

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Youth Groups and Youth Savers: Gangs, Crews, and the Rise of Filipino American
Youth Culture in Los Angeles

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

by

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2007

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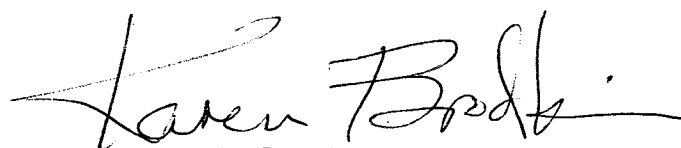
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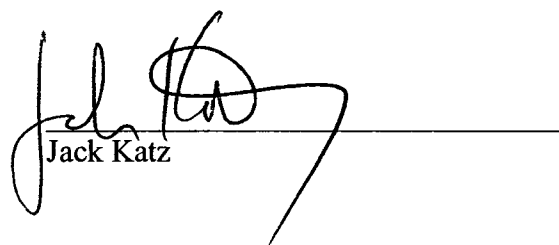
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DEDICATION

For Ban Alsaybar, my beloved father, friend,
and guiding light, who inspired me more than
he ever realized.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Youth Groups and Youth Savers: Gangs, Crews, and the Rise of Filipino American Youth Culture in Los Angeles

by

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Extensive field ethnography of youth groups in Los Angeles (as well as previous work in the Philippines) has shown me that the “gang” framework and the “gang/non-gang” dichotomy, widely held by both law enforcement and influential researchers cannot adequately explain the rise and creation of a violence-rejecting, fun-seeking Filipino American youth culture in Los Angeles. Rather than search for defects in the mental and social backgrounds of immigrant youths and explain gangs as a response to difficult acculturation, I bring attention to pre-immigration American cultural influences (Hollywood and the college fraternity system) that provide models for aggressive masculinity and group bonding. An examination of youth formations like the

transplanted “barkada,” gang, Filipino American fraternity, the more recent “crew” and the linkages among them illustrates the relative complexity of the phenomenon and challenges dominant images and representations of Filipino American gangs and youth.

This socio-historical, transnational approach enables me to examine the phenomenon across multiple geographic locations, rather than the single location analysis that results from a more traditional acculturation framework. It considerably expands the historical context, reveals a circular, trans-Pacific movement rather than one-way linearity and draws attention to the strength and persistence of the “barkada,” the third most important social unit in Philippine society.

This study rests on data generated from ethnographic field research, individual and group interviews, and content analysis of news reports, articles from both conventional library as well as internet sources, and other Filipiniana materials. Field research was not confined to the social spaces of youth groups; of great significance is data gathered from my work at SIPA, the social service agency and my observations of interactions between counselors and youth clients. The activities of youth saving social workers, community activists, students, media, as well as law enforcement agents draw attention to the controlling and normalizing functions of the therapeutic state and the perpetuation of dominant images of “gang.”

I. INTRODUCTION

On weekend nights in Los Angeles, hundreds of Filipino American youths party in a variety of venues. Some may attend smaller, intimate parties at a friend's garage or living room hastily reconfigured into a disco; others go to bigger flyer parties at established night clubs. Dressed in commercial gang-style gear, they ride to the parties in lowered, fixed-upped Japanese import cars and dance to the rhythms of hip-hop. As an emcee with an African American accent keeps the crowd on its feet, a disc jockey scratches vinyl with a virtuosity that draws vigorous applause from the crowd. On certain times of the year, import car shows draw thousands of Filipino American and other Asian youths.

In pursuit of fun and excitement, this thriving network of Filipino American youths has created a "party culture" built around the symbolic and aesthetic appeal of "gang." This social network is a virtual repository of youth creativity, cultural innovativeness, and entrepreneurial skill. Rejecting violence, they police their own ranks and deny access to troublemakers and non-compliant individuals. It might come as a surprise to many that gangs played a foundational role in the formation of this youth culture: acting as defenders of their neighborhoods, throwing all-Filipino parties, doubling as enforcers and protectors of crews cliqued up with them, adopting and modeling the gang aesthetic, and pioneering as incipient capitalists in both the club and car scenes.

This phenomenon of gangs acting as vanguards in the creation of an ethnic youth culture in Los Angeles presents an opportunity to explore and pursue alternative paths

towards understanding youth cultural formation within an immigrant and transnational community. However, such an undertaking necessitates going beyond the circularity of positivist theorizing that focuses rather narrowly on crime and deviance and attributes youth gang involvement to background conditions such as recent immigration to America, poverty, family dysfunctions, and run down neighborhoods.¹ “Gang” is more complex and variegated in meaning than is suggested by criminological models. Sorely needed is a broader and more inclusive approach that avoids simplistic binary categorizing that separates the criminal from the conventional, and that unfortunately tends to pathologize minority youth. Thus “gang” as used in law enforcement and control culture discourse has given rise to a strict line of demarcation between “gang” and “non-gang” individuals: an unreal dichotomy that is not reflected in the social world of Filipino American youth. Gang members tend to be portrayed as being vastly different from “non-gang,” conventional youth, denizens living in an isolated and mysterious underworld. To the contrary, I learned from fieldwork that individuals and groups cast as gangs had participated more extensively and meaningfully in the larger social world than is commonly portrayed, cliquing up with other groups in a vibrant social network built around partying and car racing.

There seems to be a tendency to treat individuals and groups bearing the stigma of “gang” as being outside the pale of normal society and therefore, incapable of making history and culture, only gaining relevance when appearing as case studies in research reports or in a social worker’s caseloads. This will not be the case in this study, in which

stigmatized youths are given voice and assume a major role (albeit unacceptable to some) as players in the history and creation of Los Angeles Filipino American youth culture.

Deconstructing the Hegemonic Narrative: A View From Within

This is not a “gang study” in the conventional sense. The pursuit of fun and excitement, rather than pursuit of crime, stands out and runs through the stream of social and historical processes that figured in the making of a Filipino American youth culture in Los Angeles. However, immigrating Filipino children and youth Post-1965 lived through a difficult and turbulent historical “gang” phase that stretched over some twenty years (1970s through 1980s, before a violence-rejecting Party Culture emerged and flourished in the 1990s). These youths experienced real existential problems arising from (1) street-level harassment and violent attacks from marauding Latino “Cholo” gangs; many ran afoul of the law, others sustained serious injury, and still others met death; and (2) while the gang image held currency among some groups that constructed a group identity largely drawn from Cholo culture, institutional suspicion and even outright labeling was exacerbated by a “moral panic” that raised exaggerated fears about gangs. Thus, an examination of this gang phase constitutes a major part of this study; to gain an understanding on the meaning of “gang” and its articulation within Filipino immigrant youth culture; and even more significantly, how Larger Society representations of “gang” impacted or shaped actions and programs intended to address a perceived “gang problem.” An especially influential construction may be called the “prison gang” theory offered by the police.

Early on, I discovered that the police were the authoritative source of information about Filipino gangs. Whenever I'd interview or talk to probation officers and members of the helping professions (at the Filipino American social service agency), they'd predictably give me copies of field reports replete with information on Pinoy gangs² compiled by law enforcement agencies (mainly local police and sheriffs). The dominant narrative suggested that Pinoy gangs had their origins in the dreaded prison gangs of Manila. Academicians (especially sociologists and psychologists) are the other authoritative source invoked by the helping professionals. In graduate school I was introduced to positivist/objectivist criminological theories built on data derived from African American and Latino gangs and communities; the scant literature on Filipino gangs basically revolved around the same police information that guided community workers and counselors in identifying and dealing with gang youths.

Experiencing ethnographic immersion in LA's most well-known Filipino gang in the early 1990s, working as a gang outreach worker for a Filipino NGO and later as a program evaluator, and following Filipino American youths to their parties, car shows and unsanctioned street car races in the latter part of the 1990's cumulatively raised doubts in my mind about the dominant, essentializing, Pinoy gang narrative constructed by the police and embraced by agents and members of the institutional control network. Moreover, this west coast field work actually represents for me, a trans-Pacific continuity with ethnographic observations of neighborhood youth groups in various locations in Manila that I conducted - prior to my immigration to Los Angeles. I realized the need to free myself from the strictures of criminological models and devise a broader, more

inclusive, culturally-consistent approach that strives to capture the nuances of culture, history, and social processes at work in the construction of “gang” in the Filipino American community of Los Angeles. This mode of analysis requires (1) a cultural insider’s³ understanding of aspects of Philippine society, culture, and colonial history that figured in the post-1965 era of significant Filipino American youth formation in Los Angeles to the 1990s; and (2) focus on the social construction of “gang” through the actions of agents of the “institutional control network” and the rise and development of a Filipino American social service agency.

Firstly, instead of tapping into the mental and social conditions of youths deemed problematic or highlighting social forces that are said to drive them to join gangs, I foreground the types of group formation that have arisen among Filipino American male youths and examine the transnational phenomenon of “gang,” particularly the aesthetic (or stylistic) element and behavioral patterns associated with it. This study recognizes the enduring nature of social institutions that bring youths together into effective collectivities, and acknowledges both their positive as well as negative implications and consequences. Central to my interpretive framework is the indigenous Filipino “*barkada*”⁴--an understudied but major gender-constructing and socializing institution in Philippine society--and its transplantation to America. Along with the *barkada*, the American college fraternity tradition--introduced to the Philippines during the early part of American colonial occupation--constitute what I designate to be a consequential *barkada/fraternity/gang/crew* nexus. It appears that a tradition of manly cohorting and college-based fraternity fighting (a behavior pattern at times deemed criminally violent

by authorities but not confined to groups categorized as “gangs”) had been deployed and perpetuated by Filipino American youths in Los Angeles--both within the context of fighting against other ethnicities as well as groups of fellow Filipinos.

I believe it is important to bring this aspect of youth social organization and dynamics to light, not only because it draws attention to youth as agents and creators of culture and community in their own right, but also because the link between peer group/gang involvement and family problems seems to me, rather overused, uncritical, and insufficient, implying that crime and errant behavior alone underlies Filipino immigrant youth group formation. The barkada exerts a hold on an individual that at times surpasses loyalty to family; as a social institution, it stands independent of the family. Therefore, it can be analyzed on its own right. At the same time, there's a need to appreciate the powerful appeal of glamour and style that youths find in gang culture - an aspect that agents of the control culture seem to minimize and even ignore, due to a preoccupation with and attribution of “bad” youth behavior to social and environmental forces allegedly driving youths to join gangs. Little recognized is the historical fact that American gang style and some subcultural practices associated with it came to the Philippines via Hollywood, leading to the creation of a distinct Manila teenage youth culture.

Secondly, the dominant narrative - widely accepted and unchallenged by the community at large - needs to be revisited, not as objectively given, but as a social and ideological construct. There is a real need to situate law enforcement, media, social workers, community activists, and members of the helping professions squarely within

the stream of social and historical processes implicated in the construction of popular representations and images of “Filipino gang.” At an intimate level, youth are the object of ambitious societal interventions designed to change their behaviors. Gang members and problem youth interact on a regular basis with counselors, social workers, and other agents of control and surveillance; yet, these interactions and their impact on client youths are left unreported, unaccounted for, and invisible in positivist-driven research reports⁵ I fill the gap by detailing the rise and development of Search to Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA), a social service agency, and its interactions with Filipino American youth clients (many of whom belonged to *Satanas*,⁶ the most well-known of Filipino American gangs then in Los Angeles). Inspired by the Civil Rights movement and gravely concerned by the emergence of what they perceived to be a gang problem in the community, Filipino American activists constructed a space that functioned not only for therapeutic interventions but also for constructing ethnic identity. Within the space of the social service agency, activists used pride in cultural heritage as both ideology and therapy. Troubled youths were viewed as lacking in self-esteem, a problem attributed to either confusion with regards to ethnic identity or a lack of it. In turn, youth clients were drawn to the agency and likewise appropriated this space for constructing their own gender and ethnic identities. They accomplished this through participation in programs designed to instill pride in their native heritage and through actions that expressed resistance to institutional efforts to normalize their behaviors.

Interpretive Framework

Field data - gathered through ethnographic immersion in the cultures of the youth groups studied during the decade of the 1990s - constitutes the bulk of material that is subjected to interpretation. While anthropological in approach, this study is essentially socio-historical, looking at the rise and development of Filipino American youth culture within the post-1965 era of massive Filipino migration to America up to the end of the 1990s. The Filipino American gang phenomenon and emergent youth culture in Los Angeles reflect greater complexity than is suggested by the traditional dichotomous acculturation model, which draws up this scenario: youths leave the homeland (point A, the sending country) and travel to the host or receiving culture (point B); gangs form when immigrant youths strain under stressful conditions and cannot adequately adjust to the new culture; analysis then focuses on individual gang involvement or group formation within the time and space of the new culture. Within this acculturation framework, I find “gang” problematic, a term imposed from the outside (by law enforcement, social science) that (1) leaves little room for youth/human agency and (2) apparently rules out other non-criminal, cultural imperatives that would bring immigrant Filipino youth together and assume a particular type of group formation. As my research bears out, trans-Pacific cultural circularity and flow rather than one-way linearity between two geographic points characterizes the phenomenon under study, leading me to adopt a transnational framework of analysis⁷

This approach allows me to analyze the Filipino gang phenomenon across multiple geographic locations, rather than the single location analysis that results from an

acculturative framework; it considerably expands the historical context, revealing “gang” as a multi-layered (or polysemic) phenomenon not confined to criminal meanings; reveals a circular, trans-Pacific movement rather than one-way linearity; and brings to light the strength and persistence of an indigenous pattern of group formation, the barkada.

