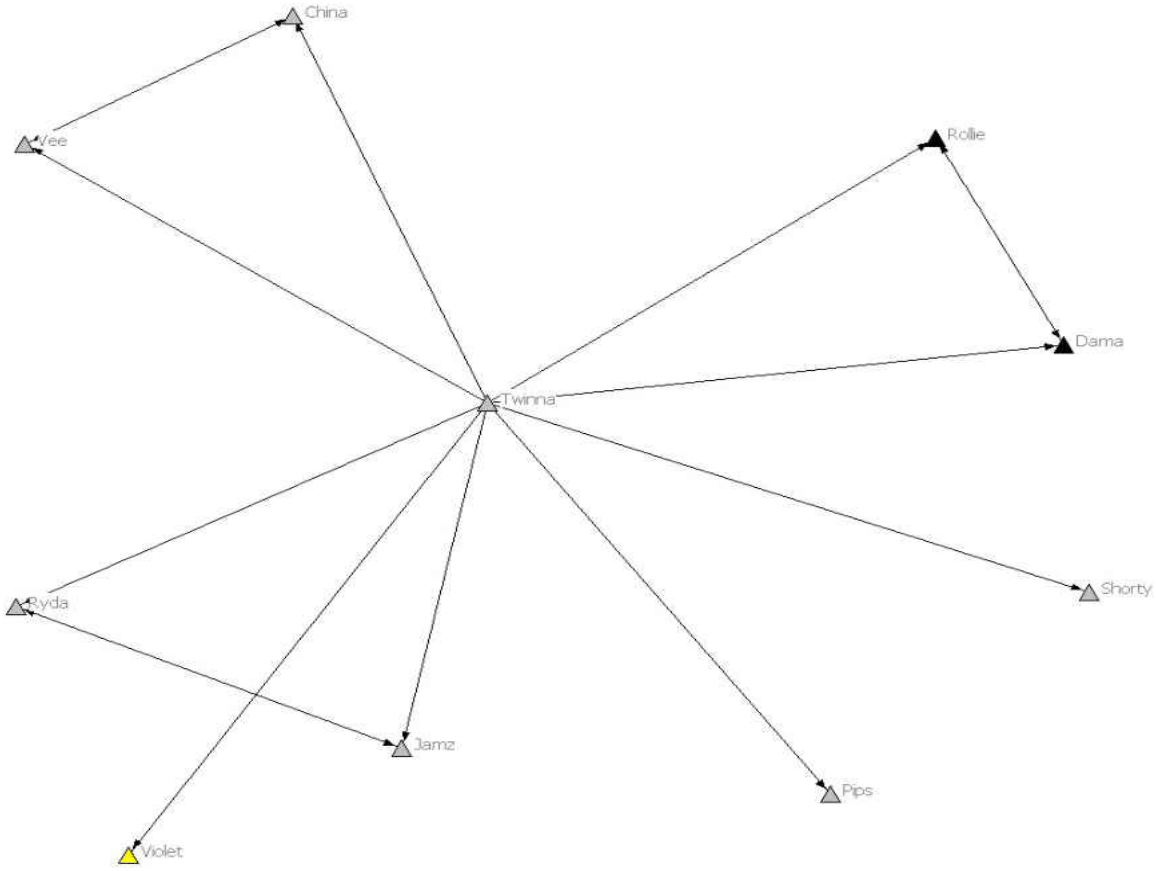

Figure 4- Twinna Female Member Ego Network

Grey- Lil' Watts 13/Lady Watts 13
Black- Bad Boyz/Bad Girlz
Gold- Vicelord/Flowers

Cliques and Social Capital

As already established, gang members often interact in a variety of ways with gang members in other gangs. Gang members are adaptable and will do what they think is in their best interest. Sullivan (2009) described a situation that he encountered during his research in which rival Bloods and Crips that lived in different sections of a neighborhood came together to fight off a group of invading Bloods. In this case, the threat to the neighborhood was deemed more important than affiliation. In a similar example, **Bear**, a Gangster Disciple explains how a fighting clique developed from two rival gangs.

> **I:** *Were there any subgroups?*
>
> **Bear:** *Yeah. We started a group called "Hit Squad," with the Bloods…we wouldn't be in a meeting together, but we'd be in the same place at the same time if something happened. We'd swarm together, but we wouldn't just be like chillin'. We'd be kinda separated and if something happened, boom, we come together, Hit Squad.*
>
> **I:** *Were there particular groups that you saw as the enemy.*
>
> **Bear:** *Yeah, really the Bloods, but really the Bloods that weren't under a certain captain, or leader. If they weren't under him, then we would go at 'em.*

The Gangster Disciples considered Bloods to be their rivals; however they came to terms with the local Blood set. The gangs only operated together when another group would threaten the area, but otherwise operated independently giving mutual respect to each other.

> **Bear:** *More and more people were joining Bloods; more and more people were joining GD. And then in the football team we were all playing together so we started hanging out with them, and they started hanging out with us, and then it kinda just jumbled in like, "we're up here right now, we might as well look out for each other because we're going to be the deepest people in the whole city right now." We end up just being a*

collaboration between the two of us, just get money and do whatever, but not fight with each other, let it slide for right then.

Counter to the belief that gangs acted in an isolationist manner, inter-gang interaction was very common. The aspect of gang structure that is ignored in most research but contributes directly to the social networking phenomenon is cliques. Beyond official subgroups, the larger a gang becomes the more unofficial cliques will form. These cliques behave in ways that may or may not separate them from the remainder of the gang.

Progeny: *You got different sections of the hood, that lived a certain way. Some of them ride bikes, some of them party. Some of them hustle, some of them gang bang you know what I mean. Everybody from the hood, got different sections that are tight with a section that is 15 and they all doing the same thing, they friends. But they don't hang with the others from the hood like that. They from the hood, and they cool with them, but they they own section.*

When gangs are broken down into these cliques or action sets, then more independence is exerted. Also because these groups engage in specified activities, the available members in the gang may not be sufficient or even interested, opening up space for gang members of other affiliations to interact.

Chill: *I mean if you was in a gang, you could also be in a clique. But you wouldn't be able to join another gang; you couldn't be a Crip and Blood. But you could be a Crip and then be in another group of people. Like, a clique that you sell drugs with, make money with, some people got cliques where they rob people with, another clique would be a clique that just exclusively robs houses.*

I: *And would they all be in the same gang too?*

Chill: *They could be in different gangs as well.*

Taking metaphorical license, activity cliques could be compared to academic disciplines. For example, imagine that a person gets a job in a criminology department. Said person's academic

background is sociology with a specialization in criminology. This person will always have the sociological background and affiliation, but is now a part of a group that he or she has trained for. Within this group are people from other academic backgrounds like criminal justice, psychology, social work, and so forth. All of them have allegiances and influences from their original affiliation, but they are now a part of something new, something they have trained for, and new allegiances form. The activity cliques in gangs are the same way.

