

## **CHARISMATIC ROLE THEORY: Towards a Theory of Gang Dissipation**

by

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### **Introduction and Literature Review**

For the greater part of the 20th century gangs were largely transitory due to the relatively rapid assimilation of white ethnic groups into mainstream culture. While gangs have always existed in the U.S. and were common in the 1940s and 1950s, most gangs did not begin to establish permanency in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York until the late 1960s. This is logical because these three cities have the largest populations and the highest populations densities of unassimilated minorities (Vigil 2002). However, in the late 1980s and early 1990s the media reported a massive explosion of gang emergence throughout the country, designating gangs as a national problem (Knox, McCurrie, Laskey, and Tromanhauser 1996). Whether these reports were accurate has been disputed, but it is certain that they spurred theoretical and empirical investigations.

Law enforcement agencies claimed that the rapid emergence of gangs in other cities occurred because gang members migrated with the intention of

expanding the criminal empires of the gang nations. Others claimed that media showcasing of gang activities inadvertently disseminated gang culture to impressionable youth (Maxson 1998). The results of investigations into these claims provide evidence that gang migration to expand criminal empires was largely a myth (Quinn and Downs 1993) and that the transplanting of gang members was largely due to families trying to escape from gang infested areas (Laskey 1996). Furthermore, gang emergence during the 1980s and 1990s was too massive to be accounted for by cultural dissemination through the media (Wells and Weisheit 2001). Even if the numbers were not totally accurate, and the reasons for the emergence were inconclusive, it is obvious that “permanent” named gangs emerged throughout the United States in the late 1980s and 1990s (Knox et al. 1996). Whether directly established by migrating gang members or copied by upstart groups, the emergent gangs took on the names and affiliations of well-established gangs in Chicago and Los Angeles.

The U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) reports that this trend may be reversing. These reports show that from 1996 to 2002 there was an overall decrease of 14% in gang membership (Egley and Major 2004). While this is dramatic in itself, the substantive significance is also shown in the demographics. The OJJDP reports that in 1996 the distribution of gang members in age categories was approximately 50% juvenile (under 18) and 50% adult (18+); however, in 2000 63% of gang members were adults and 37% were juveniles (Egley 2002). These statistics indicate that not only is gang membership declining, but also that the decline is predominately among juveniles. Some have theorized that these demographics are the result of law enforcement’s lack of concern with younger members and computerized databases that are not purged of inactive gang members (Howell, Moore and Egley 2002). However, research has not investigated these hypotheses. Previous research has been dominated by studies that explore why gangs emerge and why individuals join gangs. Researchers have not explored the dissipation of gangs, particularly declining youth participation. The present study explores these issues and proposes Charismatic Role Theory as a new framework through which we can view these phenomena.

Prior literature has provided an abundance of information regarding how gangs originate (Cohen 1955; Moore 1991; Vigil 1988; 1997; 2002), why they are violent (Horowitz 1983; Matza 1990; Jankowski 1991; Vigil 1997; Moore and Vigil 1989), and why they have spread to other areas (Vigil, Moore and Garcia 1983; Laskey 1996). However, the literature has not explained why gang membership has declined in small cities and rural areas. Large cities have reported that their overall gang membership has increased by one percent; however, these large cities still experienced a decrease in juvenile gang membership (Egley 2002). This phenomenon has received little attention despite its importance; hence this will be the focus of my thesis.

The decline of gang membership and youth participation in particular, could be the result of macro-structural factors such as racial housing segregation and employment discrimination. A reduction in these discriminatory problems may explain the decline of gangs in areas where these discriminatory problems were rampant. While it seems unlikely that discrimination and segregation have been eliminated, there may be areas where these problems have declined. Cities may have a larger proportion of minorities who have assimilated into mainstream culture, or alternately some areas may have a population dominance of minorities, such as the Hispanic majority in the site of this study, San Antonio, Texas.

Another possible factor related to the decline in membership is that in areas where gangs are relatively new, there are no “veteranos” or original gangsters (Vigil 1988), so there is largely an absence of charismatic influence for the continuation of the gang from older generations. Indeed, Winfree, Bernat, and Esbenson’s (2001) comparison of gang membership between a large city and a small one indicated the reasons for per capita gang membership discrepancy was the absence of older gang members in the smaller city. Older members provide positive reinforcement for gang membership in larger cities. My study will develop Charismatic Role Theory, a new theory that offers an explanation for the decline of gang membership by suggesting that the removal of particular members contributes to the decline of gang membership among youth.

### **Charismatic Role Theory**

Charismatic role theory is ultimately a theory about cultural transmission. This theory assumes that culture is learned and that particular members of groups teach the culture to others. The foundation of this theory is built on Cohen’s (1955), and Merton’s (1996) ideas about the motivation of youth to join delinquently labeled subcultures and participate in deviant modes of innovation. Vigil (1993) takes this further in explaining the multiple marginalization of youth from the institutions of family, education, and law enforcement. Youth are left with the public space of their neighborhood, where they begin relying on each other and older streetwise gang members for protection and survival. This process of street socialization teaches younger generations gang lore, methods, and rationalizations, thereby continuing and maintaining the subculture. Charismatic role theory concerns itself with subcultural maintenance of gangs by looking at the seldom examined process of dissipation. Additionally, previous theories have neglected the importance of particular members of the gang, and this theory seeks to rectify this neglect.

This theory argues that there are particular members within gang subcultures that are highly charismatic and that these members are the keys to the continuation of the subculture. Charismatic members inspire a following of other people both intentionally and unintentionally. For this reason I will operationalize charisma as personal charm or fervor that inspires an enthusiastic following of other people.

Indeed, Weber (1966: 328) describes the charismatic leader as having some exceptional, heroic, or exemplary quality that allows the leader to set the normative patterns for others. Jankowski (1991) states that charismatic leaders in gangs differ from Weber's concepts in two ways. First, there is more than one leader and the leadership role is passed around this inner circle of leaders arbitrarily. Secondly, all members of the gang can potentially become a charismatic leader, but those that are not leaders recognize the advanced characteristics of the people who are leaders (Jankowski 1991).

Delinquency in deviant subcultures comes from individuals learning more definitions favorable to lawbreaking than definitions favorable to law abiding (Sutherland and Cressey 1974). For instance, the law would define fighting as an illegal violation of a person's right to not suffer bodily harm; on the other hand, defining fighting as representing yourself, your friends, and your turf is a definition favorable to breaking the law. The charisma of certain members allows them to provide enough definitions to others that are favorable to committing deviant acts or breaking the law and joining a delinquent subculture. While ostracized youth can easily locate each other, I hypothesize that it takes people of a certain charisma to maintain a nexus that continually unites these youth.