My interpretive framework consists of two basic parts: (1) a historical/indigenous accounting of the impact of American colonialism upon Filipino teenage youth culture and the barkada, the third most important social unit in Philippine society; and (2) an examination of the barkada’s transformation into gang and crew, as well as the Filipino American community’s response to a perceived gang problem, in the wider context of moral panics that arose in reaction to an exaggerated threat posed by youth gangs. Foucault’s critique of social work and the workings of the therapeutic state (as magnified and operationalized by certain writers) provides a framework for understanding the actions of the youth savers: community activists, social workers, students, and media, as well as law enforcement and other agents of control.

To wit, three main time periods make up a socio historical framework for analyzing the rise and development of a “gang style-inspired” Filipino American Youth Culture in Los Angeles: (1) the 1950s through the 1960s, with the globalized circulation of Hollywood ‘gangster’ films, American pop culture, and the creation of a Manila teenage culture; (2) the 1970s through the 1990s, which saw immigrant Filipino youths experiencing a rough but transitory “gang phase” tied to initial settlement in inner city neighborhoods of Los Angeles; this period also saw the emergence of the youth savers

and the institutionalization of a youth-oriented social service agency; and (3) the 1990s, the era of the decline of gangs and the rise of partying and import car racing among Filipino American youth.

Pre-Immigration Gang Style Socialization

The Philippines was colonized by Spain for more than three centuries (1565-1896) before becoming an American colony for nearly half a century (1898-1946). Longer in duration, the Spanish occupation had far-reaching influences on native Filipino culture (i.e. religious world view, social life and arts); US occupation was comparably shorter in duration but nonetheless wrought profound transformations in Philippine society and culture. As part of efforts to control and assimilate the Filipinos into empire, an educational system was set up; consequently, generations of Filipinos using American textbooks embraced everything American and imbibed colonial values that made them captive consumers of US-made good (see Constantino 1975). US imperialist/economic policies ensured that Filipinos would become consumers and not manufacturers of goods and products, thus keeping the Philippines in a state of perpetual underdevelopment and poverty.

Filipino American youths in Los Angeles thus belong to an immigrant community that is the most Americanized among other Asian American communities, leading one writer to suggest that a “colonial mentality” had migrated from the Philippines to America (see Tamayo-Lott 1980). The enthusiasm with which Filipino American youths embrace gang style and create culture is not a new development generated by immigration and settlement in the USA. The pioneers of an incipient Filipino American

youth culture in the early 1970s were already steeped in a Manila teenage culture that idolized and copied American gang style and even behavior. Historically, the gang aesthetic originated in America and then traveled to Philippine shores during the glamorous 1950s.⁸ This was the era of James Dean movies and a slew of gangster biographies that turned Al Capone, Dillinger, and other contra vidas into teenage cult heroes. The respected nationalist historian, Renato Constantino, saw the movies as a potent instrument of American cultural colonization, calling it “one of the important educative agencies in the shaping of minds” (1977: 133). Whole generations of Filipino immigrant adults and their children grew up imitating the look and pose of James Dean and other rebellious cinematic bad asses. American-style joyriding, partying, gate-crashing, and even movie-style brawling and graffiti writing became a staple in the social life of many teenagers. In fact, after an evening screening of “West Side Story” at a downtown Manila theater, movie goers witnessed life imitating film when two groups of teenagers engaged in a Bronx-style gang fight right at the cinema lobby.

According to Nick Joaquin, famous writer and culture historian who wrote about that incident, the term “teenager” began to be fixed in the lingo of Philippine social life in the mid-1950s. His writings contain perhaps the first serious thought and analysis about the way American colonial culture through film impacted and shaped Filipino youth culture. From an interesting collection of true-to-life stories that he wrote and titled “Reportage on Crime,” Joaquin bemoans the local movie industry’s practice of pandering “to the lust to become pseudo-American,” reflected in the obsession with aping Hollywood gangster movies. He expressed in the strongest possible terms that “local

movies perpetuate the worst kind of colonialism in our culture.” The sociological and cultural impact did not escape his eye. The chronicler of his time that he was, Joaquin wrote:

From New York had come word that the young people there were forming gangs with such names as the Vandals, the Apaches, the Black Hawks, etc.; pretty soon gangs with the very same names were cropping up in Manila. Overnight, the walls of the city blossomed with gang names scrawled there in chalk or black paint. Then came Elvis Presley and rock ‘n roll....A new type of adolescent was clearly in the process of formation, but the Philippine public had no definite image of the teen-ager until Pablo Santiago made a movie called “the Lo-Waist Gang” in 1956....The movie fixed the type of the Philippine teen-ager. It was all there: the fringe of hair worn like a plume of honor, the low-waist pants, the unlaced rubber shoes with the tongues sticking out. The image had been a-forming since the early fifties; but by 1956, it had crystallized enough to be caught by the cameras. And the movie put on record such teenage practices as the 1-2-3, the rumble, and the gate-crashing at parties (Joaquin 1977:48).

The Barkada and the American Fraternity

Filipino immigrants find strength and support in the family and other social institutions. Apart from family and kin, Filipinos find support and camaraderie in the barkada, a tight group of friends of same (or close) age and common interests that develop enduring bonds. Against the dominant pattern of individualism in American society, Filipinos are “groupists” by social orientation, displaying a strong desire to be part of a collectivity (Jocano 1990:31). Barkada behavior exemplifies this group-orientedness. In contrast to “gang” that is a western concept with criminal and exclusionary connotations, barkada offers an indigenous, emic, and more inclusionary framework for analyzing Filipino and Filipino American behavior. The word “gang” denotes an individual who has been clearly categorized and labeled as a “deviant,” an “other” who is prejudged to be different, dangerous, and threatening to society. In

contrast, barkada as used in Philippine society is perhaps less prone to stigmatizing and labeling characteristic of “gang.”⁹

It appears, that the indigenous barkada was to a significant degree impacted by American colonialism via the Greek fraternity system (that came with the establishment of US-style educational system). The fraternity¹⁰ offered a more ritualized and intensified form of social bonding and group identification than could be experienced at the generic barkada level. Moreover, the practice of ritual initiation that at times involved hazing, resulting in death or serious physical injuries, further intensified the potential for aggressive behavior among members.

Being part of a school community, fraternities are not generally considered criminal, like prison or street gangs. Most fraternities remain nonviolent, encourage academic excellence and good citizenship, and are well known for promoting service to nation and community. But when hazing results in death or when inter-fraternity fighting causes death among combatants, Philippine authorities and social scientists begin drawing comparisons between “gang” and “frat.” I suggest that “normal” fighting behavior associated with conventional teenage barkadas could have been driven to a more intense level with the adoption, modification, and spread of the imported American fraternity tradition: from university campuses to high school grounds and local neighborhoods throughout the islands.

Satanas, the Filipino gang that I extensively covered, did engage in “bad behavior:” some were consequently charged with serious crimes such as assault and battery, murder, or GTA (grand theft auto). But they were not known to police for drug-

trafficking and money making as the Latino and Black gangs were known for, and robbery was virtually unknown. The landmark report on gangs issued by then District Attorney Ira Reiner in 1992 characterizes Asian gangs (Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese) as highly entrepreneurial, heavily engaged in drug trafficking and robbing compatriots in their ethnic enclaves (see Reiner 1992). Save for a passing reference to a small Filipino gang that had reportedly recruited a few African Americans, little else was mentioned about Filipino gangs.

I designate the Satanas to be a “fighting barkada,” since fighting was their signature activity. In many instances, stealing cars was committed more out of necessity than in the spirit of money-making—the immediate need for transportation—and for fun, for a joyride. They started out as a conventional barkada, not a bunch of criminals and ex-convicts as law enforcement tended to depict. They were a car club of middle class youths steeped in the art of “istambay” (hanging out) in Filipinotown. (According to Joaquin 1980, the word was coined from “stand by,” which Americans in the 1920s used to refer to Filipino men hanging out in street corners or store fronts.)

Hanging out barkada-style is alive and well in Los Angeles. It is practiced by off-duty or jobless Filipino men standing idly and engaging in small talk in front of doughnut shops or bakeries. You’ll also see it on weekend evenings when middle-aged fraternity men get together to party, drink, and reminisce the good old college days in the Philippines. The barkada has even invaded cyberspace, enabling individuals to connect and “hang out” with friends as well as track down long-lost members of the group. The “tambayan” is no longer just a cramped corner at a university campus in the Philippines

but a cyber hang out complete with bulletin boards, mail boxes, and even photo albums. The barkada is very much a part of Filipino American cultural landscape, within which the younger generation are socialized. An interesting development is the emergence of active Filipino American “Barkada” student organizations across the United States: at Cal Poly Pomona and Santa Clara University (both in California) and Northeastern University in the east coast, for instance.¹¹ Within the camaraderie of cultural space they have constructed, these youth groups hold, among others, native dance concerts, Pilipino cultural nights, and participate in university-wide events to showcase Filipino cultural heritage.

Towards an Anthropology of Youth: Youth as Producers of Culture

Bucholtz (2002:8) notes that “a good deal of anthropological work on youth violence” is characterized by “framing adolescence as a psychological stage fraught with social problems.” She calls for an approach that acknowledges that youth “are cultural actors whose experiences are best understood from their own point of view.”

Katz and Jackson-Jacobs (2004:97) point out that gang research has largely remained “separate from sociological studies of youth social life and culture outside gangs.” They observe that the study of youth culture, along with studies of adolescent life-cycle processes and social life in schools, “are almost completely ignored.” They suggest that a way to resolving the thorny issue of defining gangs lies in a comparative study of groups identified as gangs as well as those considered “non-criminal” or “non-gang.”

This study responds to the call by US-based cultural anthropologists for an “anthropology of youth” that directs attention to youth as intending agents and producers of culture. Wulff (1995:1)) calls for a broad and inclusive approach to youth culture “in its own right,” one that includes minority as well as mainstream youth, “problem” youth as well as ordinary youth. According to Bucholtz (ibid:1), “The anthropology of youth is characterized by its attention to the agency of young people, its concern to document not just highly visible youth cultures but the entirety of youth cultural practice, and its interest in how identities emerge in new cultural formations that creatively combine elements of global capitalism, transnationalism, and local culture.”

Borrowing from Omi and Winant (1994), Austin and Willard (1998) devise a formational perspective that I find particularly applicable here for three reasons: (1) it identifies the actions of the state and the larger society with regards to youth and calls for the examination of “institutions, processes, practices and policies that simultaneously shape and reproduce “youth and young people as social subjects;” (2) it draws attention to the struggles over discourse and representations of youth; and (3) it “considers the way the social identity of youth is practiced, negotiated, refused and lived by young people in relation to other identities and to other people.” These negotiations occur within the space of peer groups as well as within those institutions tasked with managing and socializing youth (i.e. family, social service agency).

Objectivist vs. Social Constructionist

Towards identifying social processes involved in state attempts to control youth and its reactions to crises situations blamed on youth, I combine the ideas of certain writers into a framework consistent with social constructionism (see Berger and Luckman 1966). A major impetus comes from the debate on the nature of social problems. The dominant view called “objectivist” assumes that troublesome social conditions are objectively given and pose a threat to the quality of life of a considerable segment of society. It is deductive in reasoning, with the end in view of affirming a pre-set theory, and it highlights the role played by social forces bearing down on individuals. A strict subject/object demarcation tends to reduce individuals to passive receptors and victims of social conditions (see also Horowitz 1990).

On the other side is the “constructionist” perspective, which argues that “A social problem is a product of **claims-making activities** by groups regarding the existence of a threat posed by a certain condition. The objective threat posed by a condition is far less important than the persuasiveness of the claims made by activist groups with respect to a putative condition” (McCorkle and Miethe 2002:11, amplifying Spector and Kitsuse 1977).) According to Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994:88),

To the constructionist, social problems do not exist “objectively” in the same sense that a rock, a frog, or a tree exists; instead, they are *constructed* by the human mind, *called into being or constituted* by the definitional process. The objective existence of a harmful condition does not, by itself or in and of itself, constitute a social problem. Merely because a disease kills the members of society does not mean that it constitutes a social problem among these people; if they do not conceptualize it or define the disease as a problem, according to the constructionist, to these people it is not a social problem...

McCorkle and Miethe (loc.cit.) clarify and simplify the constructionist argument thus:

“In short, social problems are what people think to be social problems; if they don’t see a problem, for all intents and purposes the problem does not exist. Thus according to the constructionist, before a condition is defined as a social problem, it must first be brought to the people’s attention. Someone or some group must persuade the public that the condition exists and that it poses a significant threat to them.”

The Invisible Middle Class Gang: A Reflexive, Processual View

Although lacking in political critique (that is, situating crime or delinquency within a power structure), the labeling perspective allows for a reflexive approach that is process-oriented and contributes toward the understanding of a phenomenon such as the barkada turned gang (see Becker 1963). Whereas structuralists see the deviant or criminal as differentiated from the rest of society, labeling proponents hold that deviants and conventional individuals are really very similar - that people labeled delinquent, for instance, have no monopoly on the commission of delinquent acts. Exemplifying this tradition that adopts a processual orientation to deviance is David Matza (1964) who formulated a concept of “drift,” in which he saw a less constrained drifting in and out of delinquency. Matza noted that structuralist theories “predict too much delinquency even during the period of optimal involvement.”

Most gang studies have focused on lower class, poor neighborhoods and minority communities, but some researchers noticed that middle class gangs did exist. However, references to the topic are passing and relatively few. In the 1950s Bloch and Niederhoffer (1958) observed that the gang label had been peculiarly reserved for youth

groups of low socio-economic status. Up to this day, middle class youths are rarely labeled as gangs; instead, they are more correctly referred to as “peer groups,” “clubs,” “cliques,” and “posses,” like the well-publicized “Spur Posse” of white, sex-tripping boys from the upper middle class community of Lakewood, California.¹² Why then would middle class youths from the Philippines be labeled a “gang,” a categorization assigned to groups of low socio-economic status?