> **I:** *When you came down here you said your family was Crips.*
>
> **Joker** (Folk): *That's who my friend's were…but when we shake up, we put both of our stuff together. So once you mix them in its more like a bond. It's like money and all that. Once you make money together, it doesn't really matter anymore. You can be a Blood and as long as you make money with a Crip, that kills everything right there, no matter what color you are. It's all about money; that's all there is.*

This leads full circle to attacking the assumption that gang loyalty is the dominating force. Assumption of loyalty to one group is contradictory to general human behavior. It is possible to have multiple loyalties. A person may be loyal to the family that he or she grows up in but also have loyalty to a family that is developed through marriage and procreation. Gang membership and the avenues that it opens up provide a person with social capital on the street. Gangs are the entry point and primary socialization agent into street life rather than overarching repressive entities.

> **I:** *Why did you join?*
>
> **Bones:** *When you are a gangster…there is certain places you can't go unless you are one too.*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *Tell me about your group's relationships with other groups…do they hang out with other groups?*

Joker: *Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. When you go neighborhood to neighborhood and you know, you gotta know people. Once you know people, there's a chance of him knowing somebody else, who can connect you with this, or connect you with that. So you wanna, you wanna talk to people, just not too much.*

I: *Were there people who were temporarily or not fully affiliated?*

Esoteric: *Yeah, but then they are down by association. You wanna pass through the street, so all this street walks and stops, they are your people.*

Hound: *When I got here, I got affiliated with a little bit of everybody. Like Crips, I hung around with a little bit of everybody. You know what I'm saying, like Crips, Bloods, Rigsby Court, Blood Stone Villains, I knew some people from the Terrace, East Terrace, Wheatley Courts. I'm affiliated with a lot of people out here but I wasn't reping what they was reping and we just connected on one certain thing. Street life, you know, we just have it common.*

Ayling (2009) argued that loose gang structure allowed members to be improvisational in action. This is only part of the story, the other part is the social capital created through street socialization. This social capital makes improvisational action possible and actually mitigates threatening circumstances. The ability to relate to others in the social arena of the street provides a safety net.

Blitz (Blood): *I was at Skateland and these guys were part of a group called C.O.C.* (Crusaders of Converse/Folk) *and I was the only Blood there and there were a lot of Crips there, so I was just like well, I went up to them* (C.O.C.s)*, I told them hey man, if ya'll need to fight with anybody, I am going to jump in with you guys and they were like ok man, alright. Ok, well we got your back now or whatever. So I was skating out there and rocking, talking, or whatever, and then didn't care.*

Boxer (Blood): *We may do business with them if the situation called for it, but usually we just, you know what I mean, the knowledge of bein' able to be on the same street with somebody else who is from another side and not havin' to watch your back, knowin' that he ain't worried about you, you ain't worried about him, ya'll focusing on money together*

I: *You said somebody from the other side, did you mean Crips?*

Boxer: *Yeah*

It appears that the normal operation of street life is similar to the experience of conventional life. In conventional society people pass through several social contexts on a daily basis and obtain friends and associates in each of these contexts, dividing loyalty between them. People have the agency to decide what to do and when to do it, but they often need help or access that can only be provided by other people. Even though their behaviors are demonized or attributed malicious intention, gang members are really no different. The underground social arena of the gang member is filled with metaphorically locked doors that require permission of gatekeepers to access. Gangs are not stand-alone groups, but rather institutions of street socialization that provide the starting social capital for further exploration into the purgatorial world shunned by mainstream society as well as safety nets to survive its various dangers. Gang members recognize the legitimacy of each other in this social world and base loyalty on behaviors of particular individuals rather than on categorical allegiances. In this way the much persecuted folk devil is really quite normal. In the following chapter I critically assess the claims that are made concerning hybrid gangs.

CHAPTER EIGHT: HYBRID GANG CLAIMS

Taking into account all of the aforementioned relationships between gang members of different gangs, one could quite easily make the argument that the current research lends empirical support to the existence of hybrid gangs. However, to do so ignores several logical fallacies surrounding the concept of the "hybrid gang," such as whether or not these behaviors are new, are found primarily in late-onset gang cities, and are significantly different from the behaviors of other gangs. Other than Thrasher's (1927) discussion of hybrid gangs which only referred to groups of mixed race/ethnicity, there have been no empirical studies of the "hybrid gang" phenomenon. All that we have available is a summary of law enforcement claims that such groups exist. Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist (2001) report that hybrid gangs are frequent in late onset cities and summarize all of the alleged characteristics of hybrid gangs as not having an allegiance to a traditional gang color, adopting symbols from different established gangs, members changing affiliations, members having multiple affiliations, gangs changing names, gang mergers, having a racial/ethnic mix in membership, and cooperation between rival gangs.

Behaviors identified concerning folk devils may have no objective threat and the anxiety concerning these behaviors is disproportionate. According to the view of law enforcement practitioners, hybrid gangs are of concern because new alignments may form due to a profit motive, it is "crucial" to know origins and rivalries of gangs, in particular Hispanic gangs, and it is important to have identifiers for Asian gangs (Starbuck et al. 2001). Notably, even these "causes" for concern are not in and of themselves threatening.

Previous literature and the current research identify alleged "hybrid" behaviors as regular parts of gang operation and direct results of gang social networks, not as an evolutionary advancement in gang behavior. The practice of socially constructing an issue revolves around the interest group making claims about a situation. In this chapter, I assess the claims made about alleged "hybrid" gangs and address them through history, literature, and data from this study. When the information on hybrid gangs as set forth in an OJJDP Juvenile Justice Bulletin (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001) is compared against the findings in this study, the research of Alejandro Alonso (2007) who geographically mapped the territories of the gangs in Los Angeles County, taking pictures of their graffiti and interviewing members concerning the gang's history, and other information available on gangs, the validity of the entire concept of hybrid gangs is called into question. These behaviors have existed for generations and throughout geographical space but have never before been deemed problematic. Assessing the claims about hybrid gangs reveals them as attempts toward a socially constructed moral panic.

Hybrid claim 1- "Hybrid gangs are more frequently encountered in communities in which gang problems emerged during the 1990s than in localities that reported gang problems in the 1980s" (Starbuck et al 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- One of the sites in this study, San Antonio, has often been cited as a city with gang problems prior to 1980 (Klein 1995). Yet the behavior of gang members in San Antonio concerning purported hybrid behaviors does not differ from the gang members in Orlando, a late-onset gang city. Furthermore, the locality/time assessment would explicitly

exclude the cities of gang origin, Los Angeles and Chicago. The 13 respondents in this study that were migrants from LA and Chicago reported the same gang behaviors in these cities as what is being reported in other cities.