For descriptive purposes I will call these charismatic people core gang members. Core gang members have been described as having more involvement in crime and participation in gang activities (Klein 1997: 59-60). Although core members may have differing roles, the membership role examined in this study are the charismatic core members who are highly committed to the gang, participate in the more serious crimes (specifically acts of violence), and are connection points between peripheral gang members (those members who are not as highly committed to the gang) who may not know each other. A report from the Texas Attorney General's office (Stanley 1992) makes these distinctions between the two categories: Core members have a longer history with the gang, usually joining between 10 and 14 years of age and leaving the street gang when they are 22 years or older. Whereas peripherals join the gang between 14 and 18 years of age and leave when they are 20 or older. Both groups are involved in violence, but more criminality is found in core members. And although identification with the gang, or using the gang as identification is strong in peripheral members, it is profound in core members. While important, these generalities do not point to the relevance of these differences, which is the function that core members have in the gang.

The theory I propose centers on the core gang member. There is usually more than one core member that provides an inner-circle of the gang. This inner circle is the foundation of the gang where core members and thus prestige are located. The core members set precedents for gang activity that radiate outward. The core members recruit new members either through active selection or by attracting impressionable youth who are impressed by the core member's reputation of street

prohess. While indoctrinating new members into the gang, usually through acts of physical violence or bravado that create or maintain a respected persona, the core members actively select the new generation of core members by including these recruits in the more clandestine and criminal activities. Hence, the new generation is socialized; gang culture has been transmitted and continued. If much of the emergence of gangs in the U.S. continued in this manner, then dialectically, the gangs began the process of their own destruction. Sensational media coverage attracted attention to gangs, which consisted of primarily young minority males. Gangs were perceived as a threat and a social problem; thus law enforcement reacted strongly toward these groups. Police created specialized gang units to combat this social problem and tried using a variety of methods to dismantle the gangs (Katz 2001). However, before the mid-1990s, the status of being a gang member was not illegal (the use of gang injunctions, penalty enhancements for gang membership, and laws prohibiting recruitment may have changed this to some extent), therefore the police could do little but keep a close watch. Core members who committed serious crimes gave law enforcement officials grounds for arrest and prosecution.

With the rapid emergence of various gangs there was inevitable conflict. Braga, Kennedy, and Tita (2001) argue that certain individuals are at the center of gang violence, “locked in a self-sustaining dynamic of violence, often driven by fear, “respect” issues, and vendettas. (p. 283). According to Vigil et al.’s (1983) study of gang expansion, new gangs are considerably more violent due to their efforts to establish a reputation. When several different gangs emerge, they simultaneously set off a cycle of violence. The core members will be the primary participants in this violence, and they will target the core members of other gangs (their competition). The emergence of gangs in the late 1980s and 1990s occurred at the same time that high-tech automatic weapon availability increased. This allowed core members to begin bloody campaigns to eliminate core members of other gangs. The media coverage of this inspired strong public backing for law enforcement. New laws were made that allowed gangs to be pursued under organized crime statutes and harsh penalties for gang-related crimes were instituted (Carlie 2005). The bloody campaigns of core gang members resulted in the death of many people and gave law enforcement agencies the opportunity to arrest these members and incarcerate them. Death and incarceration both neutralized core gang members and eliminated charismatic leadership at the street level. It can be argued that incarcerated members maintain these roles in prison or move on to prison gangs, however studying these possibilities was beyond on the reach of the present study.

If core gang members are removed or eliminated, then the process of gang enculturation (accepting behavior patterns of a subculture) cannot continue. This means that there are fewer people to actively recruit or attract the ostracized youths, and there are fewer people to provide a nexus of connection once these youth locate

each other. Gang benefits and ideologies are not modeled for new generations of youth, resulting in fewer reasons to join gangs, fewer available opportunities to join gangs, and fewer definitions favorable to joining gangs or participating in the criminal activity characteristic of gangs. It makes sense to hypothesize that fewer juveniles will join gangs.

Though it may seem that a decrease in gang membership is beneficial to society, the perception is somewhat misleading. If core gang members are neutralized or eliminated, thereby reducing some of the more violent crimes, the problems that led to the existence of these gang members in the first place are still not addressed. By eliminating these charismatic individuals, the primary accomplishment is that the masses of frustrated, powerless youth are left without anyone to lead them. In effect, this removal of leadership creates a void in which a variety of other problematic behaviors can emerge.

According to Alonso (1999) the void left by the dismantling of the Black Panther Party resulted in the creation of the Crips and Bloods. The Black Panther Party, and other black power organizations harnessed the emotional resources of frustrated masses of minority youths. These black power organizations were considered a threat and a social problem by law enforcement authorities, which subsequently participated in aggressive actions against these organizations. Ultimately, these organizations were neutralized by the elimination of charismatic leadership through death and incarceration. Among the masses of the now leaderless minority youth, a charismatic 15 year-old Raymond Washington emerged as a leader. Trying to pattern his group after the Black Panthers, he lacked the experience to steer his group in the footsteps of the Black Panthers and his group quickly fell into crime. This group came to be known as the Crips, and their rapid growth and crime sprees caused other groups of frustrated youth to make an alliance called the Bloods to oppose them (Alonso 1999). As we know, this rivalry and its violent manifestation would spread across the entire U.S. This is an example of the volatile or hopeless situation that can occur when people are left leaderless and others rush to fill the void. One possibility is that the conditions suggested by this theory caused a void that has created a generation of drug users. The reasoning supporting this hypothesis is as follows:

Although an increase in arrests is not necessarily synonymous with an increase in use, tentatively using arrests as a gauge supports this theory. There had been a 60% increase in juvenile arrests for drug violations in a 10-year period from the mid-90s into the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Department of Justice Federal Bureau of Investigation 2002). It is likely that youth have simply moved away from conflict and criminal gangs (Cloward and Ohlin 1960) to subcultural groups not traditionally defined as gangs. These groups- car clubs, party crews, etc. have as their common denominator, high amounts of drug use. In effect these youth may have replaced criminal deviance with the esoteric kicks of retreatist groups (Cloward and Ohlin

1960) to dull feelings of powerlessness.

Perceptions of severity may differ but ultimately retreatist groups are still problematic for society. It is possible that the strategy of eliminating charismatic core members has only removed one problem to create a drug problem. Furthermore, the removal of charismatic members by law enforcement only displaces the problem because the people are put into prison where they create a steady pool of recruitment for the more organized prison gangs.

### **Data and Methods**

This study is an exploratory inquiry; Due to a lack of precedent in examining the dissipation of gangs, a qualitative study was chosen to allow the researcher to examine the validity of questions before attempting a larger quantitative investigation. While one of the major focal points of this investigation is a preliminary examination of charismatic role theory, this study was open to a grounded theory approach, which allows for alternative explanations for gang dissipation. The study was conducted using fourteen in-depth interviews and one telephone interview with former gang members. The data was collected in 2005. The respondents were in the age range of 23 to 30. This age group was selected to generate knowledge from the time of interest, which will be the late 1980s to the mid 1990s. All respondents were active gang members during the aforementioned time period. Howell et al. (2002) report that nine out of ten localities reported what is termed “late onset gangs,” which are those gangs that appeared between 1986 and 1996. These gangs may have taken on the names of Los Angeles and Chicago gangs established well before this time period, however, gangs with these names did not appear in specified locales such as San Antonio until this time period. The late onset gangs were distinguished from traditional gangs as having more females, more Caucasians, more racial/ethnic mixture and more middle class teens.