In the early ‘60s Howard and Barbara Myerhoff published a short paper entitled “Field Observations of Middle Class ‘Gangs’” (1964). The placement of quote marks on “Gangs” in the title is profoundly significant, for it reveals that the authors might have been unsure about referring to the middle class boys they had interviewed as a “gang”—a label so exclusively applied to lower class boys. They arrived at a most significant conclusion: that the beliefs and behaviors of the middle class youths “were not dramatically different from those of most conventional teenagers and adults.” And they raised valid questions like

Has the emphasis on the deviant activities of these groups obscured their similarity to conventional teenagers and adults, thereby exaggerating the difference between delinquents and non-delinquents? Would it not be more fruitful to examine the extent and nature of the similarities rather than the differences between deviant and non-deviant teenagers and adults? (Myerhoff and Myerhoff 1964:336).

In reaching their conclusions, the Myerhoffs had drawn from ideas of researchers of their time who looked at the gang differently, through non-structuralist or non-positivist lenses like Matza and Sykes (1961), who argued in favor of exploring the similarity between the delinquent and the rest of society rather than his deviance from it; as well as Benedict (1949) and Erikson (1950), both of whom viewed adolescent

deviance as a normal phase in the process of transitioning to adulthood and creating an identity.

The Youth Savers

Alarmed by reports of Filipino American youths getting involved in gang crimes, Filipino American community activists in the early 1970s took the lead in drawing attention to a gang problem in their own community. How they perceived the problem and the activities they engaged in to persuade the community that there was a problem constitutes a major element in the process of constructing a Filipino American youth gang problem and consequently, identifying troublesome youth. Just as members of the helping professions delve into the biographies of youth clients, it is important to profile the biographical backgrounds of Filipino American community advocates. In this regard, Anthony Platt's "The Child Savers" (1977) served as an inspiration for this study, in the way he featured the biographies of leaders of the child-saving movement; their class and ideological backgrounds gave insights into their motivations for engaging in humanitarian work and social reform, as well as their defense of fundamental institutions such as the nuclear family, community, parental discipline, and assimilation of immigrants (p.74). Platt states that "Contemporary programs of delinquency control can be traced to the enterprising reforms of the child savers, who, at the end of the nineteenth century, helped to create special judicial and correctional institutions for the labeling, processing, and management of 'troublesome' youth. The origins of 'delinquency' are to

be found in the programs and ideas of those social reformers who recognized the existence and carriers of delinquent norms” (p.3).

The Social Service Agency in Foucault’s Carceral Network

Reminiscent of Platt’s child savers, the efforts of youth-saving Filipino American activists led to the establishment of a social service agency that managed youth programs designed to combat the gang problem and rehabilitate clients. To take them off the streets, the social service agency was turned into a community center that provided a safe and caring environment for youth. The agency provided not only a physically safe space but also cultural space that promoted pride in the Filipino heritage. Culture work, however important, was viewed as a supportive tool for social work, which increasingly gained significance as the agency grew and expanded. SIPA became a spawning ground for the first professionally-trained Filipino American social workers in Los Angeles. In time the agency would become part of what Foucault (1977) would refer to as the state’s carceral network for normalizing and controlling society. According to Laura Epstein (1999:9) to normalize means “to make to conform or reduce to a norm or standard, to make normal, by transforming elements in a person or situation.” Amplifying Foucault, Epstein declares that

Social work is a major social institution that legitimates the power contained in modern democratic, capitalist states...The state needs the academy, the professions, and the arts to steer the [governmental] enterprise and mold, guide, teach minds. The human or social sciences are the backbone of the technologies that have emerged as instruments by which the state can govern with minimal coercion....human science offers ways to support, ameliorate, disguise, and justify the state’s carceral machinery....Social work collaborates with other

occupations, mainly the 'helping disciplines,' all of which together manage the population (ibid. p.8).

Aihwa Ong (2003) employs a Foucauldian framework in her study of the role played by social service agencies in normalizing and preparing Cambodian refugee immigrants for citizenship in America. Ong notes that sovereign power in the USA is diffused, among other institutions and locations, through a network of welfare offices (or social service agencies). Professionals and bureaucrats implement “technologies of government” (programs, policies, codes, and practices intended to instill American values like self-reliance, individualism, freedom, etc.) and “mobilize knowledge that can be used to shape the conduct of subjects, in order to maximize certain capabilities and minimize certain risks” (p.9). However, Ong points out that normalizing practices are not always accepted by clients; her book documents many instances of client resistance. She concludes that the individual is never totally objectified or rationalized by state agencies.

Ong also discusses Cambodian street gangs but unlike her prodigious data detailing interactions between social workers/members of the helping professions and the refugee clients, she presents no data that sheds light on social worker/client gang youth interactions within the context of prevention or intervention programs (technologies of control). Of great significance is her critique of the official law enforcement definition of gang,¹³ which she argues, is “too narrowly focused on types of crimes, and does not allow for the variety of associations that go by the name *gang*.” Ong designates “gang” as “a common term for a wide variety of same-sex groups and loose networks that, while connected to criminal activities, also includes social groups engaged in entrepreneurial and cultural activities” (p.234). She states that “becoming a gang member was the most

obvious way to explore what it takes to become an American man,” with inner city streets providing the site for constructing an “alternative masculine sociality in opposition to the female-centered home, and for building an image of masculine toughness in place of the weakling image of the welfare kid” (p.235).

Moral Panics

A moral panic is a social process that arises in troubled times when a serious threat to the interests or values of society or a segment of it is sensed (see Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). According to Stanley Cohen,

A condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right thinking people; socially credited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved or...resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes invisible (1980:9).

The moral panic is characterized by the feeling held by a substantial segment of a society that evildoers engaging in unacceptable, immoral behavior pose a threat to society and the moral order; hence, the need to do something about these deviants, outsiders, and “folk devils” who become targets of self-righteous anger, hostility, and punishment. What often happens is the strengthening of the social control apparatus of society—such as instituting tougher laws, more police, more prisons, and greater public hostility and condemnation of these “folk devils.”

A brilliant application of the concept of moral panic is found in Stuart Hall et. al’s “Policing the Crisis” (1978); here they studied and analyzed the moral panic that was a

reaction to “mugging” by looking at the massive press coverage (exaggerated, often inaccurate), reactions of the local people, experts and commentators, and the mobilization of the police against certain neighborhoods in the mugging areas. The socio historical context used by Hall et. al. to examine mugging as a social phenomenon was a Great Britain in economic decline, characterized, among others, by the resurgence of racism and anti-immigrant sentiment. Within this context, mugging acquired meaning, condensing images of race, crime, and youth.

The gang problem that gripped urban centers and cities in America during the 1980s and early 1990s presents an analogue to mugging in England in two ways: (1) in the way that gang members have become today’s celebrated folk devils blamed for many of society’s ills and (2) in how the “gang problem” and the images of race, crime, and youth condensed in the image of “gang” in the context of the crisis described by Omi and Winant (1994): the declining global political and economic hegemony of the USA; the rise of the conservative religious right-wing and the Republican take over of Congress; the assault on welfare and affirmative action; and anti-immigrant, nativist sentiment sweeping across the nation.

Joan Moore (1991), one of the most respected gang researchers in the USA, notes that American cities are periodically swept by waves of fear and outrage about “poor and racially distinct young men.” She singles out the role played by two urban institutions, the media and the police, in both providing information on and generating anxieties leading to the panics. Both institutions have “powerful, self-interested motives...the police need recognition and funds; the media need audiences”(ibid:1). Two significant

moral panics surrounding “gangs” of youthful, non-anglo men have swept Los Angeles: in the 1940s and another in the late 1980s.

The first, says Moore, occurred in 1942, in reaction to the famous Zoot Suit Riots (see McWilliams 1968; Mazon 1985). A young Chicano had been killed in an incident now called the “Sleepy Lagoon” case. After the newspapers and radio launched into a frenzy of publicity about the dangers posed by Mexican zoot suit gangs, police began arresting and detaining hundreds of young Chicano men. Groups of off-duty sailors visiting Los Angeles attacked anybody they suspected of being “gang members” (especially those wearing zoot suits; McWilliams mentioned that even some Filipino zooters were mauled by white sailors. Many zooters had no connections whatsoever with the “gangs.”) Although most of the Sleepy Lagoon convictions were overturned, local authorities and media continued to view the gangs as a “Mexican problem,” despite studies of early sociologists and historians discounting the seriousness of problems posed by “boy gangs” (see Bogardus 1926;1943); McWilliams 1943). Moore thus concludes that the zoot suit panic “had very little to do with the violence and criminality of young Mexican American men, **and a lot to do with how Anglos saw Mexicans in Los Angeles**” (Moore 1991:2, emphasis mine).

The second moral panic revolved around minority gangs in the 1980s. Again, as in the panic accompanying the zoot suit riots of 1942, the media and police figured prominently in generating exaggerated fears and anxieties. Much media attention was directed on gangs and gang members who were featured in nationwide newscasts, newspapers, and talk shows; they were also the subject of federal and local government

hearings, reports, and movies like **Colors** which provided graphic but often distorted portrayal of gangs to mass audiences. The dominant image of gangs in mass media was that of groups of minority youths using high-powered weapons and motor vehicles in drug-trafficking, driven to make large amounts of money through the sale and distribution of crack and other drugs (Jackson and Rudman 1993).

Two dramatic incidents that both happened in 1988 are definitive of the racially-fueled late '80s moral panic: the Karen Toshima killing in downtown Westwood, and the police sweeps officially code-named "Hammer." Hispanic and Black community activists roundly criticized the undue media attention given to the Toshima case (for many weeks, almost daily tv and newspaper coverage. They noted the quick response of the police towards solving the case and securing the affluent Westwood community; in contrast, gang violence, a common occurrence in inner city neighborhoods, tended to be treated perfunctorily and with less urgency. The police waged all-out war against gangs through "Operation Hammer, arresting or citing every "gang-looking" (usually Black, Hispanic, and other minority) male on the streets over a period of several weeks (see Mike Davis 1990 for an extended discussion). Charges of police brutality and insensitivity to minority feelings poured out of Black and Hispanic communities.

Although most of these police sweeps were directed against "drug gangs," the drug-related arrests were relatively small, contrary to the popular notion that gangs were the main purveyors of drugs (Moore *ibid*:4). This late 1980s moral panic resulted in a major legislative response to gangs (many of them extreme), culminating in the passage of the Street Terrorism Act of 1988. According to Jackson and Rudman (1993:270), the

new laws were “a reaction to the definitions and social images of gangs provided by law enforcement, the media, and other groups.”

Organization of the Study

The sequencing of the nine chapters is consistent with the socio-historical, processual approach that frames this study. Chapter II bears perhaps the most comprehensive collation and synthesis of writings and perspectives on the barkada to date, in a bid to illustrate why it offers a culturally-competent alternative to “gang” as an interpretive framework. Chapter III contains data from the 1990 Census, instead of the more up to date 2000 Census. I have chosen the older 1990 demographic and socio economic census data in order to help contextualize the social conditions obtaining in the historical decade of the 1990s—which saw the decline of gangs and the rise of car clubs and party crews. The transnational, trans-Pacific timeline for the evolution of Filipino American Party Culture in Los Angeles covers the 1950s to the end of the 1990s.

The data in Chapter IV (on history and group structure) was taken from my ethnography of the Satanas (Alsaybar 1993), as well as most of the data in Chapter V (fighting and constructing ethnicity and masculinity). I gathered the data that went into Chapter VI while being a gang outreach worker, program evaluator, and consultant at SIPA, the youth-saving social service agency. I must point out that in this chapter and throughout the manuscript, I use the term “social worker” in a generic manner to refer to anyone that was involved in helping client youths (whether as counselor, therapist, gang outreach worker, etc.) Chapter VII rounds up my documentation and identification of the

Filipino American community media as part of the institutional control network. Here I do a content analysis of articles and news reports about Filipino gangs, as well as student writing and student/youth advocacy in support of anti-gang programs. I identify the kinds of rhetorical strategies utilized by news reporters and youth/student activists in writing about gangs and the gang problem. This chapter illustrates the media's role in sustaining the moral panic over gangs. Chapter VIII describes the network and social organization of Party Culture, how all the various youth groups converge in the club scene, whether "gang" or "non-gang." Conducted in the more contemporary late 1990s, the "ethnographic present" method of writing is employed in this chapter.

Review of Related Literature

My master's thesis, "Satanas: Ethnography of a Filipino American Street Brotherhood in Los Angeles" (Alsaybar 1993) documents a barkada-turned-gang within the twenty-year gang phase. Even then, I was already grappling with the issue of gang representation, as evidenced by my choice of the phrase "street brotherhood" instead of "gang." Guided by what I was observing at the level of group life and individual interaction, I noted that the egalitarian barkada principle constituted the core of the group's structure and internal dynamics. I also found out that in Satanas, the barkada had become an instrument of cultural/ethnic defense (in addition to being a socializing and gender –constructing institution). This arose in response to harassment and violent attacks from Cholo gangs. Despite being labeled "deviant" or even criminal, Satanas became a site for identity construction, with "Pinoy Pride" as underlying ideology.

Despite my growing misgivings, this Satanas ethnography basically remained trapped within the acculturation model, still influenced as I was by styles of gang representation and writing on Latino and African American gangs.

By the middle 1990s I experienced a moment of epiphany when I saw how both “gang” and “non-gang” youths interacted on a regular basis in pursuit of fun and excitement; thus a fresh perspective is presented in “Filipino American Youth Gangs, “Party Culture,” and Ethnic Identity in Los Angeles” (Alsaybar 2002). This paper reflects a renewed vigor drawn from Amit-Talai and Wulff’s (1994) call for a more inclusive approach to the anthropological study of youth culture, as well as Stanley Cohen’s (1992;1985) anti-criminological writing.