Hybrid Claim 2- "Hybrid gangs tend to have the following nontraditional gang features: They may or may not have an allegiance to a traditional gang color. In fact, much of the hybrid gang graffiti in the United States is a composite of multiple gangs with conflicting symbols. For example, Crip gang graffiti painted in red (the color used by the rival Blood gang) would be unheard of in California but have occurred elsewhere in the hybrid gang culture" (Starbuck et al. 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- Traditional gang features are never clearly defined. In the hybrid gang bulletin it is stated that older gangs have age-graded cliques and subgroups and that Chicago gangs have rules and organization (Starbuck et al 2001; 2004). It should be noted that all of the purported "differences" in the hybrid gang compared to the more traditional gang have no relation to the aforementioned features of older gangs, making the phrase "nontraditional gang features" insupportable. There is also the assumption that everyone knows what "traditional" gang colors are, which is again erroneous since there are several Crip and Blood sets in Los Angeles that do use colors other than blue or red to represent their gang. The Grape Street Watts Crips use purple (Alonso 2010b; Leet, Rush, and Smith 2000:66), Shot Gun Crips use green, Long Beach Rolling 20s Crips use yellow and black, Neighborhood Crips and Avenue Crips use baby blue, Crips in the "Gangster Card" alliance use gray, Santana Blocc Compton Crips use

black, and Fudge Town Mafia Crips use brown. Blood groups in the Los Angeles area can also vary colors with some Piru Bloods using burgundy and Tree Top Piru and Lime Hood Piru using green (Leet et al 2000:67). The relevance of what color gang graffiti is painted in is questionable, but putting that aside, the following are pictures from Alonso's (2010d; e) website of graffiti in the Los Angeles area.

Figure 5- Raymond Street Hustler Compton Crips

Figure 6- East Side Spook Town Compton Crip Gangsters

Note that these Crip gangs in Compton, the home of Bloods and Crips, are using red graffiti, casting considerable doubt on the claim that Crips using red graffiti would be unheard of in California.

Hybrid Claim 3- "Local gangs may adopt the symbols of large gangs in more than one city. For example, a locally based gang named after the Los Angeles Bloods may also use symbols from the Chicago People Nation, such as five-pointed stars and downward-pointed pitchforks/ Youth often "cut and paste" bits of Hollywood's media images and big city gang lore

into new local versions of nationally known gangs with which they may claim affiliation" (Starbuck et al. 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- This claim seems to initially have the most validity, however, it also suffers from narrow perception and ignorance of historical precedence. In California, the Blood/Crip affiliations exist, in Chicago the Folk/People affiliations exist, and in much of the remainder of the U.S. you have gangs that symbolically represent both affiliation systems. Rather, than the assumption that youth are cutting and pasting, the use of multiple symbols actually makes logical sense since these areas include gangs of several types of affiliations not just one system. For instance, in New York, the two most dominant gangs were the United Blood Nation, and the Latin Kings (People). If other areas in the U.S. include gangs of different affiliation systems, then ways of recognizing who is friend and who is foe needs to be adapted, therefore multiple symbols will be represented. Examining historical precedent will explain this point further and demonstrate that this phenomenon is not some new form of hybridity.

The Black P Stone Nation is considered the original People nation gang in Chicago. There are actually two BPSN gangs in the Los Angeles area. The Black P Stone-Cities in the West Adams area and the Black P Stone-Jungles in Baldwin Village developed in the late 1960s/early 1970s (pre-hybrid era). Although they were generated from the Chicago BPSN, the Blood/Crip affiliation was becoming the dominant system in LA, and these groups adapted and eventually became Blood gangs (Alonso 2010a; Jah and Shah'Keyah 1995:203-230).

All of the Blood and Crip gangs from the east coast (New York/Florida) and most of the ones in Texas used symbols either supporting or disrespecting groups in the People and Folk

affiliations. Rather than "cutting and pasting" it could be that gangs have very logical reasons for mixing symbols. When these gang systems co-exist in an area, they will encounter each other, and both positive and negative relationships will form, so mixing of gang cultures is to be expected. Beyond using symbols there were two gangs represented in this study with heritage from both the LA and Chicago systems. "Hoover Folk" derived in New York. **Caribe** explains that his OG from California started the Hoover set in New York. They took on a Folk affiliation.

> *You see the dude I ran with, he had a blue flag all of the time, so when I questioned him, he said he was Hoover, with a Crip affiliation, but it is not Crip, it is Folk.*

While this may at first seem contradictory, what is being explained is that his OG had a Crip affiliation, but the gang in New York was Folk. In a broader context, **Caribe** places the origin of the set in New York in the mid 1990s. It was around this time that many of the Hoovers in Los Angeles dropped their Crip affiliation (Alonso 2010c) leaving them free to do as they liked.

Boxer explains that his group migrated from Chicago to Texas. In Chicago, the Mickey Cobras are a People nation gang. Entrance into a new arena necessitates adaptation.

> *I mean we are an out of state gang, so I mean, we coming into another territory. First thing we did, you understand, we make allies with people who are real of course.*

The Mickey Cobras colors are red and black (Leet et al 2000:267), so it was not much of a stretch for them to adapt in a similar fashion as their Black P Stone relatives in Los Angeles did before them, they changed to the Texas Cobras and became Bloods.

Hybrid Claim 4- "Existing gangs may change their names or suddenly merge with other gangs to form new ones" (Starbuck et al 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- Here again the precedent is being ignored in favor of the assumption that this does not occur in chronic gang cities. In the Los Angeles area, after decades of warfare with other Crip gangs, several groups in the well-known Hoover Crip Gangsters dropped the Crip affiliation, changed their name to Hoover Criminal Gangsters and began wearing orange instead of blue (Alonso 2010c). Also the Acacia Blocc Compton Crips, Spook Town Compton Crips, and Farm Dog Compton Crips merged to become the ATF Compton Crips. Furthermore it is fairly commonly known that many of the major gangs in Chicago formed through smaller gangs merging. Examples of this would be the Black Gangster Disciple Nation which was a merger of the Black Disciples, Gangster Disciples, and High Supreme Gangsters back in the 1970s (Weisel 2002) and the Black P Stone Nation which was also a merger of several smaller gangs (Leet et al. 2000).

Hybrid Claim 5- "Gang members may change their affiliation from one gang to another/it is not uncommon for a gang member to claim multiple affiliations, sometimes involving rival gangs. For example, in Kansas City, MO, police may encounter an admitted Blood gang member who is also known in the St. Louis, MO area as a member of the Black Gangster Disciples gang/Gang members who relocate from California to the Midwest may align themselves with a local gang that has no ties to their original gang" (Starbuck et al. 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- As with the previous claims, these statements suffer from assuming that these behaviors are not par for course in the life of gang members regardless of where they come from. Logic would indicate that when a gang member moves to a new city or area, his or her

gang may not be in existence in the new place. Indeed as many gang members are youth and therefore at the mercy of where their parents or guardians choose to move to, they may find themselves in a neighborhood inhabited by a rival gang. Instead of suffering a certain negative fate, the gang member eventually falls in with the group in that neighborhood. Whether the individual officially switches gangs or not is an empirical question, but may be of little importance, because if they get caught committing crime with this current gang, law enforcement may assume that they are now a part of the group. The respondents in this study were well aware of this phenomenon and the likelihood of switching gang associations due to moving.