The sample was not limited to any particular group. The respondents varied enough so that most of the “gang nations” were represented. According to Texas law enforcement officials, gang nations were the Bloods, Crips, People, Folks, Sureno and Norteno affiliations. Gang nations are described as being “made up of smaller “sets” that share certain symbols and loyalties. Thus, different sets of the same gang may not even know each other except by recognizing common signs and insignia. They may develop rivalries among themselves, but they may also rally against a common enemy” (Abbott 2001)<sup>1</sup>. The sample consisted primarily of former members of the Bloods, Crips, People, and Sureno affiliation, and although two respondents were intermediately associated with a Folk gang, their primary affiliation was with other groups so there was not any solid representation of the Folk nation gangs. The Norteno groups were not represented. The sample consisted of 4 black males, 1 mixed race (black/white) male, 3 Mexican-American males, 1 Puerto Rican male, 4 white males, and 2 Mexican-American females. This study concerned

itself strictly with street gangs. Respondents were accessed through snowball sampling and the respondents were given pseudonyms to protect their identity.

The study was done in San Antonio, Texas because of the known extensiveness of its gang situation. A report by the Texas Attorney General's office (Stanley 1992) stated that San Antonio did report having a gang problem, and that the gangs were using high-powered weaponry such as the AK-47 and the SKS, which may have added to San Antonio's reputation as the "drive-by capital" during that era (Kriel 2009). The entertainment media also made note of the gang situation in San Antonio when a famous rap artist from California, released a song proclaiming San Antonio to be "just like Compton" (a city adjacent to Los Angeles, notorious for its gang situation and the birthplace of the Piru Bloods) and an intense portrayal of girls in gangs was released in the book *8-Ball Chicks* (Sikes 1997). The volatile situation in San Antonio during the time period that this study is concerned with is portrayed by one of the respondents,

**Oso:** *When I was living in San Diego (California), the gangsters there were like "oh, you are from San Antonio, we heard ya'll are crazy down there."*

### **Analysis**

The present study explores the value of Charismatic Role Theory, which consists of four major premises.

- 1) There are charismatic core members in gangs. I define charismatic core members as gang members who
  - participate in comparatively more violence and criminal ventures.
  - inspire fear and respect from other members.
- 2) Core members are the primary recruiters of new members.
- 3) Core members have been neutralized through death and incarceration.
- 4) Remaining members of dissipated and new generations joined retreatist subcultures rather than criminal or conflict gangs (Cloward and Ohlin 1960).

### *Charismatic Core Members*

Previous studies have indicated that although there are no fixed posts as leaders, core members take the lead in different situations (Jackson and McBride 2000), and that these members are above average in intelligence, strength, and agility (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). However, the limited opportunities of the lower class leave the gang as the only perceived outlet for some of these individuals to show their criminal aptitude or gladiatorial prowess in criminal and conflict gangs (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). The subjects interviewed for this study unanimously agreed that there were core members. While some said that there was not a group of core members, the accounts indicated that there were at least individual core members, if not a group of them, who were more feared, respected, and followed,

**I:** *So tell me about these people that were respected. What would entail that respect, what would qualify them for that?*

**Cajun:** *...I guess if you were capable of violence and you are capable of not having a conscience, you know a lot of time fear entails respect and if you can instill fear in people then you are definitely respected and the more that you are respected, you know the more you might be considered a leader.*

**I:** *Would you say that there was a core group?*

**Cajun:** *I think in, in any culture there is subcultures and different parts of groups that make up you know one whole. But there is always going to be kind of a core group. Just depending upon, there might be you know 20 or 30 of ya'll run tight, but there is only 8 or 9 of ya'll that are just really close, you know where you really count on each other and the rest are kind of you know floating around on the outskirts of things.*

**I:** *Was there a core group, you said there was different groups, was there like a main group?*

**Shuga:** *Yeah, like of just the certain ones that you know that like when people go out and do shit, like we were the first ones to be like hey, you know what is going down... We all meet up at my boy (name)'s house, and it seemed like it was me and (names several people) and like these were the cat's that kicked it every day, we were the ones that kicked it everyday, all day long it was just us, but a lot of times you catch other people coming around, they are like from a couple of blocks over or something to come kick it with us, because you know that we are always going to be partying or doing something stupid and shit. Yeah, but it was solid, because we were the closest.*

**I:** *About how many was in that group?*

**Shuga:** *I would say six.*

**I:** *How did that group of six affect those other people that came around?*

**Shuga:** *Oh, it was pretty much like what we said was gold. Whatever we were doing, that is what everybody else around us was doing.*

**I:** *Were there any other members in the group that a lot of the members would look up to or follow?*

**Mama T:** *Oh yeah, my brother, everybody looked up to (other name), the main, the older ones because those, they were the older ones and everybody looked up to them, followed them everywhere.*

**I:** *Were there any leaders?*

**Lil' Soldja:** *I knew some that were higher ranked, but I don't know as far as people actually leading the gang.*

**I:** *Okay, tell me about those people you say are higher ranked, is there anything in particular that would make you notice them?*

**Lil' Soldja:** *They really wouldn't get messed with a lot, like they wouldn't get joked around, people wouldn't joke on them about it or about anything. If they sat there and told you to do something for the gang then you would follow their instructions but if somebody else lower ranked told you to do something, you would look at them like they were stupid.*

Yablonsky (1959) states that there was generally a core of 5 or 6 members that were more psychologically disturbed, so it can be reasoned that these were more violent individuals. The respondents overwhelmingly stated that there were a few members of their gangs that were feared, respected, and followed because they were much more violent and apt to criminality than the other members. Charisma suggests qualities that inspire an enthusiastic following by others. Although mainstream society may view charisma as positive qualities in a leader, it is apparent from respondent accounts that violent behavior is an admired quality in gang subcultures.

**I:** *Were there any other members that the group looked up to or followed?*

**Scrappy:** *There were some that people would look up to them and say hey man, this is the type of G (gangster) I want to be. Yeah, there were some.*

**I:** *Tell me about these people.*

**Scrappy:** *There was one person that I knew, a lot of people, I mean this guy, he was just crazy, insane. I mean he would go out and police would be coming down looking for him because he had shot some person or something...and these police be coming down through the neighborhood...he started shooting at them...and they, they turn around and call back-up, but by the time they call back-up, this guy was running off somewhere, you know. And everybody, "he crazy, you know I wanna be like him."*

**I:** *Were there any other members that the group looked up to or followed?*

**Shuga:** ...There were a couple of other cats, they were some Rolling 30's or something like that, (names given) they were like the hardest niggas out on the block, people would come out there and be like "they holding it down and shit" and we would be like hey, we are down with them. They would tell us to go do our, go run some shit, and we would go do the shit.