In the late 1990s I became part of a team of researchers (based at the Asian American Studies Center) that undertook a study of Asian American Youth Violence; a final report was released (Delacruz et. al 2002). Among others, the study confirmed my contention that gangs had greatly declined in the Filipino American community while partying and import racing groups were proliferating and attracting youths across the Asian American communities. It also revealed that Filipino American and other Asian American youth greatly mistrust the police; youth participants in focus groups openly talked about being harassed and disrespected by police and other law enforcement agents.

Two publications that signal growing interest in Asian American youth are “The Second Generation: Ethnic Identity Among Asian Americans” (Min 2002) and “Asian American Youth: Culture, Identity, and Ethnicity” (Lee and Min Zhou 2004). The former featured my paper as a chapter (Alsaybar loc cit) while the latter features two

articles that provide greater detail and support for my description and analysis of the gang/crew crossovers and the rise of “party culture.” Immensely significant is Lakandiwa de Leon’s “Filipinotown and the DJ scene: Cultural Expression and Identity Affirmation of Filipino American Youth in Los Angeles” (2004). Born in southern California and a practitioner of hip hop culture, de Leon provides an insider’s vantage point from which to describe and analyze the Filipino American youth scene in Los Angeles.

Particularly illuminating are the details he reveals on the pivotal role played by disc jockeys, who serve as “an avenue to establish, express, and affirm a collective identity” among Filipino American youths, and the intimate connection between the gangs and crews during the violence-wracked latter half of the 1980s. He notes that structurally, the barkada principle that promotes “the collective over the individual” ensured the success of a DJ crew, given the way members would pool together their resources to buy the needed equipment. De Leon attributes the creative process involved in the creation of a Filipino American youth culture to being “caught in a cultural limbo where they feel disconnected from the traditions of a homeland culture, yet not fully part of mainstream American culture.”

Incidentally, Lakandiwa is also co-director of “Beats, Rhymes, and Resistance” (1997; revised 1999), a film documentary that traces the development of political and cultural awareness among Filipino American youth through the language, rhythms and styles of hip hop. The film features well-known DJs in action as well as interviews with them and other artists (poets, culture workers). A much longer film opus produced for

commercial distribution and screening is “The Debut” (1999), produced and directed by young Filipino Americans Gene Cajayon and John Castro. This movie revolves around the dilemmas faced by second the generation growing up in the kind of “cultural limbo” described by Lakan de Leon. The cultural and generational tension between parents and their children is set against the backdrop of a burgeoning youth culture and all the parties, import cars, and gangs (a movie I enjoyed watching because it documents my “party culture” in film). A third work in film is “Diary of a Gangsta Sucka” (1993) directed and produced by John Castro. This brief opus features the everyday life of a gang wannabe, Junior Aguinaldo, whose father is never shown and whose mother denies that her son is involved in a gang.

The second article from Lee and Min Zhou (2004) is Victoria Namkung’s “Reinventing the Wheel: Import Car Racing in Southern California.” Namkung’s fieldwork in the Asian American import car culture was conducted in the late 1990s; it is possible that we were at the same racing events and import car shows without the other knowing it; (I’m now citing her work in the same way she references my own in her article). Her ethnographic observations basically corroborate mine. One of the contributions of her paper is her historical positioning of Asian import car racing and customizing vis a vis the wider American car culture and the Mexican American “low rider” culture. Namkung looks at racing as a way of identity formation among Asian Americans: the races and shows “serve as cultural space constructed and used by Asian American youth and young adults as a proactive response to the history of

marginalization and exclusion. Import car racing forges a distinct identity for Asian American youth that allows them to look and feel good, cool, and sexy.”

Namkung sees a process of pan-ethnic community identity building, in the way the import car scene has brought individual Asian American racing groups together as a wider community. She notes that Asian import car racing has tremendous cross over appeal, attracting whites, Blacks, Latinos, and even women who also get behind the wheel in races. But while import racing appears to be racially inclusive, “Asian American males are the creators of and dominant forces behind this youth culture.” She argues that import racing has become a resource for Asian American males to construct a masculine, hyper-heterosexual identity that challenges negative stereotypes associated with them.

Linda Espana-Maram’s “Brown ‘Hordes’ in McIntosh Suits” (1998) provides illuminating insights into the social life of youthful Filipino laborers in Los Angeles during the 1930s to 1940s. Frequented by lonely pinoy bachelors, the taxi dance hall was not simply a place where working class men gathered after work in pursuit of leisure: it provided a site for Filipino men to create masculine and ethnic identities at a time of the Great Depression, intense nativism, and the prevailing racist and sexist climate. It becomes evident that even in earlier, pre-1965 times, the pursuit of leisure rather than the pursuit of crime stands out in the creation of youth cultures in Los Angeles.

Methodology

This study rests on data generated from the following methods, procedures, and sources: (1) Ethnographic field research; (2) individual and group interviews; and (3) content analysis of news reports, articles from both conventional library as well as internet (cyberspace), and other Filipiniana materials.

Field data on Filipino American youth groups in Los Angeles was gathered during the decade of the 1990s, a few years after I had immigrated. However, due to the transnational and socio-historical dimensionality of this youth culture, this study's origins are to be found in field observations (on the neighborhood barkada) that I conducted in the Philippines during the early 1970s. These observations are contained in Jocano et. al., "Children of the Lakeshore" (1976a) and Jocano et. al. "Work: Four Community Studies" (1976b). I utilize two sets of field data gathered from field work in Los Angeles: the first comes from my nearly two-year immersion and hanging out with the Satanas during the early 1990s; I fall back on part of this data but treat it as "ethnohistorical," in my reconstruction of the "gang phase" in the evolution of the youth culture in study; and (2) field ethnography of Filipino American "party culture," undertaken during the latter half of the 1990s, written out and presented in the mode of the "ethnographic present."

Ethnographic field research did not just take place within the social spaces of youth groups; I consider of great significance my participation in and observation of SIPA, the social service agency established to address gangs and other youth problems. During the first half of the 1990s I had been a youth outreach worker and then evaluator (part of an evaluation team based at UCLA's Center for Asian American Mental Health).

These work experiences gave me valuable insights into the workings of a social service agency, the nature of interactions between counselors and youth clients, and the place of the social service agency within the wider state network of control and surveillance of immigrant populations. And to round up my coverage of youth culture “street”/public spaces as well as the spaces of social service agencies, I became part of a research team based at UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center that undertook a study of Asian American youth violence. Conducted in 1998-2000, it received funding from the California Wellness Foundation’s “Violence Prevention Initiative.” Guided and sanctioned by UCLA’s Human Subject Protection Committee (grant #9700155), we gathered data through (1) open-ended interviews with counselors and social workers from various Asian American social service agencies in Los Angeles, probation officers and a deputy district attorney; (2) individual interviews with youth clients of these agencies, and (3) group interviews with ten youth focus groups. This dissertation utilizes interview materials from this project, specifically interviews with SIPA counselors and workers and focus groups of youth clients and my West Covina-based “party culture, gang/crew mix” that constituted a focus group.

In my initial dissertation research proposal (1995), I had intended to do an ethnography of a suburban Filipino American youth gang (having already studied an inner city based group, the Satanas). However, I experienced a moment of epiphany while on a weekend visit to my brother-in-law’s home in West Covina: his teenaged sons were hanging out at the backyard with a crew that was composed of both “gang” and “regular” “non-gang” boys. Consequently I spent the rest of the afternoon chatting with

the boys and learning all about the partying and car racing network. Against the backdrop of declining Filipino American gang activity in the early 1990s and the rise of this emergent partying culture, I decided to shift my focus from “gang” to “crew.”

Ethnographic Procedures

I then began to hang out with my nephews and their crew, who became my guides into the social world of the emergent partying and car customizing and racing Filipino American youth. They helped me identify the social situations (see Goffman 1963;1971) that figured prominently in their social world, of which three stood out: the party or club scene, the street racing scene, and the hang out. Identification of social situations and access to them provided the starting point for doing observations asking questions revolving around what Spradley (1980) considers to be the nine basic features of a social situation: (1) **space** (i.e. described in detail, the places frequented by the crew); (2) **actor**, (who are the people involved?); (3) **activities** (what set of related activities do the crew engage in?); (4) **object** (what physical things are present?); (5) **act** (what single actions do individuals do?); (6) **event** (what set of related activities are carried out by the crew?); (7) **time** (what kind of sequencing of activities takes place over time?); (8) **goal** (what things are people trying to accomplish?); and (9) **feeling** (what emotions are felt and expressed?)

I benefited greatly from the qualitative research methods course taught by Professor Susan Scrimshaw (Anthro M284). The course focused on practical field experience and required exercises involving direct observation and recording of specific

social situations as well as informal and formal interviews. She stressed three basic ethnographic procedures: (1) meticulous recording of each social situation or scene in the form of “raw” field notes that included detailed diagrams of the scene; (2) the need to draw up findings, no matter how preliminary; and (3) a reflexive critique of the process. In the course of field work, I wrote down detailed field notes which I immediately typed into my personal computer, in order not to lose immediate recollections of an event or scene just observed. I also had a voice-activated tape recorder in my car at all times, in order to be able to immediately record observations of spontaneously occurring events. I took pictures of huge gatherings and events such as import car show offs and flyer parties; I also took pictures at smaller parties and occasions when granted permission.

I utilized a method of tape-recorded, open-ended interviewing that constitutes the core of person-centered ethnography advocated and practiced by my advisor, Dr. Douglas Hollan. This method of ethnographic interviewing presents an alternative to conventional methods in psychological anthropology that tend to infer individual psychology from the analysis of social and cultural data. The aim of this interview strategy is to elicit self-reflective commentaries or discourses on experience, emotion, and self that reveal a level of reality at the personal level that contrasts with or tends to be obscured by public cultural forms. Spontaneity and reflection are encouraged in order to generate “experience-near” concepts of thought, emotion, and behavior. The interviews were loosely structured around a checklist of topics borrowed from Hollan and Wellenkamp (1994). The checklist (see appendix I) was modified to include experiences that are significant or recurring in gang or crew life such as participation in fights, car races, ritual

initiations, and leisure activities. I formulated a questioning route for counselors, social workers, and past and current (at time of research) personnel of SIPA and other Asian American social service agencies (see appendix II); the interviews were conducted as part of the Asian American Youth Violence project.

From the Asian American Studies Center Library and also the much smaller compilations at SIPA, I gathered news reports, articles, commentaries, and student papers on Filipino American gangs. I subjected these materials to a content analysis utilized by Johnson (1989) which identifies the rhetorical devices used by writers to construct images of issues or problems; these include (1) evoking negative emotions; (2) citing expert opinion and using statistics; and (3) theoretical assumptions underlying the construction of problems. From SIPA Director Joel Jacinto, I obtained copies of a Filipino population profile and a compilation of top 20 Filipino communities by name and by zip code; based on 1990 Census data, the reports were issued by United Way of Los Angeles (see Appendices III and IV).

II. THE BARKADA IN PHILIPPINE SOCIETY

Filipino scholars and other social scientists identify two basic organizing structures in Philippine society: the family and the kin group (see Fox 1976; Eggan 1971; Mendez and Jocano 1974). Despite the diversity and perceived ethnic differences, Philippine lowland cultures share these two basic elements of social organization. There is a third element which appears to have escaped the eye of researchers influenced by dominant western anthropological paradigms: I refer to the barkada or age-based indigenous peer group. So far, only the well-known social anthropologist F. Landa Jocano has identified the barkada as a third organizing principle, although he has not fully defined its ramifications and place within Philippine social organization.

The barkada is viewed by F. Landa Jocano (1990) as “the third most important unit in Philippine social organization.” Largely identified with but not limited to adolescence, the barkada is a peer group suffused by an egalitarian orientation emphasizing caring, loyalty, and friendship. The group is made up of individuals of same (or close) age and common interests. The barkada is one of the primary groups within which early socialization of the Filipino takes place. Along with the family and kin group, the barkada experience initially shapes “the personality of the individual and equips him with values for adult participation in community activities before any other agency or institution in the environment can affect his social development and psychological growth” (p. 27). There are male barkadas, female barkadas, mixed male/female barkadas, and gay barkadas.¹ Male barkadas tend to be more given to spectacular behavioral displays and have great public visibility, however, since boys are

given more freedom to roam the social landscape. In contrast, greater restrictions are imposed on girls with regards to attendance at social events or travel and movement outside the home. While significant social change has altered gender patterns of behavior, public places are still regarded as male domain; the home continues to be a woman's domain. This pattern is especially observable in more rural areas of the Philippines.

At times the barkada assumes greater importance than the family, a tendency observably greater among teenagers and young adults. A core value underlying barkada relationships is *pakikisama*, a dominant social value that emphasizes compliance and subordination of self to the will of the group (from the root word, "*sama*," direct translation would be "to go along"). A local Manila television commentator was quoted to have said,

To many of us, the barkada comes first before the family. It is merely lip service when we say we value the family but it is not deeply felt. After work, the Mister does not come home early because he was invited by the barkada. And because of this, the Mister is not able to do what he should be doing for Misis and the children (Jocano *ibid*).

While Jocano draws attention to the role of the barkada in socialization, anthropologist Jean Paul Dumont, in an exceedingly thoughtful essay (1993) sees it as a site for gender construction. He views the Visayan male barkada as an "anti-institution" which functions to bond males together against women, and to cement the social construction of a Filipino male identity. Standing outside the normality and rigidity of "structure," the barkada "communitas" enables male youths to rebel against the family and domestic authority. Because they could freely experiment and do as they please, it is

in the barkada where boys are initiated to sex, drinking, gambling, and other masculine patterns of behavior. Even later in life, it is within the closed world of the barkada where married men are able to retreat from their wives and families and “be among the boys” again. Not surprisingly, the barkada nurtures and encourages macho behavior and other expressions of male dominance, superiority, and control over women.