> **Stixx** (San Antonio)**:** *Yeah, like if one guy used to bang one thing back in the day, let's say he was a King, and then he ended up moving to a neighborhood and ended up being a Blood, you would call that a transformer, which he would still be down, but he wouldn't have the same respect or the back of all of us here.*
>
> ---
>
> **Slick** (Chicago)**:** *People do it. That is a, what was that, we used to call that a crusero, a crosser. That could get you killed. So a few people did it. Those who did it, basically did it out of necessity, as they had to, you know they moved into a different area.*
>
> ---
>
> **Jenga** (Los Angeles)**:** *You know it is kind of hard for somebody like that because we kind of know that you can't really be out there in full uniform, you know out there with your big old black pants, your white t-shirt, you know gang banging out there cause you're out there by yourself in somebody else's neighborhood. You can't really be posted up…you are going to get your house shot up, with your parents, you know get your mom killed or something.*
>
> ---
>
> **Curly** (Orlando)**:** *Usually if you in that one set you stay in that one set, unless like if you move from state to state since they don't have that same set, so maybe you drop that one and move to another one just because that set doesn't exist where you are at?*
>
> ---
>
> **I:** *Have you been a part of more than one gang?*
>
> **Prince** (Chicago/San Antonio)**:** *In Chicago no, I was strictly a Latin King, but when I moved to Texas, there was a group of Kings that I did clique with. When I moved back down here, yes.*
>
> ---

> **Aztec** (San Antonio/Los Angeles)**:** *Well in Los Angeles, East LA, I used to be from 212 Choppers.*
>
> **I:** *At what age did you first join?*
>
> **Aztec:** *Over there, when I was 19, but here in San Antonio, I was from the Alazon-Apache Courts and from here, I started at 11 years old.*

The premise of hybrid gangs is that these behaviors are new and found in emerging gang cities. However, the interviewees representing both chronic and emergent gang cities indicate the presence of gang switching behavior. Respondents indicate that gangs may not always be transferable, but gang status can be transferred when moving to a new area. Furthermore, this like other phenomenon is not new, at the time of the interview **Aztec** was 59 years of age, which would put his entrance to the different gangs in the 1960s. Even in that era, this situation was occurring. While moving seemed to be the primary scenario that resulted in gang switching, the process also occurred in conjunction with incarceration or gang politics.

> **Joker** (Chicago/Orlando)**:** *It happens, it happens quite a lot, especially when you go to jail. A lot of people flip flop when they go to jail. A person, it's, it's kinda, kinda understandable at times cause if you are supposed to be belong to that family and you went to jail for something that you did for the family…and the family won't help bond you out. That is when people flip flop. That's when people start recruiting, be like "What? They left you alone in here like that? Just come over here, we'll take care of you, and that's when people start flip flopping real quick."*
>
> ---
>
> **Hoops** (San Antonio)**:** *This guy, who was originally from the East Terrace* (Crip) *and he moved down here to Skyline and his cousin was living here and also a member of the group, so since he moved out here, with his cousin, he started claiming Skyline…He ended up getting locked up again and flipped and became ABC, you know Altadena.*

In Chicago, gangs are known to switch affiliations (Delaney 2006:188) and doing so is acceptable in specified situations. **Stripe** who was an original member of the Latin Dragons, describes how and why he switched to the Insane Unknowns.

The hierarchy of command of the Dragons got killed, the top leader. And there was a battle going on with them and a group that was an ally to the Dragons. And they started fighting with them, which was a majority of them in the penitentiary…and the guys in the street decided to change their affiliations and their allies (from People to Folk) *because the Latin Kings were starting to fight with them and they had issue with that. Unfortunately, we weren't standing for that behind the wall* (in the penitentiary), *but they went and did it. There was a term where you could have the opportunity to leave the group or change affiliation or do whatever you needed to do. I chose to opt out and change my affiliation and left the Latin Dragons because they were turning Folks.*

These accounts clearly indicate that in specified situations switching gangs is common, and somewhat expected, but there is nothing to indicate that this behavior is limited to "hybrid gangs" in emergent cities. If the inter-gang social networks are taken into account, it may also explain gang switching, merging, and multiple associations as well.

Caribe: *There was a set called 8 Ball and they were Crips and they fell apart. I don't know what happened to those dudes, but then my O.G. took them in.*

I: *So you said you were a part of a couple of different groups, how did that happen?*

Jet: *Me being a part of them, well I was only a part of really one, well, it was kind of difficult. I was mainly a Blood, I'm a Blood, and I got along with all Bloods in different Blood gangs, you know BSV* (Blood Stone Villain), *BTP* (Big Time Players), *and then all kinds of different Blood gangs.*

I: *Have other members been a part of more than one gang?*

Spider: *Yeah, I am pretty sure they did, especially with, like with the, your own particular group, like Bloods in general, the affiliation, you get so much intermingling that it almost doesn't matter which particular set you are a part of. I am sure it was the same with the Crips too, because like you would run into a group of Crips and they would all be different things. One would be ABC* (Altadena Blocc Crip), *one would be Tray-Five-Seven, one would be Grape Street, you know but they are together and so, I'm sure that the lines just blur.*

I: *Is this the only group that you've ever been a part of?*

Jenga: *(laughs) You know, I was kind of asking myself that question when I started hanging around West Side Wilmas. Because I wasn't really going around Torrance, I*

> *didn't really want to go over there, you know all my friends were in jail, you know for big things, they weren't gonna be getting out any time soon so I'm not gonna go over there and start hanging out with a bunch of youngsters who don't know anything about what the gang was founded on or anything like that…I started hanging around West Side Wilmas, but I never really changed cliques. I never really said I was gonna be from here.*

Multiple association leads into the next claim concerning hybrid gangs to be discussed.

Hybrid Claim 6- "Members of rival gangs from Chicago or Los Angeles frequently cooperate in criminal activity in other parts of the country."

Counterpoint- Like many of the other claims about "hybrid gangs" this seems to be true at first glance. Indeed, several respondents in this study indicated that this phenomenon did occur. However, backtracking to the gang member's social networks that were previously discussed, most of the respondents engaged in this type of behavior regardless of time and place. The error here is again assuming that these behaviors are new and that they do not happen in chronic gang cities. Take for instance, the following respondent who discusses peaceful relationships between Bloods and Crips.

> **Rocket:** *We repped Bloods but we had a certain Crip group that you know we were cool with and we weren't… you know "Oh Bloods against Crips" all the time. But you know we had certain people we chilled with, we accepted more groups. We were a Blood group but you know we accepted Crips, we accepted some other Bloods…we tied flags* (made peace) *you know with some Crips and stuff like that, you know, there were other groups in school but for the most part we stuck together and we basically looked out for each other.*

Calling this a new or different phenomenon explicitly ignores the countless gang truces and joint projects among gang members in both Los Angeles and Chicago. Earlier explanations by **Jenga** indicated that gangs in Los Angeles bought drugs from other gangs. **Hammer** explained that

commerce between gangs was common in San Diego. **Rok** of the Black P Stones (People) in Chicago also describes working with rival groups.