**I:** Were there any leaders?

**Kinkaid:** There really weren't any that I knew of, I'm sure there were but, I mean there were dudes that stood out in different areas, but I didn't know any that could be pointed out as like that is the leader you know.

**I:** So you said there were people who stood out, tell me more about these people?

**Kinkaid:** You know its this guy you would hear about getting into it with other dudes, you know shooting at them or robbing them or whatever.

**I:** Were there certain members of the group you were in that initiated or participated in most of the violence?

**Kinkaid:** Oh yeah, I mean (laughs) there was a few, you know just like the answers that I gave earlier, there is always that one or that couple that is just hard core about it and is just always down to start shit. I mean its cool sometimes, but other times you know it is to get the point across and to the other dudes to let them know that we ain't taking no shit or whatever so it was necessary.

**Dj Cast,** another former Sa Town Blood agrees with the sentiments of **Kinkaid**, as well as indicating that charisma may come from abilities other than violence. Klein (1995: 59) explains that activities leading to the core member role may not be crime related.

**I:** Did the other members look up to these certain individuals?

**Dj Cast:** I think there was different reasons to look up to different people. Uh, another guy that we had, you know, short dude, he was real intelligent, you know people would gain leadership through intelligence, people would gain leadership through willingness to do whatever it took, because a part of being in a gang was bringing the attention to people in your set to let people know that your set is the roughest, so you needed those people that was just off the hinges and that would just

*snap and just do whatever without caring about nothing except for making their mark in history.*

An interview with a former gangster from Tulsa, Oklahoma was obtained for a preliminary comparison of San Antonio with other cities. **Azul** confirmed that the gang he belonged to was similar:

**I:** *Were there select members or certain members that participated in or initiated more of the violence?*

**Azul:** *Yeah, definitely, some of the guys, they would just you know, just do what they wanted to do. Really no cares, no concerns, you know they knew they knew where they were headed and that was it. There, were definitely some were more violent than others.*

**T-Note** was an added bonus for comparative value. A proud member of the Dayton Street Posse from Newark, New Jersey, **T-Note** moved to San Antonio and became affiliated with the Tray-Five-Seven Crips. **T-Note** also confirms the existence of charismatic members from Dayton Street, who were feared but somewhat benevolent to the other inhabitants. He contrasts the existence of the core members in San Antonio, however,

**I:** *Okay, you said there wasn't any leaders- like designated leaders in Texas. Were there any other members that the group looked up to or followed?*

**T-Note:** *Oh, definitely, definitely, but out here it worked more on a fear factor level. It was more like the more you are afraid of this guy, the more control and power he has over what's going on, and in some cases, some cat's life basically. So if you are that afraid of a dude, it is hard to tell*

*him no, you know what I mean, so yeah, I guess you can say they were almost like leaders, but it wasn't like a general. You know he wasn't thinking for what was going to be best for the team. It was just like the best for me, since I got all these niggas scared of me and they think they a part of me and down with me, I'm just going to instill fear, you know I'm going to fuckin' push them around. I'm still going to rob these jokers and they are still going to show me love and respect because they are afraid of me.*

It is apparent from all these accounts that the typology of charismatic core members- members who are feared, respected, and followed, usually due to their volatile attributes- merits validity and should be investigated further.

*Recruitment*

The second premise of charismatic role theory examined in this study was concerned with the recruitment of new members by the charismatic core members. This premise was not well supported by the data for several reasons. Some subjects did state that there were certain members or groups that were heavily into recruiting,

**Cajun:** *There was, there is a lot of people that, that I think that in their own personality, they need to feel like they are big and they're bad ass, and so they want to go and recruit little younger members and little weaklings and try to mold them to make themselves feel better so they want to feel like they got a bunch of youngsters looking up to them.*

**I:** *Of all the different groups that you were affiliated with were any active in recruiting?*

**Sleek:** *The Ambros were big into that. They had all their little shorties (young members) running around. Yeah, they were all about having new members.*

Other respondents admitted to joining the gang because of their admiration of a core member.

**Lil Soldja:** *Well, I figured I wanted to follow in my cousin's footsteps, cause I wanted to be like him, I wanted to do what he was doing.*

**I:** *Were there specific members that the other people really looked up to?*

**Lil' Soldja:** *Yeah, yeah there were. I used to, I mean I still do, I looked up to my cousin because basically it was everything, the way I looked at it everything revolved around him. If something was going to happen, he was involved with it. If there was money to be made, he was involved with it. If guns needed to be there, he had them, so basically a lot of people looked up to him.*

This premise that gangs actively recruited was not the consensus however. Two interrelated issues emerged concerning recruitment. If associates/affiliates are considered members then issues of recruiting become extremely complex. This complexity emerges when determining what recruitment means. Is it the courtship of a potential new member of the gang, or is it actually becoming a new member of the gang? Courtship of a potential member is too difficult of a variable to examine because problems of definition again arise. The actual joining of a new member is simpler, except that there has to be a point at which a person crosses the line from a non-member to a member. An apparent and often used line of determining who is a

gang member is the initiation rite which usually consists of fighting several other members at the same time or committing a violent crime. Associates, affiliates, and wannabes have not participated in initiation rites; therefore they are usually excluded from consideration as gang members. I, the researcher reject the idea of excluding associates because the only difference between a proclaimed member and a proclaimed associate was self-identification as such. Associates are still a part of the entities known as gangs. Furthermore, the study data indicated that self-identification had little relationship to how others perceived the individual and more intriguingly, had no relationship to initiation rites. Other people identifying a person as a part of the gang seemed more relevant in the experience of respondents than initiation rites did. Thus, for this study, the judgment of other gang members was used in defining the line of demarcation from non-gang member to gang member.

Fleisher (2002) noticed this significance in that only nine out of 54 subjects in the Champaign study participated in initiation rites. Similarly, the respondents in this study indicated no pattern as to when and why initiations occur. For comparative purposes we can examine the Sa Town Bloods. **Dj Cast** and **Kinkaid** were both core members but only **Dj Cast** went through an initiation. **Lil' Soldja**, **Rush**, and **Scrappy** were all peripheral members, yet only **Lil' Soldja** went through an initiation. This indicates that initiations are not a determinate factor in who is and who is not a gang member. This is a significant finding, but it was not in the scope of the present research to investigate. If an individual participates in gang activity, then they are a part of the social network entity known as a gang.

The second emergent issue related to recruitment was a distinction between types of gangs. A typology of gangs arose from the data. This typology consisted of three gang categories: hoods, clans, and the hybrid gangs that Howell et al. discussed (2002).

**Hoods** are traditional type gangs based in impoverished, densely populated neighborhoods. These gangs commanded total dominance of the neighborhood, and any youth living in the neighborhood is automatically associated with the gang. Because of the racial/ethnic segregation of housing, these gangs are likely to be homogenous in terms of race/ethnicity.