“Young Filipinos have a long adolescence,” note writers Alfredo and Grace Roces. “They enjoy a long period of immunity—a time when adolescents can get away with childish, irresponsible behavior because they are not yet considered adults and therefore not expected to behave accordingly” (Roces and Roces 1985:198). Not uncommonly, boys remain dependent on their parents until they marry; they do not have to work their way to college and thus have lots of time to spend with the barkada. The same writers make the interesting observation that

Because of the Filipino’s need to belong...the barkada is an essential part of an adolescent’s life. Not to belong to any group is to feel like an outcast—loners and individualists (those who want to be different) are considered ‘weird’ by Filipinos. The society exerts tremendous pressure to conform. Once one belongs to a barkada one is ensured support and the fun of shared experiences. “Filipinos do not like being alone....They do not like eating alone, they will not see a movie alone, they always have to be with someone—a friend or a relative. They do not enjoy experiences not shared with others. They feel uncomfortable eating beside someone who is not, so they will always offer to share their food or cajole their companion into having ‘a bit of something.’ The Filipino will not try anything new alone but with his barkada to back him up, he will (loc cit.)

Filipinos do not generally reflect on the etymology of the word “barkada.” The common definition—a group of really close friends, a peer group, or a clique—is usually given without thought of the term’s root. Over the internet, one can come across definitions of barkada as crew or posse. In some Tagalog dictionaries, it is defined as a

“gang,” or “a group with which one hangs out.”² There’s nothing trivial, however, with the use of barkada to denote an extremely important indigenous pattern of cohorting. Nick Joaquin, a famous Filipino writer and culture historian, notes that while the Spanish word for gang is “pandilla,” Filipinos preferred to adopt “barkada,” which means boatload (the root word is “barco,” meaning, boat). The pre-Hispanic forbears of modern-day Filipinos were voyagers who navigated the high seas in fast-moving outriggers called “barangays.” Thus when they settled the island group now called the Philippines, a village was made up of a boatload of fellow passengers; to this day, the word for village is “barangay.” Harking back to that boatload experience where co-passengers pledged to fight and die for each other, barkada stands for a closeness and interdependence, a communal solidarity that transcends kinship and blood ties. Thus wrote Nick Joaquin:

The Spanish word for gang is pandilla; but when we preferred to adopt barkada, which means boatload, were we consciously moved by the memory of a time when being together in a boat made people not simply co-passengers but near-kinsmen, almost brothers, pledged to live and work together, to fight and die for each other? That was the idea of the barangay, and our young folk have re-expressed, in a Spanish word, an ancient Malay concept. The revival is not merely nominal. Are we not shocked by the fanatic devotion of our boys to their barkada? Have we not heard them say that the barkada is more important than parents or sweethearts or family, and that to fail it is the unpardonable crime? In seeking to understand why our sons place the barkada above home and family, we may have failed to go back far enough for an explanation—back to the barangay where we all began, the barangay that lives again today in the barkada (1980:13).

Negative and Positive Aspects

Filipino psychologist E. Aldaba-Lim (1969) saw the barkada in starkly negative terms as a vehicle for juvenile delinquency. When youths engage in vices such as

gambling, drinking, smoking, or other instances of badness, these are attributed to the influence of the barkada. When students do not do well in school, there's the suspicion that he/she had been hanging out too long with the barkada. Young men idly hanging out in street corners or in front of sari-sari stores evoke images of "gang." The pressure to go along with what the group wishes to do (*pakikisama*) is best expressed in the testimony of this reluctant drinker: "You are forced to drink to be just like the others, even if you do not feel like it. Your friends push you to do things you will regret"(Dumont 1993:405).

Aside from anthropologists Jocano and Dumont (who both saw the positive and negative aspects), others point to the positive side of the barkada. A Filipino Catholic priest known for his espousal of Filipino cultural traditions and values views the barkada as a "comfort zone" where "a person claims he feels he belongs, where he says he does not have to wear masks to hide or defend himself. With his barkada, he feels comfortable the way he is—sinner or saint, where he is accepted without being interrogated, probed, judged, and condemned. Among his 'berks' he feels he is welcomed, understood, loved, and helped to become a better person, even the best he could ever be" (Villote 2003).

Corporate management lecturer T. Andres (1989) states that the barkada bond "is usually indestructible for it is based on pure and genuine friendship"(Dumont *ibid*). A Filipino website calls "barkadahan" (variant of barkada) "our own brand of camaraderie...A way of life that is based on compatriotism that fills the common tao's need to belong." The text goes on to assert that this sense of belongingness made the Filipino endure centuries of colonialism followed by Marcos dictatorship; a potent tool of the barkada is identified as "the ability to laugh at himself/herself with his/her compatriots in times of the most

humiliating experience, a welcome respite from a serious and cruel world”
(Blogkadaan.com 2005).

Barkada, Fraternity, and Gang

The barkada as organizing principle in Philippine society can best be understood by looking at the various social settings in which discernible “types” appear to have emerged, including school-based fraternities and groups identified as criminal gangs. They commonly arise in the local neighborhoods where children growing up together form friendships that lead to barkada formation in early adolescence; in church communities; in high schools and colleges, where barkada is experienced in a more ritualized and intensified form through membership in fraternities and other enduring groups; and even in the prisons and inner cities where the “barkada spirit” is a strong element in the everyday life of criminal street gang. An individual may belong to more than one barkada at a time (due to multiple involvements in the neighborhood, the church, or school) but membership may vary in terms of duration and intensity, from relatively shorter-lived to lifetime friendships.

Neighborhood and Village Peer Group

The neighborhood barkada is pervasive in both rural and urban environments. Dumont (ibid) observed that in the southern Philippine rural barangay (village) he studied, “relatively few people did not belong to any barkada. Belonging to a barkada was perceived as an integral part of social life (p.417). He noted that only early grade-school children at the “pre-barkada” stage, the very old, and the mentally incapacitated did not have barkadas. The barkada Dumont closely observed was composed of middle-aged, middle class men well into their forties. Feeling the need to retreat from the home where the wife’s authority was “too strong,” the men would meet on the beach where they would share meals of raw as well as roast meat, and where they could break a number of home taboos like drinking and telling dirty jokes. An interesting observation of Dumont’s is how the preparation and cooking of dog meat is semi-ritualized in that it excludes women and children. Dog meat, he says, is a sort of “supermale delicacy.” While the male barkada’s culturally significant activities brought them outside of home, female barkadas revolved around household and domestic activities, except for a few occasions that brought women in public venues such as prayer meetings and mass. Women who spent much time outside the home ran the risk of being the object of gossip.

In an ethnographic study of social relations in the Laguna lakeshore town of Tanay, province of Rizal, social anthropologist Robert Morais calls the barkada a “polyadic gang” that exemplifies social friendship” (Morais 1981:75), adding that “There are few teenagers and young adults who are not part of a gang.” He goes on to state that

The gang is a unit where the adage “all for one and one for all” epitomizes the group’s ethos. Salient qualities of the gang are solidarity, *pakikisama*, shared

ideas and interests, and occasional mutual aid (as in boys and girls helping one another with romantic relationships or boys joining together in fights for mutual defense. As with close friendship, close kinsmen are excluded but cousins are often gangmates. Members name their barkadas and join with them daily (for men, nightly as well) for various activities. The cost of these activities is covered by pooling the money of the members. (loc. cit.)

Data on a Metro Manila urban barkada and a rural barkada in the adjacent Laguna lakeshore area are contained in research monographs that I co-wrote with F. Landa Jocano (Jocano et.al. 1976a, 1976b). Significantly, the “rural” lakeshore town where I did a year of in-residence fieldwork is located less than 30 kilometers from Tanay, where Morais did his own fieldwork. Independently, Morais and our studies appear to have been conducted during the same decade, sharing a common time frame and geographic/cultural space and thus mutually corroborating each other’s ethnographic observations.

About the urban barkada, we (Jocano et. al) noted that it drew its members from teenage males residing within the kapitbahay or neighborhood unit. “Hence, when properly motivated and dealt with, the barkada can serve to bind together the families its members represent, and consequently, make the neighborhood a strong and cohesive unit....The barkada...objects to being considered a street corner gang in the traditional and popular connotation of the term,” we observed. “Its members are not thugs or underworld characters and few have had brushes with the law. The boys come from highly educated, socially accepted and maritally stable families. Despite occasional truancy or dropping out from school, they have lofty career aspirations....The barkada is tightly cohesive, observes common norms of conduct, defends what it claims to be its

territory, and is bitterly resentful of parental authoritarianism and the Establishment.

Interrelationships among members are close and highly affective, since almost all of them grew up together as kids and playmates before entering adolescence and joining the peer groups” (Jocano et. al. 1976a:37).

The *tambayan* or meeting place of the barkada was the front area of a small, dimly lighted sari-sari store. The boys spent many idle hours there, carrying on light, at times boisterous and rowdy talk, playing chess, gambling and betting on race horses, and playing cards. What struck me was the generally unkempt and hippie-like appearance of the boys. All sported long hair and dressed like flower people. It was the norm to look “rugged” at the *tambayan*. Except for more formal social events, one was expected to wear slippers or sandals, puff a cigarette, and be dressed in the most casual manner. Pot sessions were not unheard of in more secluded, private places. These youths were also non-conformists in a political sense. The hang out was one place where they could openly express opposition to martial law; many of them had been active members of radical anti-Marcos movements. Curfew (from midnight to 5 a.m.) was not at all welcome, for it meant a curtailment of partying and other social events, and jail time if caught on the streets during curfew hours.

At times the barkada would get involved in fights against rival groups from other neighborhoods. But due to its solidarity and cohesiveness, the barkada was undoubtedly the most effective channel for accomplishing collective endeavors. Preparations for neighborhood holiday events (such as Christmas and New Year) often revealed the lack of coordination, teamwork, and organization of the parents (despite the formation of

committees appointed to take charge of tasks and activities). The boys would take over and finish the work in record time. Not uncommonly, certain types of household work and repair such as repainting walls and fixing fences were done by the boys through traditional reciprocal, free labor (called “tulongan” or “bayanihan”).

I observed similar barkada cohorting behavior in the rural lakeshore town of Cardona (Rizal province). Teenage boys of high school age would be seen spending many idle hours together at favorite street corners; they sported such names as “GI Blues,” “Blackpatch,” or “Cattsino” (reportedly because eating cat meat was part of getting initiated into the group). As in the urban settings, the barkadas were the most cohesive units in town; they were active in preparations for Christmas and other big holiday events. They displayed a high level of civic-consciousness and community involvement. I actually witnessed youths constructing a waiting shed at a bus stop on the town’s main road; I saw how they actively raised funds (by selling tickets for a pop concert) for the installation of a wall clock in one of the street corners of a barangay. Cardona’s out of school youth found work at a fish pen cooperative set up by a government agency; this same agency tried to encourage greater youth involvement in community building by forming a federation of youth clubs and organizations.

School-based Barkadas (In High School and College Fraternities)

The University of the Philippines (UP) has been described by a respected Filipino writer and journalist as a “virtual copy of US universities, with their ring hops, hay rides, and yes, fraternities and sororities” (Teodoro 2000). Ever since the first Greek-letter

fraternities were established at UP during the early part of the twentieth century, college fraternities have sprung all over the island nation.³ The phenomenon, however, is not limited to the college years; high school fraternities abound throughout the country, some of which are junior annexes of established Greek-letter organizations in major universities and colleges. By and large, these junior annexes are made up of early adolescent, conventional males that were already part of a conventional barkada. A fraternity is a much larger grouping, but within it are smaller “barkadas” that form around common interests. Thus joining the junior fraternity brings the barkada experience to an intensified level.

Because of their youthfulness these high school fratmen are said to be more aggressive, impulsive, and more eager to prove their manhood in fighting enemy groups than their college counterparts. Prolonged high school inter-fraternity warfare at times has resulted in death and injury to members.⁴ Ongoing rivalry and fighting between fraternities is not confined to the college campuses. According to older generation fraternity men now living in Los Angeles, their Manila-based fraternity, Tau Gamma Phi, had recruited teenaged youths in depressed neighborhoods of Metro Manila in the early 1970s. Some were high school students, others were out of school kids that served as the college fraternity’s “frontline fighters” against counterpart youths (belonging to their arch-rival fraternity) in the local neighborhoods.⁵ East Coast-based Filipino American writer, Luis Francia (1991), writes about similar “gang fraternities” in a depressed barrio of Northern Metro Manila; these groups recruited mainly from a nearby university campus and had their own pass words, tattoo markings, and hand signals. These groups

at times engaged in pre-arranged showdowns called “rumbles”; held in the open, rules of engagement were agreed upon by both sides before start of combat.

The University of the Philippines is considered to be the nation’s premiere educational institution. Only a small percentage out of thousands of applicants pass the annual entrance examinations. Many fraternity members come from reputable family backgrounds and eventually become national figures and leaders in both the public and private sectors. Ferdinand Marcos packed his administration with fraternity brothers (Upsilon Sigma Phi);⁶ other trusted officials who were not his brods (like then minister of defense Juan Ponce Enrile, Sigma Rho) likewise placed frat brods in government positions. Upon graduating and embarking on their careers, fraternity members can count on a strategic network of connections in society. As one writer put it,

“In feudal Philippines, where beyond what you know is the greater imperative of whom you know in order to succeed, fraternities provide a network of support and patronage from fraternity alumni in strategic positions in government, the professions, and industry. The young men with already promising futures who join fraternities are in short making sure that the future is even more promising, fraternity membership assuring access to “brods” who can open even wider the doors to opportunity that mean wealth and power in Philippine society”(Teodoro ibid.).