> **Rok:** *As far as our relationship with allies, the allies that we had, we had some Latin King allies, we had Vice Lord allies, and we had some BD, Black Disciple allies. We were a real close-knit family-type organization whereas we try to secure our contacts and connects with each other, and we would get together and have parties together, things like that.*
>
> **I:** *Talking about groups you were friendly with, you mentioned either Black Gangsters or Black Disciples. Which one was it?*
>
> **Rok:** *Black Disciples*
>
> **I:** *Aren't they Folks?*
>
> **Rok:** *Yeah*

Hybrid Claim 7- "Although many gangs continue to be based on race/ethnicity, many of them are increasingly diverse in both race/ethnicity and gender. Seemingly strange associations may form, such as between Skinheads, whose members frequently espouse racist rhetoric, and Crips, whose members are predominately African-American" (Starbuck et al. 2001; 2004).

Counterpoint- Of all the claims about "hybrid gangs" this one is the least contentious, as indeed it is true to Thrasher's (1927) original conception of hybrid gangs. The implication that Skinheads dealing with African-Americans would be unusual is suspect and may be an outside observer's oversimplification of events. Not all skinheads are racist. Indeed, non-racist skinheads far outnumber racist skinheads in most of the U.S. (Leet et al. 2000:135). Furthermore, some of these groups advocate a "white pride" rather than a "white power" philosophy which may cause confusion for outsiders (Leet et al. 2000:135).

As previously stated, the change in racial/ethnic make-up is a claim of less dispute, and is given statistical support from the National Youth Gang Center report (2000). The increase in gender diversity is harder to assess, as it has been continuously argued that law enforcement have always ignored or underestimated the population and involvement of female gang members (Moore and Hagedorn 2001; Esbensen, Deschenes, and Winfree 2004). The respondents in this study were varied in their perception of demographic changes in the gang landscape. Table 12 gives an overview of racial/ethnic and gender diversity in the gangs represented in this study. Gangs of mixed race/ethnicity had a greater presence in Orlando, the emerging gang city, but gang members from both cities indicated that female gang members were very much a part of the gang composition.

Table 12- Gang Diversity

	Orange County, FL N= 22	Bexar County, TX N= 26
Gang had racial/ethnic diversity	50%	38%
Gang had gender diversity	64%	69%
Females were associates only	23%	19%
Notable increase in white members	40%	35%
Few or no white members	55%	54%

From examining historical context, it becomes apparent that the hybrid gang as presented in law enforcement rhetoric is a socially constructed concept based on lack of awareness about gang behavior. Six of the seven claims about hybrid gangs are faulty in that the behaviors are not new, do not indicate gang evolution, and are common behaviors of gangs throughout time and geographic space. The seventh claim concerning racial/ethnic and gender diversity in gangs may

have more validity however the question of whether or not law enforcement simply ignored female gang members before still remains. Furthermore, racial and ethnic diversity in gangs may simply be a result of a more modern era with less segregation, more cultural diffusion, and more mobility amongst people of all races.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSIONS

This research began with questions of validity about the hybrid gang concept. After a review of literature concerning gang behavior, social constructionist and social network analysis were chosen as frameworks to examine purported hybrid gangs. The study used triangulated methods of in-depth interviews in two metropolitan areas and a supplemental social network survey. The results of this study supported previous research demonstrating that gang migration was due to factors other than expansion of criminal enterprise. They also provided a small contribution on gang diversity and a larger contribution identifying the processes of joining and leaving the gang as much more diverse and complex than popular myths would lead people to believe (Chapter Five). Examining ego-networks of the respondents in this study demonstrated that both individual relationships among gang members of different gangs and group level relationships among gangs were very common and not considered deviant (Chapter Six). Depictions and utility of the gang social network are discussed in Chapter Seven. The specific claims of hybrid gangs were addressed and challenged through the use of historical precedent, logical assessment, and interview data, with the conclusion that the hybrid gang concept lacks validity and is a social construction (Chapter Eight). I now turn to concluding remarks on the findings of this study.

The data from this study were very rich and went a long way toward answering all but one of the research questions that drove the study. The respondents in the study clearly indicated that the social network of the gang member went beyond members of the same categorical affiliation to members of other gangs, even rival gangs. The expanded social network of the gang

member provided additional social capital that allowed respondents to travel in certain areas, establish connections, and operate with safety nets in various activities. No solid conclusions could be drawn as to whether or not gang members perceived an increase in female, white, and middle class membership, although Orange County respondents reported more racial/ethnic diversity in gangs. Other than that demographic component there was no difference between Orange County respondents and Bexar County respondents in regard to behaviors labeled as "hybrid."

The process of studying the "hybrid gang" phenomenon has ultimately become the process of discovering and refuting myths. This research demonstrates overall that the hybrid gang phenomenon is socially constructed and that the behaviors in question are widespread, have existed for a long time and would not be seen as deviant if the population behaving in this way was not a common folk devil. As previous literature has pointed out, most gang migrants are not moving with the express purpose of franchising their gang to new geographical areas, but instead move for family reasons or to particularly get away from the gang.

In this study it was discovered that the prominent myth of "Blood-In, Blood-Out" was both a romanticized construction and half-truth. Many gang members did in fact join gangs without violent ceremonies, and a considerable portion of gang members were able to leave the gang. The belief that one could not leave the gang was more of a misinterpretation by the media and law enforcement claiming that gangs would kill recalcitrant members. The reality from the gang member's perspective was that affection drew people back into the gang, not any fear of retaliation.

It appears that gang members of supposedly rival groups are interacting on a frequent basis; however, this is nothing new. This has been going on for a long time. Outside observers are just now noticing. Perhaps, finally noticing the phenomenon has to do with timing. Our society's media outlets seem to thrive on giving people something to be afraid of. As gangs became more mainstream through the music and film in popular culture, losing the ferocious image that they once had, a "new" more dangerous gang or evolution of gangs suddenly arises. This socially constructed reality seems to aim directly at putting gangs back into the limelight. As uncovered in this study however, there is nothing new or different about the behaviors that are being discussed.

These "new" gangs purportedly arose in emerging gang cities, but when compared to a chronic gang city there was no difference in the behaviors of the gang members. The only real difference between the cities was that gangs in the Orlando area had a little more racial/ethnic diversity. Half of the respondents were gang migrants from other cities, which were mostly the gang hubs of Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York. The behaviors of these gang migrants were no different than the behaviors of any other gang members in this sample.