**I:** *Why do you think gangs appeared in San Antonio to the extent that they did?*

**Pranx:** *Because of the, it's just how San Antonio east side is broken up. You have all these housings, and then from the housings is poverty, so that is why the east side is so bad to this day, because all the housing is just broken off into sections. You know you have East Terrace, you have Rigsby, you have Sutton Homes, you have Victoria Courts that used to exist but then they tore them down. So you have all these hoods and then from the hoods, they started cliquing, and then we, you know, hey man, you know, we should be called this. And they feel they the best, and then the other people feel they the best and then from that went on to gangs, they became gang members and so then, they became from that, from how San Antonio was sectioned.*

**Clans** are family based gangs. They are often small but occasionally large. These are generally close-knit gangs consisting primarily of family members and their immediate associates. These gangs may share neighborhoods or territories with other gangs and tend not to seek open conflict due to the awareness of their numerical size. Clans tend to be but are not always Hispanic gangs, and there seems to be no

pattern as to what locality they exist in. Clans may be similar to Hagedorn and Macon's (1998: 15) description of Milwaukee gangs in having "no loyalty to neighborhood or race."

**Hybrids** are the gangs that have either none of the attributes of traditional gangs or cut and paste colors, symbols, and characteristics from different traditional gangs as they please (Starbuck, Howell, and Lindquist 2001). While they may exist in a certain neighborhood, they do not command dominance over the entire neighborhood and other youth living there are not automatically associated with the gang. Many of the members do not live in the neighborhood where they hang out. They have usually taken a namesake of gangs in Los Angeles or Chicago, and the membership consists of mixed race/ethnicity/sex and individuals from mixed-income families. These groups existed primarily in the Northeast and Northwest of San Antonio.

For a discussion of recruitment, respondents indicate that Hoods and Clans did not use active recruitment, but rather a persons lengthy association with the gang or gang territory as pertinent in being included in the group.. To be a part of or affiliated with a Hood gang, an individual could simply live in the same neighborhood. Similarly, the membership requirement for a Clan gang was blood relation or close association with the family.

**Mama T:** (LWS 13/Clan Type)...*All the people that were in the Watts were already people we knew, you know so I had, I don't know of anybody we just barely met or you know met and a couple of months later, boom you are in. It was more like we were family, you know the same people we hung around with, you know it was the same thing we went with. We never had new people or go to parties and kick it with some guys and boom a couple of months later, hey you are in. It was never like that. It was, you know they needed people they knew, they trusted and they knew about.*

**I:** *O.k. was the gang active in recruiting new people?*

**Pranx:** (W.C.T./Hood Type) *Nah, they didn't recruit nobody man, all that recruiting stuff, man, you just, it is not really recruiting, you just adapt to your surroundings like I said earlier, there ain't no recruiting in it. They don't go out, hey, you know, you should be down with us, you know, we ruthless. There is none of that man, you just adapt to your surroundings.*

**I:** *Were the majority of the members any certain racial or ethnic group?*

**Pranx:** *Mostly blacks...and Hispanics. I mean we had a lot of Hispanics too, just because basically if you moved to that neighborhood, you was going to be down. Like I knew white people like you know, they moved to the Wheatley Courts because of poverty and the next thing you know they down with the Wheatley Courts.*

Unlike Hoods and Clans, Hybrid gangs need to actively recruit. However, of the respondents only Sa Town Bloods said they actively recruited new members. The other respondents of the hybrid gangs gave mixed responses. Some indicated that their groups did not recruit:

**Shuga:** *It wasn't even a recruiting thing. We never went out like hey ya'll want to*

*be down with us. We never done that, we never done nothing like that. All the people that kicked it with us were either already gang members, you know already people that was down with other sets...*

Other respondents indicated that recruitment did happen in various connections to core members,

**Cajun:** *In any group, recruitment happens, I mean, when I, once I was like 17 and I had to come back to San Antonio from when I was in Missouri, I seen a lot of youngsters that were coming up and I was still really active in the lifestyle. I wouldn't necessarily try to recruit them because they would want to be there because they think it's cool you know. They've been looking at you for you know 5 or 6 years and they've heard about you and you know. I've walked into jails at 21, 22, 23, years of age and seen little 17, 18 year olds and I don't even know who the fuck they are, and they are like "hey, man, what's up, man. Hey we did a drive-by together when we were kids, you don't remember, you pistol-whipped me and pushed me out of the car and said I was too young." And so I would say that recruitment happens but really these kids are looking for a sense of belonging, they want to belong to something. They don't belong in their home; they don't feel like they have a family so they want to be loved. They want to be you know feeling like they belong to something, so they really come to you. And then if they are willing to jump through some hoops and help you out and they are, they're helping you out, then you are going to let them ride with you.*

**Dj Cast:** *Well yeah, I would say those core members. I think the core members were more into recruiting. Anyways more matter of fact for the most part of the real ones that were in it, the core members were the ones who pretty much did the recruiting, it wasn't too much the underlings I would say. They didn't really do much as far as recruiting.*

In summary, most gangs do not need to recruit. Those that did recruit, did not present a clear picture of how active they were in recruiting and whether or not core members did most of the recruiting<sup>2</sup>.

#### *Core Member Neutralization*

The third premise of charismatic role theory is the concept that core members were neutralized due to death and incarceration. The sample in the study unanimously confirmed that death and incarceration were common occurrences amongst core members. All of the respondents said that they knew members who had been killed or incarcerated, and many of them noted that it was the core members who suffered these fates,

**I:** *Was there anything particularly special about these people, the same people that you said earlier that people feared and respected...*

**Pranx:** *They are all in jail or dead... they are all dead or in jail and a lot of my friends that I grew up with are in jail and a few of them are dead but most of them are in jail like doing long terms, like doing Feds.*

**I:** *What happened to the rest of the gang?*

**Rush:** *It just kind of fizzled out to me... I just kind of blew it off, because like I said, someone that meant something to me went to prison and I just wanted to not do that.*

**Rush's** account is similar to others indicating the important role core members played in the cohesion of the gangs.

**T-Note:** *My homeboy (name), well this cat was like 17 when he died, I was 16. This mothafucker was a knock out king. I mean he was knocking out 23 year old dudes when he was like 13. I mean he was putting it on grown men to where... You would see a man who had money and was not to be fucked with, tuck his chain when (name) walked by. And he got shot like 11 times, maybe seven of them in the head. And then that beef was over, because once they killed (name), I guess the dudes that was really riding his coattails, they had no more juice now, they couldn't just use his name and get respect, so a lot of them cats caught some bullets too because they didn't have their superpower behind them anymore.*

**Dj Cast:** *Well, the set, like I said you know the people getting girlfriends, eventually getting married. People getting in jail, people getting shot and that core group got just broken up and once the core group got broken up, the rest of the members did not have much reason to bang, especially since banging abroad just kind of died down.*

**Cajun:** *At this point, there is, there is gangs that still function under certain names and what not like that but as a kid, you know people that I ran around with, you know they are not together anymore, you know they are all in different prisons or dead or in different places... So in my opinion what I was a part of then is gone and is gone forever.*

One respondent gave additional insight into the post street life of core members. **Oso** was distinguished from the other respondents because he was the oldest, placing his gang involvement in the late 80s as opposed to the early 90s, which was the gang era of the other subjects.