There are allegations that fraternity alumni in government help to “shield their organizations from police scrutiny.”⁷ In a similar way, during the martial law years, political dissidents from the UP who had fraternity brothers in the military received better treatment than other arrestees.

Fraternities are generally known for beneficial activities within both the campus and the larger society, but what appears intriguing is the tendency of some to engage in violent inter-fraternity fighting and hazing that results in injuries and at times, death.

This led two sociologists (the lead author, a Filipino and the secondary author, a visiting American professor) to research the phenomenon and title their paper, “Student Organizations as **Conflict Gangs**, University of the Philippines, Diliman” (Zarco and Shoemaker 1995, highlighting mine).

The joint authors noted that while fraternity fighting posed a serious problem to the university administration and academic community, it also presented “an interesting behavioral phenomenon for the sociological analysis of youth deviance. **Here is a situation which involves behavior similar to youth street gangs in the United States but which is committed by middle-class fraternity members at a selective university**” (ibid:p.70, highlighting mine). Based on university police records for some 25 fraternities over a three-year period, there were a total of 195 violent incidents that included “ganging up,” rumbles, fist fights, throwing of explosives, vandalism, carrying of weapons, intimidation, alcohol use/possession, and hazing. The weapons of choice included clubs (steel pipes, baseball bats, and wooden clubs); hand-thrown projectiles (pillboxes [explosives], stones, and Molotov bombs); bladed weapons (paper cutters, knives, fan knives, and long knives); and miscellaneous weapons such as fists, glass bottles, tear gas, guns, and ice picks. Frat men reportedly wear masks to hide their identities, and, with the advent of cell phones, are able to conduct more sophisticated operations against enemy groups.

An exchange of looks (“mad dogging” in American slang) and competition over girls are the common triggers that start rumbles. The fraternities that have their *tambayans* (hang outs) at the largest college building in campus are said to be the most

fight-prone. “The tambayans are located where there is heaviest pedestrian traffic,” according to Professor Zarco. “They want to show everyone that they are ‘macho.’”⁸ The new recruits act as “foot soldiers,” are the most aggressive, and are the ones that provoke the fights. A fraternity member who spent seven years in jail for being involved in the killing of a member of a rival fraternity brings us inside the fraternity system:

Though cloaked with noble and lofty ideals such as academic excellence, nationalism, leadership, rule of law, and intellectual integrity, the fraternities have developed strong organizational cultures that lean towards violence and that contradict such ideals.

The seeds of violence are sown early in the heart of a frat man the moment he enters the fraternity. The rites of passage an applicant has to go through before he can be considered a ‘brother’ are replete with physical and psychological violence. By testing their mettle through pain and humiliation, the new members are inducted to become blood brothers. In hazing or initiations, the neophytes are made to believe that their fraternity is the one and only fraternity existing. All the rest are mere dance troupes. The ‘masters’ train their ‘neophytes’ to hate the ‘enemy’ and vow to work for the destruction of their enemy-fraternities.

The physical violence frat members undergo during initiations becomes the rationale for the acceptability of other forms of violence. Members accept violence as normal practice.

The culture of hate is passed from one generation to another. Stories of ‘war exploits’ by senior and alumni members are told again and again to young members exhorting them to do their fair share in advancing the fraternity’s ‘glorious tradition.’ They have evolved the ‘warrior class’ to act as vanguard in their military efforts. The warrior class has the special mission of collecting information against the other parties, in plotting attacks and developing the paraphernalia of war. Members who do not adhere to the militarist tradition are considered outcasts or have low fraternity stature. The voices of those who have cracked more skulls or have proven themselves to be ‘the man’ command more following than those who advocate good academic performance (Narag 2003).

Fraternity proliferation in the late 1960s to the early 1970s is attributed by some to the social unrest generated by martial law under Ferdinand Marcos.⁹ But fraternity violence seems to have worsened during the decade of the 1990s, with several students

belonging to fraternities based at the University of the Philippines being hazed to death during initiation rituals.¹⁰ Such incidents never fail to grab the headlines of national newspapers, but one case particularly roiled the premier university community and led to massive soul-searching among officials and commentators like no other.

On February 19, 1999, a graduating journalism major was shot to death in front of a fraternity hang out. The hapless victim lost his life in a case of mistaken identity—he never was a fraternity member; witnesses said that three unidentified men who did not look like college students allegedly pumped five bullets into his body. This incident caused great outrage because (1) it looked like the first case of fraternity violence involving mistaken identity in the university, perpetrated by (2) alleged killers from outside the university, suspected of being hired guns; and (3) the victim was a “barbarian” (term for non-fraternity member), a bright, mild-mannered young man born to a poor family that looked to him as their hope for a better life. University officials called for tighter control and supervision of campus fraternities, with some calling the violent fratmen “criminals” that did not belong in a college campus but who deserved to be locked up in the national prison. The columnist Teodoro noted the widespread identification of violence with fraternities and suggested that these groups are “actually little more than **street gangs** in the poorer, working class areas surrounding Manila’s ‘university belt,’ where dozens of fifth-rate colleges and universities are concentrated.”¹⁰ (highlighting mine).

Street Gangs in Metro Manila

Empirical studies on street gangs in Manila are virtually non-existent, perhaps reflecting the dread among researchers for doing field work on this topic. Still regarded as required reading is an ethnographic study done more than thirty years ago by the social anthropologist F. Landa Jocano (see summarization below). He earned his PhD in Anthropology at the University of Chicago; not surprisingly he was greatly influenced by the Chicago School of Ethnography. A master's thesis done in the early 1930s by a graduate student in the combined departments of Anthropology and Sociology at the University of the Philippines (Mangahis 1935) reports that there were “gangsters” in various districts of Manila during the American occupation. A study of juvenile delinquency with a decidedly behaviorist/positivist framework of analysis, the author attributed delinquency among his research subjects to the impact of poverty, unsanitary conditions in the home, poor ventilation (small windows), influence of gangsters in the neighborhood, the lure of “ballerinas” (taxi dancers) and their corrupting influence on boys, and lack of adequate playground facilities—among other factors. Unfortunately, the study did not delve into gang structure and history.

Being the commercial, industrial, and educational hub of the Philippines, a steady stream of job-seekers, rural migrants, and students make Metro Manila a densely populated city. Thousands live in abject poverty, in crowded slum settlements that continue to sprout at the fringes of the metropolis. Well-known gangs emerged in the late 1940s, an extremely difficult period following the end of World War II. Manila was a badly ruined city; jobs were scarce, people were hungry and dying of disease. The

“mother gangs” are said to have been formed in the National Penitentiary (Muntinglupa). These dreaded street gangs first appeared in the old slum district of Tondo and the “squatter” (shantytowns) colonies along the railroad tracks in Singalong. It was here, in a place called “Looban” where the anthropologist F. Landa Jocano resided for three years, studying the street corner gangs as part of his larger ethnography of a Manila slum (Jocano 1977).

The mean age of gang members was 25, which places in doubt any characterization of the Looban gang as a “youth gang.” Many of these men were migrants from various regions of the country. A majority (75%) of the 300 gang members interviewed belonged to matricentric families. Fathers were either in jail or had deserted their families. The average daily family income was 20 pesos (around 5 USD at that time), derived mainly from doing odd jobs and vending cigarettes, candies and peanuts in the sidewalks. Many worked as jeepney or taxicab drivers, but whatever earned was often spent on drinking with gangmates.

Street gangs in Looban were composed mainly of criminals, ex-convicts, recidivists, and fugitives from the law. Almost all of them had been arrested or jailed for various crimes ranging from qualified theft to murder. Jocano noted that the gangs were loosely organized, with no definite set of goals, except for “the desire to be with friends, seek the security of the barkada, and to be accepted as a man” (1975: 102). Gang membership was not stable, and turn over rate was high. Many would stay briefly for a few months in the neighborhood and then either move out or return to the City Jail for new offenses. At any rate, the gang was attractive to both old members and new ones,

because it provided security and protection from enemies and the Police. Jocano observed that leadership was not fixed: rather, it was situationally defined. Thus, he states:

Functional leadership seems to be related to the situations and the activities involved in group undertakings. It is of short duration too. In a word, leadership is not exclusive. Rather, it is dependent upon the skills of each member under a specific condition. All members are potential leaders (ibid:104).

Despite being loosely organized, there were sources of internal cohesion, such as the built-in barkada spirit. Another source of internal cohesion derived from the community's acceptance and toleration of the gang's presence. There was no strong disapproval of the gang, since they provided protection from gangs of other neighborhoods. Adherence to an unwritten code which stressed group loyalty, mutual sharing, and respect reinforced unity and cohesion. Tattoing was practiced, with tattoos placed in various parts of the body. Tattoos were believed to imbue the bearer with magical, protective power. Violence and aggressive behavior was the mark of manhood in the Looban gang. Sometimes violence was directed against a gangmate suspected of betraying the group. Jocano describes a ritual blood compact which accompanies the selection of a designated killer (who will kill the suspected traitor or snitch).

The gangs had a strong sense of territoriality. Intrusions by rival gangs were not tolerated, often leading to fighting. The territory was also the area where most of the nefarious moneymaking activities such as bag-snatching, pocket-picking, burglary and hold ups were perpetuated. The gangs also engaged in protecting individuals and their establishments (or properties) for a fee. Extortion and collection of protection money from bus and taxicab drivers was another major source of income for gang members.

Synthesis

It is important to understand the barkada and its significance in Philippine society, in order to comprehend its transplantation to America and its implantation in cyberspace. The barkada has its positive as well as negative aspects, a group driven by peer pressure, egalitarianism, and group conformity. Members are of same or close age and share common interests and pursuits. Unlike family and kin group membership based on biological or affinal (marriage) ties, barkada membership is based on pure friendship, but at times it surpasses loyalty to family or kin. Thus the neighborhood male barkada is often the most cohesive unit capable of undertaking collective endeavors more effectively than other social units. Engaging in leisure and recreational activities, hanging out, partying, and providing a supportive context for dating (or “courting,” the preferred term in Philippine lingo) and pursuing girls constitute the major part of an adolescent male barkada’s waking hours. It can also be disruptive of the social order when rival groups engage in brawls and fist fights. In the space of the barkada, boys learn not only to be aggressive but are also initiated into sex, drinking, smoking, gambling, and other masculine ways.

The meaning of “gang” in Philippine society needs further clarification, for even ethnographers like Jocano and Morais and some Tagalog dictionaries apparently use the term at times synonymously with barkada. Jocano’s study of street corner gangs clearly identifies the gangs in the slums as criminal groups, therefore distinct from the non-criminal, conventional peer neighborhood adolescent groups described in the literature—yet why are the latter at times referred to loosely as “gangs?” I suggest that part of the

answer may lie in the differing Philippine and USA social environments: in contrast to the USA where public reaction to gangs tends to be more emotional, where images of race, crime, and youth are condensed in “gang,” and where moral panics over immigrant youth have historically spread fear and dread across society, the phenomenon appears to be perceived differently in the Philippines. While outbreaks of criminal or street gang violence are not unusual in Manila and the bigger cities, I am not aware of the occurrence of racist-driven moral panic over gangs, or of such groups being viewed as alien or foreign “others.” Criminality may be attributed to poverty or individual moral deficit, but not to race or ethnicity. Then, too, “gang” gained currency during the 1950s when the coming of Hollywood gangster movies gave rise to a Manila teenage culture. It is significant to note that while criminal street gangs were already ensconced in the slums and poorer districts, it was primarily the glamour of American gang style, not that of the local street underworld, that was appropriated by Manila youths as a model for creating a teenage culture.

Fed by law enforcement narratives, there’s a popular tendency to trace youth violence to the streets and prisons of Manila. However, a considerable segment of Filipino youths experience violence in the relative safety of school campuses, in the form of college fraternity hazing and “rumbling” (group combat) as well as other incidents involving younger high school fraternities. The introduction of the American Greek fraternity system provided a more intensified form of bonding among young Filipino college students than could be experienced at the generic barkada level. I suggest that among some groups the fraternity ramped up the level of aggressive behavior through

often violent initiation rituals and protracted inter fraternity warfare and competition. As described earlier in this chapter, there's an eerily striking similarity between the macho-like behavior and practices of college fraternities in the Philippines and Filipino American youth gangs in Los Angeles. Bonded for life, many fraternity brods go on to occupy positions of power and privilege in Philippine government and corporate sector, and are known to protect each other and look after their younger cohorts.

I maintain that the American fraternity, rather than the Manila prison gang, provides a cultural/structural model that comes closer to the pre-immigration life experiences of members of Filipino American gangs and youth groups in Los Angeles. In the course of doing fieldwork I met and interviewed numerous young men who were members of high school fraternities in Manila or other cities. In contrast, I did not find evidence of any kind of organizational transfer to Los Angeles of a Manila prison gang. In terms of group formation, everything began with the barkada, for when first generation adolescents immigrated and settled with their parents in specific neighborhoods and schools, they met others of same or close age and common interests, formed close friendships, walked to school, hung out and partied together, and eventually fought together against common enemies and competitors. For outside the family and kin group, the barkada is the primordial social unit, a publicly visible group formation that, throughout the evolution of a youth culture, provided the egalitarian structural core for other formations such as gangs, second generation Filipino American fraternities, and crews. In the following chapter (dealing with a brief history of Filipino immigration and profile of the Los Angeles Filipino American community till circa 2000), as well as

chapter IV, I strive to provide sharper focus on the immigration experience of this ethnic community and the transformation of barkada to gang.