The concept of "hybrid gangs" does not hold up very well under empirical, historical, and logical scrutiny. A greater understanding of gang processes may be discovered if researchers venture beyond etic methodology and its socially constructed concepts. Modern gang members have been accused of cutting and pasting media images, but it literally seems as if it is the outside observers, particularly law enforcement agents, that are buying into these images and constructing definitions that narrowly fit into ideas of what gangs are "supposed" to be like.

These socially constructed definitions have little to no relevance for actual gang members other than the resulting treatment by law enforcement.

The categorization of gang members has become a futile fetish and misdirected emphasis of law enforcement. “Because of uncertainty in reporting on problem groups such as ‘cliques,’ ‘crews,’ ‘posses,’ and other nontraditional collectives that may be hybrid gangs, some police department staff spend an inordinate amount of time trying to precisely categorize local groups’/’Because these independent gangs can be the most difficult to classify, they frequently pose the biggest problems for local law enforcement” (Starbuck et al. 2001:3; 5).

Regardless of the validity of the “hybrid gang” concept, Starbuck et al (2001:6) come to the correct conclusions. “It is vitally important for law enforcement to concentrate on gang-related criminal activity rather than on more ephemeral aspects of gang affiliation and demographics.”

Many of the state laws as written are flawed in including both the categorical and relational attributes of gang membership. Focusing on categorical attributes is not only futile, but keeps the legal system on the unconstitutional path of criminalizing status and associations rather than actually prosecuting criminal behavior that occurs in groups. In many states such as California, individuals are given enhanced criminal penalties for being a gang member, not for committing a gang crime, which should be the emphasis. In 26 states, statutes require both relational activity- criminal behavior, and categorical activity- common name and symbols, to categorize something as gang related (Barrows and Huff 2009). The emphasis on categorization

is ultimately self-defeating as gang members are not limited to interaction, criminal or otherwise, within their own categorical gang.

Gang policies should focus on criminal behavior, not social groupings or social status. Concentrating on these things leads down the slippery slope of demonizing people because of who they are not what they do. It is perhaps too much to expect law enforcement agencies and media outlets to temper or abandon their crusade against the gang member folk devil, which is all the more reason for the participation in policy making of academic researchers with empirical information. The hyped up socially constructed gang problems and the resulting laws and policies have been ineffective. And they will continue be so as long as there are stakeholders in the maintenance of the gang moral panic. It is time to try something other than ill-advised unsupported suppression strategies.

The use of new socially constructed moral panics such as the hybrid gang only undergirds the same societal doctrine that things are getting worse and harsher penalties are needed to deter these new threats. The empirical reality however, is that these issues are not new, and not localized; they are as they have always been. The media and law enforcement social constructions are not the only culprits in this. The social sciences have begun neglecting both the examination of social processes in favor of studying the criminality of gangs, and the qualitative study of gangs in general. There have been few major qualitative studies of gangs in the last decade. The resulting complete reliance on quantitative assessments of police data on gangs creates an implication that the research community already knows everything about gang processes and is sure of that knowledge. The majority of findings in this study ultimately ask the

question, do we really know what we think we know? More studies completed in the manner of attaining the gang member's view rather than preconceived societal notions about gangs may result in opening up a whole new genre of information. Perhaps this uncovered information can lead to more workable solutions to gang issues than the deterrence approach that has proven unsuccessful in the 30 years in which it has held prominence. It is time to move beyond the myth-manufacturing machine that has been capturing imaginations and back into the realm of empirical investigation.

This study contributed to an abundance of newly discovered knowledge concerning gang processes. Although a few other studies have looked at networks within the gang, the magnitude of inter-gang connections and day-to-day interactions between gang members in different groups has not been looked at in any significant capacity. The socialization of gang members into the underworld of street life certainly requires more study and precipitates a reassessment of how researchers study and understand gang members. Concentration on gang categories and on individual criminal behavior has caused investigators to miss the important information in between- just who are gang member's committing crimes with?

This research also found the "Blood-in, Blood-out" belief to be a distortion of gang behaviors. For the first time a typology of initiation practices was discussed in an empirical fashion and interestingly, these indoctrination methods included several non-violent variants. As the respondents all knew of these processes regardless of their city of origin, causes concern that the information was never before uncovered. Furthermore, this study verified the little previous literature there is on leaving the gang. Many people do leave the gang without adverse

consequences. What this study contributes to that literature is an explanation to the myth that one could not leave the gang. This concept is a misinterpretation of the psychological attachment that former gang members would have to other group members if they remain in the same geographic space.

The study used a snowball sample that could have resulted in the homogeneity of respondents and only one large network was accessed enough to use a social network survey. These limitations considerably hamper the generalizability of the study. However, the study participants were very diverse in race/ethnicity, age, and city of origin. This research followed Eurogang Program protocols to allow for comparative data with other Eurogang studies. This endeavor was comparative on multiple levels, by looking at gang members in two metropolitan areas, Orlando and San Antonio, with the added bonus of nearly half of the sample being gang migrants from California, Chicago, New York and several other cities. Furthermore the age range allowed comparisons across five decades making this study uniquely strong in descriptions of gang behaviors over time and geographical space.

The proliferation of gangs has coincided with a proliferation of gang myths. The distorted ideas are not from the gangs but from the interpretations of outside observers. These interpretations are spread through media and police culture and reported as official data. All of this has been directly related to the abandonment of gang studies to quantitative criminology, nearly all of which rely solely on police data. This research has cast more than considerable doubt on the purported beliefs on hybrid gangs and the "Blood in, Blood out" philosophy. This information was only uncovered however by returning to the sociology of gangs and examining

gang processes. If we want to really understand social phenomena in gangs, we have to overcome our fears and go meet the devils face to face rather than trying to count them from the safety of our ivory towers.

APPENDIX A: GANG INDEX

Alazon-Apache Courts

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Traditional *Color*: None

Length of Existence: 50yrs *Number of Members*: 200 *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Alazon-Apache Courts

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Almighty Vice Lords

Affiliation: People *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Maroon

Length of Existence: 5yrs *Number of Members*: 8 *Age Range*: 13-18

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Crownwood

Subgroups: Yes- Gender- Flowers

City of Origin: Detroit, MI *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Altadena Blocc Crip

Affiliation: Crip *Type*: Collective *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 15yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 10-30

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = East Terrell Hills

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

ATF Compton Crips

Affiliation: Crip *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 10-40

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhood

Subgroups: Yes = activity

City of Origin: Compton, California *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Bad Boyz

Affiliation: People *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Black

Length of Existence: 20yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 14-40

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Lockhill/Selma

Subgroups: Yes = Gender- Bad Girlz

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Big Time Players

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Burgundy

Length of Existence: 7-10yrs *Number of Members*: 20-25 *Age Range*: 18-23

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: No

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Big Time Surenos

Affiliation: Sureno *Type*: Traditional *Color*: No Data

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhoods

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Individual only

Black P-Stone Nation

Affiliation: People *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Red/Black/Green

Length of Existence: 50yrs *Number of Members*: 1000+ *Age Range*: 9-45

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Woodlawn area

Subgroups: Yes = Sets- Terror Town

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Blood Stone Villains

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Collective *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 15yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 12-26