**I:** *So why did you stop?*

**Oso:** *When I got locked up, all my friends got locked up. I seen them in there. Same old thing but just different, how can I say this- morals. They were mafias (prison gangs) in there and all that. Me, I wasn't into all that. When I got out everybody was either gang-related or a biker gang. Me, I just stayed to myself. I don't believe in all the biker gangs or the mafia*

While not in the scope of this paper, it is important to take note of **Oso's** observation. The core members who were violent in street gangs are sent to prison where they are indoctrinated into more organized criminal organizations.

The accounts of the subjects in this study make it apparent that core member neutralization is a valid concept to be further examined. Some of the participants also indicated that the neutralization of core members precipitated the dissipation of the

gang. This premise of neutralization precipitating the dissipation of the gang is the crux of this theory. The accounts of **Dj Cast**, **Rush**, and **T-note** indicate that dissipation was directly linked to the removal of core members. Similar sentiments were shared by many of the other respondents. This finding suggests that core members are vital to the existence of the gang. However, due to the earlier finding that recruitment isn't necessarily a function of charismatic core members, more research is necessary to determine how the core members are vital to gang persistence and the connection between street gang and prison gang membership..

Dissipation was not universally the case however. Using the gang typology established earlier, the sample indicated that hybrid and clan gangs dissipated after the neutralization of core members. Hood gangs on the other hand did not dissipate. This situation of non-dissipation may be due to the numerical dominance in Hood gangs. Hood gangs are similar to traditional Los Angeles gangs in that it is not possible to neutralize enough core members to dissipate the gang. This is not to say however, that neutralization of core members had no effect on Hood gangs. The effect will be discussed in the following section.

#### *Dissipation and Alternative structures*

The last premise of this theory is that the conditions of frustrated youth still exist after the neutralization of core members. The remaining members and new generations of youth who are not members of conflict gangs would join retreatist subcultures. The groups represented in this study were highly combative and representative of Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) description of conflict gangs. The last premise indicated that there would be a switch to those subcultural groups where people searched for esoteric kicks through sex or drugs (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). The premise found absolutely no resonance in the accounts given by the subjects. Only one respondent suggested that other groups are being joined,

**Royal:** *Gang banging isn't as popular as it was when I was a kid. Now you got all your tagging crews, your breaking crews, shit like that. And there are just chingos of them and nobody really tries to recruit them.*

However, there is no indication given that these groups are retreatist groups or that they are characterized primarily by drug usage. The majority of respondents indicated that the remaining gang members and the new generation have evolved into criminal- oriented subcultures. The street warfare has faded and the remaining groups are entirely concerned with illegitimate financial gain,

**I:** *If I told you that statistics show that juvenile gang membership is declining, going down, why would you think that would be?*

**Pranx:** *Everybody is in jail (laughs), they getting caught. They, I mean the police are cutting, trying to crack down on gangs, so everybody is getting caught, and it is just dying down. I wouldn't say dying down, but like I said, people are getting smarter, investing money. Money is going into different places, and you know legal places. I mean it ain't legal, but you know they somehow getting around it from getting caught.*

**I:** *Do you think the gang situation has gotten better or worse?*

**Dj Cast:** *Oh, it's gotten tons better. I mean, ain't nobody gang banging. San Antonio, you got very few people who even claim they gang bang now and those people who they gang bang, they are not banging, they are not doing anything. If anything, they are selling drugs; selling drugs don't make you a gang banger.*

**I:** *If I told you that statistics show that juvenile gang membership has gone way down, what is your opinion on what is causing that?*

**Dj Cast:** *Now everybody in the entertainment industry seems to be talking about how rich they are, so now the focus has become getting rich, which is very destructive because that means instead of having groups of kids that concentrated on you know, well we were destructive too, because we were violent towards each other. But now you are going to have people just as concentrated on selling drugs, pushing you name it- crack, heroin, and everything. I think the drugs are going to go way up now, because everybody is just so focused on making money and the jobs and the economy is not going to support you, to make the kind of money that your favorite rappers are out there making. So if you want your Escalade on 20-inch rims and stuff you are going to have to sell drugs.*

**I:** *Do you think there is a difference between the generation of gang members now and the ones back when you were banging?*

**Azul:** *Definitely, definitely...when we were younger you know it was a lot more violent it seemed like and as even as we progressed it turned into money and I think that is what it is about now, it is about money. You know that is all it is, it is the color green more than anything else, you know everybody wants to make money. They use their gangs as a way to do that, it provides them with good outlets to clients and things like that.*

**I:** *If I told you that statistics show that juvenile gang membership is declining, what would you say is causing that?*

**Balla:** *I would believe it. That is what I thought actually. What is causing that man, people are... it was a fad like I said, I mean, people are more turning to making money you know what I'm saying. They are realizing that killing people and crime for colors or for neighborhoods you know it only gets you so far. But what is really bout it is money. Like the older gang members, they realize that, like they bang hard but when they get older they have to depend on themselves more and what you need is money. So now they are getting older, now the younger kids in that environment are looking up to them, and they see the people making money, driving nice cars, this and that and they are trying to emulate that. So they are like, I think they are just trying to, its more towards a funding factor for yourself now, you just trying to survive, you know making money.*

It is important to note that **Pranx** and **Balla** were associated with Hood type gangs, the Wheatley Courts and the Denver Heights respectively. It appears that Hybrid and Clan type gangs tended to disappear after the neutralization of core members. However, Hood gangs tended to change to a criminal orientation because the remaining older members shifted from open conflict to illegitimate profit and the

younger members model themselves after the example of the older members. According to Laskey (1996), this shift to criminal orientation is important because the communities are no longer socially disorganized; they are criminally organized. This criminal orientation may be adverse to the general norms of society, but nevertheless it is still a form of social organization in which a large portion of the community is working together.