III. FILIPINO IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT IN LOS ANGELES: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL NOTE

To gain a proper perspective on Filipino American youth subcultures, it becomes imperative to examine the larger parent community's experience of immigration and settlement in Los Angeles. Traditional theories look at migration in terms of "macro-micro" or "push-pull" factors to explain the movement of people from one country—called the "sending country"—to another, often more economically advanced country, called the "host country" (see Fawcett and Carino 1988). Clearly starting from a structuralist paradigm (highlighting the way dire economic and social conditions shape human behavior), such bi-polar models of migration represent a kind of material or structural determinism that leaves little room for human agency.

The more contemporary transnationalist perspective (Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton-Blanc 1994) argues that present conceptions of "immigrant" and "migrant," anchored in the conditions of earlier time periods, no longer suffice. Given the level of technology that has shrunk time and distance, as well as the concomitant social and political transformations that force a rethinking of traditional bounded concepts of nation, culture, and territoriality, today's immigrant communities contain large numbers of individuals who develop networks, cultural patterns, and ideologies that span their home and host society. Basch et. al. (ibid) define transnationalism as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. These joint authors use the term transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural,

and political borders” (ibid:7). Individuals who develop and maintain multiple relationships—familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political—that span borders are called “transmigrants.”

I find the use of traditional as well as more recent perspectives on migration quite helpful in explaining trans-Pacific movements of individuals from the Philippine Islands to the United States of America. The historical background of anglo-European colonialism that has profoundly shaped Philippine culture and society, as well as those indigenous principles of social organization that continue to account for group dynamics and formation, are critical to an understanding of Filipino American communities and the emergent youth culture in Los Angeles.

Spanish and American Colonial Rule

The Philippines is an archipelago made up of 7,107 islands; it is strategically situated below the Asian subcontinent, south of Taiwan and north of the Indonesian islands group. Facing the south China sea to the west and the Pacific Ocean to the east, the Philippines has often been called the “Crossroads of Asia” where various civilizational influences have converged, notably Pre-Hispanic Hindu, Islamic, Spanish, and Anglo American. Movement and migration among inhabitants of these islands are not a modern phenomenon; the ancestors of today’s Filipinos came from various places (from as far as Arabia, India, Indonesia, China, and Malaysia) and were experienced mariners and seafarers (see Jocano 1975; Agoncillo and Alfonso 1967). There are eight

major lowland languages and literally hundreds of spoken dialects; Pilipino, based largely on the Tagalog language, is the national language¹

The Philippines was colonized by Spain for more than three hundred years (1565-1898). At no time during their occupation of the islands did the Spanish have a force of more than 10,000 soldiers, but they managed to maintain control largely thru a “divide and rule” policy—setting up a feudal system that rewarded loyal officers with land grants, installing puppet leaders among the aristocracy of indigenous communities, and pitting tribal groups against others (i.e. Macabebes and Pampangans against Moros of Mindanao; see Constantino 1975). The conquest of the Philippines was as much accomplished thru military means as by religious coercion and conversion, with “the Cross” following “the Sword.” The Spanish friars, not the soldiers, were the most visible agents of colonial authority; aggressive religious proselytizing led to the conversion of lowland communities—giving rise to a “Folk Christianity” or “Folk Catholicism” featuring a curious blend of Judeo-Christian and indigenous beliefs and practices (see Phelan 1959; see also Jocano 1969).

Through the Galleon Trade, which lasted from the late 16th to the early part of the 19th century, Manila became an important trading outpost between Asia and other places under Spanish rule. Galleons made once-a-year runs between Acapulco, Mexico, and Manila. Because Mexico was deemed closer geographically to the Philippines, Spain actually ruled the Philippines through Mexico (Phelan, *ibid*). The “compadrazgo” system of ritual kinship (or fictive co-parenthood) is a Mexican tradition brought to the Philippines, as well as certain domesticated plants indigenous to Mexico through the

galleons. Spanish influence is readily identifiable in Philippine lowland music, dance, and even food. Spanish conquest and colonial policies led to prolonged oppression, destruction of cultural properties and artifacts, and the stifling of native entrepreneurship.

American-style democracy was brought to the Philippines by American rule, which lasted much shorter than Spanish rule but nonetheless registered profound influences in the mentality of Filipinos. Through an educational system that used English as the medium of instruction, Filipino children were taught American ideals and learned to idolize American heroes like George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Just like the Spanish soldiers who were followed by proselytizing friars, Protestant missionaries followed the American military forces: Methodists, Baptists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians “divided” the Philippines into “spheres of mission work” (see Clymer 1986). Despite aggressive missions work, more than 90 per cent of Filipinos consider themselves “Roman Catholic;” but the Protestant influence is evident in the great number of fine universities and colleges they set up, as well as hospitals and other medical institutions. General Fidel Ramos, a Methodist by church affiliation, became the first and only Protestant to become Philippine President in the 1990s.

While the Philippines was granted independence in 1946, the United States of America continues to wield profound economic, political, and cultural influences upon its former colony. Through onerous treaties and trade agreements made prior to granting of independence, the US had been able to continue to exploit the Philippines of its natural resources and maintain military bases until lately. American government support propped up Ferdinand Marcos and helped the Dictator maintain martial law for nearly 15

dark years. US economic imperialism had transformed the Philippines into a supplier of raw materials and consumer of imported goods—keeping it in a state of dependency and underdevelopment. Thus, although the US occupation lasted less than a half century, its impact upon the Filipino psyche reinforced and worsened the foundation of colonial mentality laid by more than three hundred years of Spanish occupation.

Coming to America

Older historical narratives had assumed that Filipinos had been coming to America since the turn of the 20th century, when the United States seized the Philippines from Spain. But more recent research indicates that Filipinos had been coming here as early as the early part of the 18th century, when Filipino seamen jumped ship in Acapulco, Mexico (and possibly, the coasts of California); they reportedly found their way to New Orleans where they intermarried with local women and founded a thriving fishing village (Espina 1988; Cordova 1983). But large-scale immigration did not begin until the time of American colonial take over of the Islands.

By the last decade of the twentieth century, Filipinos constituted the largest Asian American community in California (1990 Census) but ranked second to the Chinese (numbers-wise) nationwide. Pido (1986) views Filipino migration to America in terms of both “macro” and “micro” dimensions. While stating that international immigration is, “to some extent a process in which the most active agents are the immigrants themselves,” he points out that migration patterns “are influenced by and operate within a sociohistorical, economic, political and military institutional framework with

international, transnational, and regional dimensions” (p.5). The colonial relationship, therefore, between the Philippines and the USA, provides a sociohistorical background for comprehending the patterns of Filipino migration, settlement, adaptation and acculturation in America.

The first big wave of Filipinos began coming to Hawaii and mainland USA between 1905-1940. Students were the first to arrive; called “pensionados,” they were sent to American universities under a program designed to produce “disciples” who would return to the Philippines and propagate the American democratic way of life. With the increasing demand for cheap labor, thousands of young Filipino laborers (mostly from the Ilocos region) were recruited to work in the sugar plantations of Hawaii. The restrictions placed on Japanese immigration to the Mainland prompted recruiters to turn to Filipinos as an alternative source of cheap labor; the 1920s thus saw a heavy flow of Filipino agricultural workers to the farm lands of California and other places in the West Coast. This influx declined with the onset of the Great Depression and the passage of the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 which imposed severe quota limitations on Filipino immigration.

The pioneering Filipino farm workers proved to be hardworking and dependable. But like the Japanese who preceded them, they became targets of white resentment and racial prejudice. Derisively called “brown monkeys,” “uncivilized,” “fit for stoop labor,” and other derogatory terms, Filipino laborers were accused of depriving anglos of jobs. Filipino intermarriage with white women was viewed as polluting to the racial purity of white society. Although as “nationals” they had the right to travel on US passports and

could enter the US freely, they did not have the right to trial by jury nor the right to bear arms. Anti-Filipino resentment perhaps reached its peak with the infamous Watsonville and Exeter riots of 1930; angry mobs of white men lynched any Filipino in sight and hunted them down like wild game. A laborer named Fermin Tobera was lynched to death (see Takaki 1989).²

Because the Philippines showed its loyalty to the United States during World War II, and many Filipinos had volunteered for military service and distinguished themselves in action, Congress voted to make them eligible for citizenship through the Naturalization Act of 1946. This opened the doors to a “second wave” (1946-1959) composed of permanent immigrants, dependents of old timers, dependents of World War II GIs, students and tourists. Occupationally, most of those who belonged to this group were agricultural, domestic, restaurant and hotel workers; but Filipinos were beginning to enter clerical and semi-skilled jobs, and professionals began to appear.

The landmark 1965 Immigration Reform Act opened America’s doors to a phenomenal “third wave” (1965-1973). Compared to earlier groups composed of agricultural laborers, the new group was predominantly composed of professional and highly educated men and women such as doctors, nurses, medical technologists, dentists, lawyers, engineers, teachers, and CPAs who brought their spouses and children along with them. Most settled in such big cities as New York, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Chicago. The imposition of martial law under the iron hand of Marcos gave rise to another type of immigrant group that is sometimes called the “fourth wave”: those who fled from Marcos rule and sought political asylum during the 1970s and 1980s.

The worsening Philippine economy during the Marcos years constituted a vital “push” factor fueling unabated immigration through the 1980s and early 1990s. Even with the resurgence of Right-wing conservatism and anti-immigrant sentiment in the US Congress that has generated immigration reform (stricter sanctions, tougher enforcement of immigration laws, etc.), the US continued to be the main destination point of Filipinos seeking a better life.

Some Demographic Data on Filipino Immigration (1960-1990)

Census data gathered from 1960 thru 1990 show phenomenal and sustained increases in the number of Filipinos calling Los Angeles county their home (see appendices III, IV). In 1960, there were only 12,122 in the county; by 1970, only five years after the milestone Immigration Reform Act of 1965 granting a quota of 20,000 immigrants yearly from the Philippines, the census count showed 33,459. In 1980, there were 100,040 Filipinos, registering an increase over the 1970 count of 199%. The 1990 census shows a count of 223,276, an increase of 123.2% over the 1980 count (against the County population growth rate of 18%). Los Angeles county in the 1990s was home to perhaps the largest Filipino community outside the Philippine archipelago. The median household income was \$46,497.00 (versus County's \$34,965; African American \$25,827.00). The number of Filipinos below the poverty rate was 5.7%, the lowest among the Asian American communities.

While census data on pre-1960 decades are not available here, historical documents inform us that the early Filipino populations were relatively young; in fact, the

laborers that were recruited for farm work were males in their teenage years, as young as seventeen and under twenty. As will be cited in a succeeding chapter, groups of males banded together to form “barkadas” based on regional origins and age cohort. Pre-1960, however, before the coming of huge waves of immigrants, Filipino American youths hang out with Mexican American boy gangs and pachucos (zoot suiters). California-wide data (Ong 1989:26) reveal that there were 11,750 US-born Filipino youths (age 15-24) and 11,162 foreign born in 1970. By 1980, the number of US-born rose to 22,514 while the foreign-born rose to 35,317. By 1990, the foreign-born (56,518) continued to outpace the US-born (38,872), with a total youth count of 95,391 state-wide. As can be seen, the phenomenal increase of both foreign-born and US-born Filipino youths during the 1970s and 1980s is consistent with my observation that Filipino gangs were largely immigrant led, functioning as a social institution preserving traditional Filipino cultural and behavioral patterns. 1990 Census data specific to Los Angeles County show that out of the 223,276 Filipinos, roughly close to 25% (around 50,000) fall within the older children and youth age brackets (from 10-25; see appendix III). This data are of direct relevance to any examination of Filipino American youth groups and subcultures in the County.

Filipino American Community and Settlement Patterns

Despite being the second largest Asian American population in Los Angeles County, the Filipino American community’s low visibility does not appear commensurate to its size. There are certain areas and neighborhoods in the County that are identified as

“Filipino towns” due to the large numbers of Filipinos residing there, but one does not see the cultural and spatial boundedness more popularly associated with the highly developed commercial districts and business centers of Asian ethnic enclaves. There is an historic “Filipinotown” in the old Temple/Beverly/Alvarado corridor near the mid-Wilshire district of the City of L.A., but many Filipinos complained that “all that exists about Filipino Town is a solitary sign near the Hollywood freeway.”³

The complaint may be an exaggeration, even when the “invisible” Filipinotowns are compared to the highly visible ethnic Japanese, Korean, or Chinese enclaves, for there were relatively large Filipino populations dispersed all over the County—from San Fernando with 2,791 to Long Beach with 19,328 (see appendix IV). The post-1965 immigrants were largely professionals (many were medical practitioners) and highly trained individuals who settled in metropolitan areas and thus seldom formed tightly knit ethnic communities. Filipinos, unlike many other ethnic groups, are flexible and more able to blend into mainstream society because of their command of English and pre-migration acculturation to American civilization (US-style educational system, exposure to Hollywood movies, pop musical culture, etc.) prior to their coming to America. They feel no compelling need to seek the sanctuary and comfort of well-defined ethnic enclaves or cultural ghettos.

In a survey of the suburban community of Eagle Rock (Alsaybar, Azuma and Mortimer 1990), one of the open-ended questions asked of Filipino residents was, “What factors (or considerations) made you choose to live in Eagle Rock?” The reason or factor that appeared with an overwhelming frequency was “accessibility/convenience,”(80%)

followed by “peaceful and quiet,”(50%) and “beautiful neighborhood” (30%).

Significantly, “many Filipinos” and “no Blacks” or “less Blacks” registered low frequencies of response of less than 10%. This would indicate that “class” rather than “race” or “ethnicity” was the decisive or prime consideration taken by Filipinos moving into Eagle Rock at the beginning of the 1990s.