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Camelot II

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang Presence

Cold Springs Posse

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Traditional *Color*: None

Length of Existence: 25yrs *Number of Members*: 30 *Age Range*: 13-30

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Cold Springs

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded- Young Guns

City of Origin: Buffalo, NY *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

East Side Piru- No Data

Affiliation- Blood *Type*: Defunct *Color*: Red

East Terrace Gangster

Affiliation: Crip *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 40yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = East Terrace

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Five-Nine Brims

Affiliation: Blood/UBN *Type*: Collective *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 20yrs *Number of Members*: 150 *Age Range*: 16 to adult

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Castle Hill and Parchester

Subgroups: Yes

City of Origin: Bronx, NY *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang present

Florencia 13

Affiliation: Sureno *Type*: Traditional *Color*: No Data

Length of Existence: 60yrs *Number of Members*: 1000+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = general area

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded- Midgets, Santos

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Individual only

Folk Nation

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Compressed *Color*: No data

Length of Existence: 15 yrs *Number of Members*: 30-35 *Age Range*: 20-30

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = side of town

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Jacksonville, FL *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

414 Texas Cobras

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 9-50

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = several streets

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Gangster Disciples

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 15yrs/35yrs *Number of Members*: 40 *Age Range*: 14-20

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Wallstreet

Subgroups: Prison variation = International Posse

City of Origin: Orlando/Birmingham, AL *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

Grape Street Watts

Affiliation: Crip *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Purple

Length of Existence: *Number of Members*: 10 *Age Range*: 18-21

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhood

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

Hoover Folk

Affiliation: Folk | *Type:* Compressed | *Color:* Grey/Blue

Length of Existence: 16 yrs | *Number of Members:* 30 | *Age Range:* 13-20

Criminal Specialty: No | *Territorial:* Yes = Flatbush

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Brooklyn, NY | *Site Representation***:** Orange- Individual only

Insane Unknowns

Affiliation: People | *Type*: Traditional | *Color*: Black/white

Length of Existence: 30yrs | *Number of Members*: 1000+ | *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No | *Territorial*: Yes = streets

Subgroups: Yes = blocks

City of Origin: Chicago | *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Killer Gangster Blood

Affiliation: Blood/UBN | *Type*: Compressed | *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 15yrs | *Number of Members*: 50 | *Age Range*: 18-30

Criminal Specialty: No | *Territorial*: Yes = several streets

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Atlanta, Georgia | *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Kurk Town Piru

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 25yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 12-38

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = the Heights

Subgroups: Yes

City of Origin: Albuquerque, NM *Site Representation*: Bexar- Individual only

Latin Dragons

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Black/Green

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 1000+ *Age Range*: 14-40

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes- 87th and Escanaba

Subgroups: Yes- blocks

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Latin Kings

Affiliation: People *Type*: Traditional/Neotraditional *Color*: Black/Gold

Length of Existence: 10y/7y/40yrs *Number of Members*: 80/100 *Age Range*: 21-30/14-17

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhood/school

Subgroups: Yes = Gender- Latin Queens; Tribes- United Gangsters

City of Origin: Brooklyn, NY/Long Island, NY/Chicago

Site Representation: Orange- Gang Presence/ Bexar- Gang Presence

Latin Lovers

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Green/Yellow/Red

Length of Existence: 40 yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = portion of Humboldt Park

Subgroups: Yes = blocks

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Latin Stylers

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Traditional *Color*: No Data

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: 13-35

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes- West Town Humboldt Park

Subgroups: Yes- Gender

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Lincoln Heights

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Neotraditional *Color*: Black

Length of Existence: 10yrs *Number of Members*: 20-30 *Age Range*: 12-30

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Lincoln Heights

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Orlando/Sanford *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

Little Watts 13

Affiliation: Sureno *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Black

Length of Existence: No Data *Number of Members*: 32 *Age Range*: 13-21

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = general area

Subgroups: Yes = Gender- Lady Watts

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Maniac Latin Disciples

Affiliation: Folk *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Blue/Black

Length of Existence: 40yrs *Number of Members*: 1000+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = blocks

Subgroups: Yes = Gender- Lady Ds

City of Origin: Chicago *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Nine-Tray Gangsters

Affiliation: Blood/UBN *Type*: Neotraditional *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: Undetermined *Number of Members*: 100 *Age Range*: 16-35

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhood, Boardwalk

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded- SG; M2G

City of Origin: New York *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

No Fear Gangster Crip- NO DATA

Affiliation: Crip *Color*: Blue

Original Five Bloodline

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Collective *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 13yrs *Number of Members*: 50 *Age Range*: 16-35

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = general area

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Orlando *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

Puro Segundo Varrio

Affiliation: Crip *Type*: Neotraditional *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 10yrs *Number of Members*: 50 *Age Range*: 13-18

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Second Ward

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Houston, TX *Site Representation*: Bexar- Individual only

Rigsby Court Gangsters

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 100 *Age Range*: 14-35

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Rigsby Courts

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Ruthless Kings

Affiliation: People *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Black

Length of Existence: 5yrs *Number of Members*: 30 *Age Range*: 15-22

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = several streets

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang Presence

Sa Town Bloods

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Compressed *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 5-7yrs *Number of Members*: 25-30 *Age Range*: 13-24

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Crownwood

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

Skyline Park

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Green

Length of Existence: 30yrs *Number of Members*: 32 *Age Range*: 16-21

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = Skyline Park

Subgroups: Yes = neighborhood sections

City of Origin: San Antonio *Site Representation*: Bexar- Gang presence

South Side San Diego

Affiliation: Sureno *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 21yrs *Number of Members*: 120 *Age Range*: 15-35

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = small towns on Mexican border

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded

City of Origin: San Diego *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

Torrance East Side 13

Affiliation: Sureno *Type*: Traditional *Color*: Blue

Length of Existence: 40 yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes, Torrance

Subgroups: Yes = age-graded- Little Rascals, Pee-Wees, Diablos

City of Origin: Torrance, California *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

21 Guns- No Data

Affiliation- Independent *Type*: Defunct

212 Choppers

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Traditional *Color*: No Data

Length of Existence: 40yrs *Number of Members*: 100+ *Age Range*: All

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes = areas in East LA

Subgroups: No Data

City of Origin: Los Angeles *Site Representation*: Bexar- Individual only

Unfolk Law of Blood

Affiliation: Blood *Type*: Collective *Color*: Red

Length of Existence: 3yrs *Number of Members*: 400 *Age Range*: 13-19

Criminal Specialty: No *Territorial*: Yes, school

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Orlando *Site Representation*: Orange- Gang presence