The findings in this study give some support to this theory that the removal of core members is related to the dissipation of the gang. However, because recruitment is not the crux of maintaining the gang, further research is necessary to determine how core members are vital to gang persistence. These findings also lend credence to the possibility that the removal of violent core members is an evolutionary process, which led to the development of the criminal oriented gang. Another unexplored possibility would be the incarceration of members and subsequent connections to more organized prison gangs could influence the remaining gang members toward profit-oriented ventures. There are other potential explanations for the emergence of the criminal oriented gang as well. If a large number of violent members are removed from society due to death and incarceration, it inevitably increases the legitimate and illegitimate financial opportunities for others. A second possibility, less likely but still viable, concerns the dominance of an alliance. The dissipation of the Northeast hybrid gangs in conjunction with the destruction of some East side neighborhoods created an unintended consequence. The Victoria Courts were completely destroyed and the Alamodome was built in its place. This event dissipated the Fellas, a blue-rag gang allied with the Crips because the former inhabitants were randomly relocated, thus dispersing the gang. Much of the territory of the East Terrace Gangster Crips was also destroyed and severe injunctions forbidding the gang from congregating and wearing colors and symbols representative of the gang, were served against many remaining East Terrace Gangsters. The Wheatley Court Gangster Crips changed to the Wheatley Court Texas Bloods. All these events served to create a prevalence of Bloods remaining on the east side. This does not indicate any victory of one group over another; however, it does raise the possibility that less occasion for conflict to thrive (Cloward and Ohlin 1960), provided more opportunity for allied cooperation in financial adventures. Thus, there was more opportunity for illegitimate financial gain and criminal gangs emerged (Cloward and Ohlin 1960). Some of the respondents support this explanation,

**Shuga:** *Bloods were like overpopulated, like the Crips and shit was minute you know. It was like we had a little section of us you know and like a whole bunch of Bloods you know what I'm saying. So like for every Crip, there was like maybe say three Bloods...*

**Balla:** *It wasn't too many Crips, there was more Bloods, I feel like there was more Bloods than Crips personally.*

Whether or not these alternate explanations have merit, this study indicates that gangs did change. There is not enough evidence to state that the change was caused by the removal of core members, but there is enough evidence in this study to suggest that this premise should be investigated further.

## Conclusion

This study used a small but diverse sample. The respondents were diversified in age, race/ethnicity, and gang affiliations. Highly detailed gang processes and gang experiences were also obtained.

The primary focus of this investigation was to evaluate the validity of charismatic role theory. This theory was examined on four hypotheses, which met with mixed results. The first premise, that there were charismatic core members met with universal agreement among the respondents. The second premise suggested that these core members recruited the new members. This premise found little support and inadvertently uncovered the irrelevancy of recruitment and initiation rites. Although other research has indicated the extreme importance of initiation rites in gangs (Vigil 1996), the importance may have changed for the late-onset, hybrid gangs.

The third premise was that core members were neutralized through death and possibly through incarceration. This premise was supported by the accounts of the majority of respondents. Furthermore, some of these accounts indicated that the neutralization of core members directly or indirectly resulted in the dissipation of the gang. This is an important finding for all groups interested in dealing with gangs. Although this research was not extensive enough to be generalized, the implication of this research is that core member removal could be related to the dissipation of gangs. If the neutralization of core members did in fact result in the dissipation of the gang, then it is important to investigate further into the functions of the core member in the gang.

The final premise proposed that remaining gang members and newer generations of frustrated youth would begin to join retreatist subcultures. This idea was unsupported. According to the accounts in this study, instead of retreating, the remaining gang members and the newer generations have innovated and become criminally oriented gangs, which indicates gang transitions or evolution rather than dissipation. Financial profit through illegitimate means has become the primary focus of the new generation.

From these results it can be concluded that charismatic role theory needs revision. The accuracy of the first and third premise suggests that the theory is somewhat fruitful in investigating the dissipation of gangs. The second premise, recruitment, can be eliminated because the respondents did not indicate that core members or any other particular type was vital to the recruitment of others<sup>3</sup>. The last premise while not accurate in describing the dissipation of gangs, was highly useful in examining the evolution of late-onset gangs into criminally oriented gangs.

The findings of this study are easily viewed through the framework of Cloward and Ohlin's (1960) typology of gangs. Late-onset gangs of the 80s and 90s prized violence and combat, exemplifying the conflict gang. Either through elimination of enough competition or the opening of financial avenues, the conflict gangs evolved into criminal gangs focused on illegitimate financial profit (Cloward and Ohlin 1960).

This study suffered from a few weaknesses. The investigation was done with a small qualitative sample. The sample was flawed because it had an overrepresentation of gang members from one region of San Antonio. In addition, a snowball sample was used, which likely increased the homogeneity of the respondents. Furthermore, this study was concerned with gangs in general and did not conduct an in-depth examination of any particular gang. In spite of these

deficiencies, important knowledge was obtained concerning the organizational change of gangs.

Future research should examine the existence of charismatic core members in other locations and the evolution of gang structural changes. More specifically, the functions of the core members in gangs should be examined and the reasons for dissipation of conflict gangs and shift to criminal gangs should be explored. This endeavor further exposed many understudied aspects of the gang subculture and will hopefully inspire more research into the areas of gang initiation and gang fluidity. Comparisons between late-onset localities and traditional gang cities should also be sought. It is pertinent that further investigations into the new generation of gangs continue.

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#### Appendix A: Gang Networks

**Almighty ViceLords-** (A.V.L.) **Type:** Clan **Affiliation:** Maroon/People  
**Descriptive:** Two affiliates of Vicelords in Chicago and Detroit joined with members of Blood gangs to create this. The network was primarily African-American and operated in the Northeast.

**Dissipation:** The incarceration of a core member preceded the fading of this group.

**Altadena Blocc Crips-** (A.B.C.) **Type:** Hybrid

**Descriptive:** Several small networks operated under this name of a Los Angeles Gang. The group represented existed in the Northeast- Roosevelt district near East Terrell Hills.

**Dissipation:** A core member was shot, paralyzed, and died shortly after. Another core member was incarcerated. The gang subsequently dissipated. Other groups still operate under this name.

**Big Time Kings-** (B.T.K.) **Type:** Hybrid **Affiliation:** (Black/People)

**Descriptive:** Large, primarily Hispanic, West Side group that emerged as one of the primary factions from the break-up of the W.S.V. Kings.

**Dissipation:** No data

**Blood Stone Villains-** (B.S.V.) **Type:** Hybrid

**Descriptive:** Named after a gang originating in California. The majority of Blood gang members that were not from Hood gangs operated under this name. Thus there were and still are countless groups using the name.

**Dissipation:** Since several smaller networks used the name, the name did not dissipate even when some of these cliques did. Other cliques infamously dominated their neighborhood, shifting towards Hood gangs. Camelot II in the Northeast-Roosevelt district is an example of this. The clique that was represented in this sample dissipated through member dispersion.

**Denver Heights Gangsters-** (D.H.G.) **Type:** Hood **Affiliation:** Red/Blood

**Descriptive:** Also called Denver Heights Texas (D.H.T.). Large, spread out East side neighborhood, consisting primarily of Blacks and Hispanics.

**Dissipation:** No dissipation.

**Dope Overthrowing Gangsters-** (D.O.G.) **Type:** Hybrid

**Affiliation:** Though technically this was a neutral gang represented by the

color black, their alliance with the Crips became so profound that the D.O.G.'s began to be considered Crips. Another unrelated gang operated under the name of D.O.G. and was more affiliated with Bloods.