Young Shottaz

Affiliation: Independent *Type*: Specialty *Color*: None

Length of Existence: 26yrs *Number of Members*: 40 *Age Range*: 10-22

Criminal Specialty: Drug trafficking *Territorial*: Yes = neighborhood

Subgroups: No

City of Origin: Kingston, Jamaica *Site Representation*: Orange- Individual only

APPENDIX B: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Demographics

1. What is your age?
2. Which group(s) were/are you a part of?
3. At what age did you join your first group? Current group?
4. Why did you join your gang?
    a. Do you think your reasons for joining differ from other member's reasons for joining the gang?
5. What race/ethnicity would you consider yourself?
    a. How often have you seen or encountered White (or other white) gang members?
        i. (If so) Why do you think White people join gangs?
        ii. (If so) How would you describe the backgrounds of white gang members/your own background (if white)?
    b. Do you think there are more White gang members now than there have been in the past?
        i. (If so) Why do you think more White people are joining gangs now?
6. About how many people belong to the group of which you are/were a member?
7. What would you say is/was the average age of members in your group?
8. What races/ethnicities is/was your group comprised of?
9. What portion of your group is male? Female?
    a. How often have you seen or encountered female/ (other female) gangs members?
        i. (If so) Why do you think females join gangs?
        ii. (If so) How would you describe the backgrounds of female gang members?
    b. Do you think there are more female gang members now than there have been in the past?
        i. (If so) Why do you think more females are joining gangs now?
10. How long has your current group(s) been in existence?
    a. Other groups that you have been in?
11. Where was/were your group(s) geographically located?
12. Does/did your group(s) have a territory?
    a. (If so) Tell me more about the territory. Where or what was it?

Activity and Structure

13. What are typical activities that your group(s) engages/engaged in?
14. Tell me about the structure of the group(s)?
15. Are/were there any sub-cliques in your group(s)?
    a. (If so) Tell me about them.
    b. Were you in a sub-clique/group?
    c. Tell me about your relationships with the other people in that sub-group/clique
16. Are/were there people who hang/hung around with the group(s) temporarily or are/were not fully connected to the group(s)?

Hybrid Variation

17. Tell me about your group's relationships with other groups.
    a. Do you hang out? Party together? Commit crimes together?
18. How about your individual relationships with members of other groups?
    a. Do you hang out? Party together? Commit crimes together?
19. Have you been a part of more than one gang? Have other members done so?
    a. Can you explain that process?
20. Have you switched gangs? Have other members done so?
    a. (If so) Tell me more about that process.
21. Did you go through an initiation?
    a. (If so) What happened during the initiation?
22. Does everyone go through an initiation?
    a. (If so) What are the purposes of the initiation?
23. Have you left this group? Have you tried to leave this group?
    a. (If so) Why did you leave/try to leave? (Probe for reasons such as switching gangs or changing lifestyle to not include gang membership.)
    b. (If so) What happened when you left/tried to leave?
    c. (If respondent tried to leave but was unsuccessful) Why were you not able to successfully leave the group when you tried to do so?
24. Do you participate in gang activities online?
    a. (If so) Why? For what purpose or purposes?
25. Do you have enough money to pay your bills and feed yourself each month?
    a. (If so) Where does that money come from?
        i. (If respondent indicates money comes from their group) How does the group obtain this money?
        ii. (If respondent indicates money comes from their group) How is money distributed among group members?
    b. Did your family's ability to pay bills before you joined your group affect your decision to become a gang member?
26. Why do you think gangs appeared in Bexar County/Orange County?
    a. Do you think the number of gangs has changed?
    b. Do you think gangs have changed their activities?

APPENDIX C: STB SOCIAL NETWORK SURVEY

Name	**Did you know this person?**	**How often did you hang with this person?**	**How close were you to this person?**	**Which set(s) was this person a part of or associated with? (Select all that apply)**	**How involved in the gang/gang activity was this person?**
	1-yes **2-no**	**1-Never** **2-Rarely** **3-Occasionally** **4-Often** **5-All of the time**	**1-Not at all** **2-Not really** **3-Somewhat** **4-Close** **5-Very close**	-**S.T.B.** **-B.S.V.** **-Rigsby** **-Vicelord** **-W.S.V.** **-Lady Watts** **-Other_____**	1-**O.G**. 2- **Core** (always) 3-**Peripheral** (Often) 4-**Situational** (only did certain things) 5- **Fringe** (Temporary) 6- **Associate/Affiliate**

APPENDIX D: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS APPROVAL LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Revised Letter
Notice of Full Board Review and Approval of a New Study

From : **UCF Institutional Review Board**
FWA00000351, Exp. 10/8/11, IRB00001138
To : **Christian L. Bolden,**

Date : **February 10, 2009**

IRB Number: **SBE-08-05955**
Study Title: **A Social Network Perspective of the "Hybrid" Gang Label**

Dear Researcher:

Your research protocol noted above was reviewed by the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) at a convened meeting on January 28, 2009. Having received the revisions, clarifications and acknowledgement of stipulations requested by the Board, you may now proceed with your research and begin enrolling participants and collecting data and/or specimens. **The expiration date is January 27, 2010.** The IRB determined this study to be greater than minimal risk for human subjects .The IRB has determined that the federally mandated criteria at 45 CFR 46, 45 CFR 164, and/or 21 CFR 50 & 56 for IRB approval of research have been met. This study requires full board review and approval for renewal.

A **waiver of documentation of consent** has been approved for all subjects. Participants do not have to sign a consent form, and participants do not have to take a copy of the IRB-approved consent form, letter, information sheet, or statement of voluntary consent at the top of the survey.

NOTE: Please notify the IRB office when you receive your Certificate of Confidentiality. A copy must be provided to the IRB office and we will upload it to your study in iRIS. You may not begin your research until this requirement has been met.

All data, including all signed consent form documents, must be retained in a locked file cabinet for a minimum of three years past the completion of this research. Any links to the identification of participants should be maintained on a password-protected computer if electronic information is used. Additional requirements may be imposed by your funding agency, your department, or other entities. Access to data is limited to authorized individuals listed as key study personnel. Advise the IRB if you receive a subpoena for the release of this information, or if a breach of confidentiality occurs.

Unanticipated problems or serious adverse events must be reported within 5 working days by submitting either the Unanticipated Problem and Notable Event Report Form or the Serious Adverse Event Form. Do not make changes to the protocol methodology, consent form or other study documents before obtaining IRB approval. Minor changes to this research may be approved by expedited review and should be submitted using the online Addendum/Modification Request Form. To continue this research beyond the expiration date, a Continuing Review Application Form must be submitted 4 weeks prior to the expiration date. An Addendum/Modification Request Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All submission forms may be found in the iRIS system. **Failure to submit a Continuing Review Application Form could lead to study suspension, a loss of funding and/or publication possibilities, or reporting of noncompliance to sponsors or funding agencies.** The IRB maintains the authority under 45 CFR 46.110(e) to observe or have a third party observe the consent process and the research.

On behalf of Tracy Dietz, Ph.D., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/10/2009 03:21:09 PM EST

Joanne Muratori

IRB Coordinator

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