**Descriptive:** Small, primarily African-American network operating in the Judson District primarily in the Live Oak area.

**Dissipation:** One member killed another. An attack by another Crip group led to a disassociation, and subsequently other core members were killed and incarcerated completely disintegrating the gang.

**East Side Players-** (E.S.P.)

**Type:** Hybrid **Affiliation:** Blue/Crip

**Descriptive:** No data

**Dissipation:** No data

**East Terrace Gangster-** (E.T.G.) **Type:** Hood **Affiliation:** Blue/Crip

**Descriptive:** Large, notorious East side gang, primarily consisting of African Americans.

**Dissipation:** While the gang has been plagued by destruction of its' territory, gang injunctions, as well as death and incarceration of many members, the gang is still in existence.

**Hoover Crip-**

**Type:** Hybrid

**Descriptive:** Named after the Los Angeles based group. Although, the members represented in this study were a part of Hoover groups in Tulsa, Oklahoma and Houston, Texas, Hoover's did exist to some extent in San Antonio. However, the usual scenario, was that the Hoover Crip was involved with a conglomerate social network of other Crips. In this case, the network consisted of 3-5-7's, Rolling 60's, and Rolling 30's Crips. This Black and Hispanic group operated in the Northeast-Roosevelt district.

**Dissipation:** Incarceration of several members along with a few deaths caused the group to dissipate.

**Klik or Romos Klik-**

**Type:** Clan **Affiliation:** Red/People

**Descriptive:** Gargantuan Hispanic gang in the late 80's with hundreds of purported members, operating on several sides of town.

**Dissipation:** An internal dispute caused a huge portion to break off and form the Klan (White/Folks). More groups began to break away such as the Kin (Green/People) and the La Raza Bloods. The remaining portion that had dropped Romos from the name eventually began to fade. The older core members joined the Mexican Mafia and Biker gangs.

**Latin Kings a.k.a Almighty Latin Kings-** (L.K. or A.L.K.)

**Type:** Hybrid

**Affiliation:** Black/People

**Descriptive:** One of the few groups that started as a direct result of Chicago sending representatives to try to exert control over the Kings in San Antonio. This endeavor met with mixed success and led to initial conflict with other King groups. Nevertheless, Latin Kings became a very big social network.

**Dissipation:** No data.

**Lil' Watts X3-** (LWS13)

**Type:** Clan

**Affiliation:** Black/ Sureno

**Descriptive:** Originated from a Los Angeles gang in the Watts district. This small, primarily Hispanic, family based network operated on the West side and in the Northeast- Roosevelt district.

**Dissipation:** After the death of an influential member and the incarceration of several other members for the retaliation that ensued, the reality of the losses caused the remaining members to lose their will to continue, starting a gradual dissipation.

**Mickey Clan- Type:** No data                      **Affiliation:** Red/People

**Descriptive:** Small group operating in the Northeast, MacArthur district.

**Dissipation:** No data

**North East Varrio- (N.E.V.)                      Type:** Hybrid   **Affiliation:** Blood/People

**Descriptive:** Small, short lived conglomerate of Bloods and former W.S.V. Kings in the Northeast.

**Dissipation:** When King sets re-emerged, this group was primarily subsumed under the Big Time Kings.

**Sa Town Bloods- (S.T.B.)                      Type:** Hybrid

**Descriptive:** Conglomerate gang consisting of members of the Blood Stone Villian, Rigsby Court Gangsters and several other groups that broke off and formed a gang around their social network. This mixed-ethnicity network operated in North East San Antonio, the Roosevelt and Judson districts, Converse and Live Oak.

**Dissipation:** A violent retaliatory action led to the imprisonment of a core member that was a nexus point in the social network of the group. After his removal the gang dissipated and the other members either became inactive or returned to their original groups.

**South Side Ambros/North Side Ambros-                      Type:** Hybrid

**Affiliation:** Baby Blue/Folk

**Descriptive:** Named after a Chicago gang, reportedly started by two representatives from Chicago. This was a small, primarily Hispanic group, notorious for its reputation of popularizing drive-by's. The North Side group had more of a racial/ethnic mix.

**Dissipation:** Many Ambros were prosecuted under organized crime statutes and were given lengthy prison sentences. Some groups still operate under the name today. The North Side network had less of a propensity for violence and did not suffer the same fate.

**Sur 13-                      Type:** Hybrid                      **Affiliation:** Blue/Surenos

**Descriptive:** No data

**Dissipation:** Conflict between members from California and members from San Antonio led to a break-up and creation of 210 (San Antonio area code) gangs. Conflict also ensued because other Sureno groups like CA 13 (Brown) and LWS 13 (Black) were enemies with gangs represented by blue.

**Third Generation Gangster- (3 G)**

**Descriptive:** Five or six person subset of Big Time Kings. (See Big Time Kings).

**Tray-Five-Seven- (3-5-7) Type:** Hybrid **Affiliation:** Blue/Crips

**Descriptive:** Named after a California gang. Three core members from different cities met up and created the 3-5-7 Crips in Schertz, Northeast of San Antonio, obtaining a large following from the African-Americans in the area. There may have been other groups known as 3-5-7 in other parts of San Antonio.

**Dissipation:** Having almost no oppositional gangs in the area, the group began infighting. This fighting ultimately led to one core member killing another core member and the subsequent dissipation of the group.

**West Side Varrio Kings – (W.S.V.) Type:** Hybrid **Affiliation:** Black/People

**Descriptive:** Gargantuan gang in the late 80's, that reportedly included several hundred Mexican-American members primarily from the West side.

**Dissipation:** After the incarceration of the leading gang member, a power struggle between the remaining core members ensued that ultimately resulted in the total disbanding of the W.S.V. Kings. Within a year, the former core members began separate gangs which included the Purple Kings (Purple/allied with Crips), Grand Theft Auto (G.T.A./Red), Ruthless Kings (R.K.), Underground Kings (U.G.K.) and Big Time Kings (B.T.K.)

**Wheatley Court Texas- (W.C.T.) Type:** Hood **Affiliation:** Red/Bloods

**Descriptive:** Large East side housing project consisting of approximately 250 living units. Formerly operating as the Wheatley Court Gangsters, a Crip gang, conflict with other Crip groups caused them to switch over to Bloods.

**Dissipation:** Did not dissipate.

### About the Author

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### End Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Respondents also indicated two other “nations” in San Antonio being the “Stone nation” and the “210” groups. Little info was given about the “Stone nation.” The “210s” consisted of local gangs existing before “nation gangs” emerged in San Antonio and break-offs from Surenos. Law enforcement publications did not discuss these groups.

<sup>2</sup> Recognition of other youth subcultures and the gang subculture’s lack of attempts in recruiting or absorbing them is noted by **Royal** in the *Dissipation and Alternative Structures* section ahead.

<sup>3</sup> Although penalties for gang recruitment may have an effect on present gang activity. The respondents in this study were active gang members prior to the institution of such penalties.