Helen M., 60, an accountant and naturalized citizen, followed a pattern of geographic and socio-economic mobility that was dominant among sixties and early seventies Filipino immigrants in Los Angeles: initial settlement in less affluent, often inner city areas around Downtown L.A. and then moving to the suburbs in the late 1970s or 1980s. Before moving to Eagle Rock in 1983, they first stayed in an apartment and then bought a house in the Hollywood/Fountain area. What drew her and her family to Eagle Rock was its accessibility to good schools, churches, and malls and its being quiet, less crowded and having more space than Los Angeles.

Ferdi, age 47 (now deceased) was a businessman/music arranger. He and his wife bought a lovely, three bedroom house on Hill Drive, the “Beverly Hills” of Eagle Rock. They first lived in an apartment in the Hollywood area before moving here when they had saved enough for a house. “When you buy a house, you buy the whole vicinity,” he said. He and his wife, a nurse, fell in love with this area of Eagle Rock “because it is peaceful and quiet, and accessible to prestigious cities like Glendale and Pasadena.”

Ben H, 43, ran a small but growing home business. He and his wife and three children occupied an apartment unit along Eagle Rock Boulevard. They came to America in 1986. They first stayed in Anaheim with a brother before moving to an

apartment in Culver City. After almost two years there, they moved to Eagle Rock, a place they learned about through a friend. “We moved out of Culver City because of the street gangs and general atmosphere of insecurity there,” said Ben. He and his wife considered Eagle Rock is a congenial and peaceful neighborhood, despite occasional reports of gang activity at the local high school. “As long as their activities are confined to the premises of the school, that’s okay with me,” he declared.

During the 1980s and 1990s Eagle Rock, like other growing Filipinotowns such as Carson in the South Bay, and West Covina in the San Gabriel Valley, had become initial settling points for newly arrived immigrants. “The growing number of Filipino establishments like restaurants, food stores, medical clinics, bake shops, and insurance agencies—not to mention the local Catholic and Protestant churches filled with sizeable Filipino memberships—can lessen feelings of homesickness. Eagle Rock can serve as an ideal transition to the outside world,” the introspective Ben opined.

One of the more significant features of Filipino American social life is the presence of literally hundreds of social, political, and religious organizations that have sprung up all over the County. Filipinos recreate a bit of “home” by setting up town or provincial associations; the names of the associations thus indicate their municipal or regional origins such as “Batangueno Association” (indicating that they are from Batangas, a province located about 100 kilometers south of Manila), or “United Candon Association” (from the big town of Candon, Ilocos Sur). Their main activities usually include fund-raising for some charitable cause (i.e. a building project back in their hometown or province, raising funds for members in dire need, etc.). Beauty contests are

a popular fund-raising activity; the women candidates that raise the largest amounts of money are then declared winners (“queens”) and crowned during the association’s annual ball or some other festive occasion such as their town fiesta.

Socio-civic/business organizations in the form of “chambers of commerce” have been a force in the community. Although this is a type of organization that brings together Filipino business people and is intended to advance their business or commercial interests, the chamber of commerce fills a major function in the social and cultural life of Filipino Americans. For instance, during the 1990s the Glendale Chamber of Commerce had worked closely with the Philippine Consulate in holding elaborate Philippine Independence Day ceremonies. Perhaps because the community views the chamber of commerce as an organization composed of “moneyed” individuals, its financial and moral support of various cultural, religious, and even political ventures is widely recognized.

Yen Le Espiritu, the UC San Diego-based ethnic studies expert notes that “although few Filipinos desire to retire in the Philippines, most have maintained ties with family and friends in the home country through occasional visits, telephone calls, remittances, and humanitarian contributions. In so doing, they have assumed the role of transmigrants, generating and sustaining multi-stranded relations that link the Philippines and the United States” (Espiritu 1994; 2003). The same phenomenon is an observable dimension of social life among Filipino Americans in Los Angeles County. To many Filipinos, especially those who are Philippine-born or first generation, “home” means the Philippines, even if they already have been naturalized as American citizens.

Many of those health professionals and white-collar workers who immigrated in the 1970s and early 1980s bought houses and established themselves in their careers. They continue to work to build houses or supplement the income of their family households left behind in the Philippines. Certain organizations, especially those with a strong humanitarian and religious orientation, keep financially-strapped churches afloat with regular infusions of tithe money and love offerings. I know of two organizations—a mission society and an alumni group, both allied with a common church denomination—that aggressively raises funds for mission projects and schools in the Philippines.⁴ Each year, huge amounts (to the hundreds of thousands) are donated and whole container van loads of used equipment such as computers, televisions, refrigerators, washing machines, and even ambulances are shipped to church institutions “back home.” Members of this Filipino ethnic church and alumni association make more than occasional visits to the Philippines, especially during significant church events and festivities. In addition, they hold yearly medical missions free of charge and at times hold evangelistic crusades in the urban centers of the Philippines.

A Highly-Educated, Relatively Affluent Community

County-wide data derived from the 1990 Census reveal a highly educated and relatively affluent community (see appendix III). For instance, 48% of the reported 223,276 had a bachelor’s degree or higher (masteral, doctorate, M.D. etc.). 27% report having had “some college” while high school graduates numbered 12.2%. Occupationally, there were 35,566 Filipinos holding managerial positions or engaged in

professional practice (28.9%). A larger percentage (45.1%, numbering 55,586) were employed as technicians, clerks, or salespersons, indeed confirming observations that Filipinos would rather work for others (in the private sector or government offices) than engage in individual entrepreneurship (as Koreans, Chinese, and other Asians do). This community had a high employment rate (129,328 constituting 76%); only 4.8% are reportedly unemployed. The self-employed constitute only 3.8% numbering 3,858.

19.5% of households reported annual incomes of \$75,000 and over, with 26.1% reporting annual incomes within the \$50,000--\$74,999 range. 20% (11,613 households) reported annual incomes within the \$35,000-\$49,999 bracket. As stated in a previous section of this chapter, the median household income was \$46,497 per annum. Only 5.7% were below the poverty level (12,623), with 94.3% (208,670) reportedly “above poverty level.” Home ownership ran at a respectable 52% (State is 48%; Latino is 35%); vehicle availability was 53,671 (93.1%).

Despite Highly-Educated Work Force, Community Not Without Problems

Despite the impressive profile constructed from 1990 Census data, this community was not without problems commonly faced by other minorities and non-white groups. Due largely to racial discrimination, strict licensing procedures that stack the odds against the foreign-trained, and hiring preferences in the labor market, being underemployed was a common predicament of many Filipino professionals (see Takaki 1989; thus, for example, many doctors work as medical assistants, lawyers become office clerks, etc.) Curiously, Philippine professional schools (such as those in medicine,

business, law, and engineering) are patterned after US programs and curricula, and are staffed by US-trained professors and scientists; yet, the diplomas and accreditations earned by Filipino professionals are not recognized here. Despite obviously being highly qualified, many Filipino professionals shared the fate of other minorities and women in corporations: hitting a “glass ceiling” that prevented promotion to management or higher level positions (see Woo 1994).

The impressive annual median household income and low poverty rates must be approached with caution, for median household income represents the combined earnings of several family or household members often living in crowded and less than adequate houses. It must be noted that individual Filipino per capita income was \$14,272—lower than the County figure of \$16,149 and those of the White (\$24,938), Japanese (\$22,078), Asian Indian (\$18,412), Hawaiian (\$16,557) and Chinese (\$14,645). Moreover, certain areas like the Filipino Town in Los Angeles and Carson in the South Bay - which accounted for some of the largest concentrations of Filipinos in L.A. County, revealed much lower household and family incomes. According to urban planner Dennis Arguelles, “Filipinos tend to have more members in both their household and family units than the State average, thus these lower incomes do not reveal the true economic disparity faced by these families. Even median home prices in these areas are relatively lower than Cerritos and West Covina” (Arguelles 1992:7).

Synthesis

Among Asian immigrant groups, Filipinos experienced the most intense and prolonged contact with western, Judeo-Christian religion and civilization (Spanish and American). Even before migrating to American shores Filipinos had already been previously acculturated to American civilization (through US-style education, movies and popular culture, and religion [Protestantism]); they carried with them a “colonial mentality” that reflected their desire to become “Americanized.” The first generation youth had been oriented to a Manila teenage culture shaped significantly by Hollywood gang style. Post-1965 Filipino immigrants reflect a socio-economic profile of a highly educated, highly skilled group that already shared a middle class ethos and aspiration for even greater economic mobility. While initially settling in the inner city, then moving on to the suburbs, Filipino Americans had not been trapped in the kind of ghetto or barrio conditions that account for the persistence of gangs in other communities. This is why I realized that utilizing traditional acculturational approaches and hegemonic structuralist models—drawn from studies of poverty-stricken, inner city underclass Latino and African American communities—ran the risk of distorting the reality of the Filipino American gang phenomenon and the rise of a larger, violence-rejecting youth culture.

The next chapter brings into finer detail a history of Filipino immigration to Los Angeles; the historical specificities (i.e. racism), gender structure, and size of the immigrant population at certain points in time all had consequences and implications for Filipino youth formations and youth culture genesis. There is a history of Filipino involvement with Latino boy groups and “gangs” pre-1965 (from 1920s up), when the

size of the Filipino American youth population was relatively small. Harmonious cohorting between Filipino and Latino youths appears to have fractured post 1965; huge numbers of immigrant Filipino youth materialized in inner city schools and Latino neighborhoods, giving rise to all-Filipino barkadas-turned gangs that had formed to defend themselves against hostile Cholo gangs.

IV. GROUP FORMATION AND HISTORY OF THE BARKADA IN LOS ANGELES: CHOLO HOSTILITY FUELS THE RISE OF THE SATANAS

The history of Filipino migration to the USA has been clearly favorable to the rise of male barkadas and their transformation into gangs and other forms of youth groups. The earliest Filipino migrants were youthful males in their late teens recruited to work in the farms of California and canneries of Alaska (see Takaki 1989; Chan 1991). Because Filipino laborers were not allowed to bring their wives with them, and harsh anti-miscegenation laws prohibited them from marrying white women, the early Filipino communities were virtual bachelor societies. Oral histories derived from “First Wave” Filipinos in Los Angeles point to the existence of barkadas in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Morales undated paper).

Groups of young Filipino men frequented taxi dance halls and pool houses. In their search for relaxation and escape from the drudgery of manual labor, they were often forced to defend themselves against men of other ethnicities. Far from being “gangs” in the contemporary usage, these groups banded together based on town or regional identity, age cohort, and common interests—they were a barkada. They named themselves after their towns or regions of birth in the Philippines: thus, “Cavitenos” came from Cavite Province, “Candon Boys” were from Candon, Ilocos Sur, and “Narvacanos” were from Narvacan, Ilocos Sur. They earned a reputation for their use of indigenous weapons such as the *balisong* or fan knife, the *chaku*, and even walking canes. They were feared for their skill in the native style of stick fighting called *arnis*.

Considering that racial prejudice was rampant and Filipino migrants were grossly exploited for cheap labor, crime offered a way out of personal hardship and need. Carlos Bulosan, the famed Filipino writer who lived for many years in the Temple area of Los Angeles, wrote about an “Oriental Gangland” in his semi-autobiographical work, “America is in the Heart:”

I felt numb for days. When I regained my composure, I sensed the futility of my writing. I wanted action—and violence. The monotony of my existence led me into the Filipino underworld, into the tangle of Oriental Gangland, where I came upon Julio of the Moxee City days. He had become a Robin Hood among Filipinos, because he swindled only Chinese and White men. He had a partner, a young, handsome Filipino named Romy, who had just stolen nearly three hundred Federal Social Security checks (1946:308).

If literature mirrors historical and social reality, then Bulosan’s semi-fictional reference to a Filipino underworld in the Temple area seems to lend support to the *veteranos*’ claim that there was Filipino “gang” involvement prior to the 1970s. Bulosan’s writing was based on lived experience, and the Temple area was one of the few friendly places in the city where Pinoys could live and work.

Temple Street gang, widely known by its placard “TST,” was reportedly jointly founded by Filipinos and Mexican youths during the late 1920s or early 1930s.¹ Filipino membership had dwindled steadily, especially after the massive wave of post-1965 immigration that gave rise to the all-Filipino fighting barkada. The noted gang expert and anthropologist James Diego Vigil likewise recalled that during his adolescent years, he had met Filipino youths who were members of Latino gangs in the neighborhood where he lived and grew up.² Much earlier, Carey McWilliams (1969) writes that during the infamous Zoot Suit riots of 1942, Filipinos were among those beaten up and mistaken

for Pachucos by irate, off-duty white sailors. If our assumption is correct that Filipino youths fraternized with Mexican American youths and even became members of barrio gangs, then those Filipinos mistaken for Pachucos were not merely wearing zoot suits to make a fashion statement but were most likely “Filipino Pachucos.” On a more personal note, one of my friends belonging to the Satanas, L.A.’s oldest all-Filipino fighting barkada, possesses a zoot suit which his departed father passed on to him as heirloom. He said that his father, who had come to America as a farm worker, had hang out with Pachucos.

Post 1965: The Rise of All-Filipino Fighting Barkadas

Prior to 1965, the Filipino American communities were predominantly male in composition, virtual bachelor societies; until the end of the 1940s, settled family life was the exception rather than the norm. After World War II, however, Filipinos who had served in the American military were allowed by law to petition for their wives and other dependents. The community was growing slowly but steadily, as immigration quotas were increased. But 1965 represents a watershed, for with the passage of the Immigration Reform Bill allowing a quota of 20,000 new immigrants annually from the Philippines, thousands of Filipinos, mostly professionals and highly educated individuals, came to America.

Massive influx to Los Angeles post-1965² brought significant implications for barkada and youth cultural transformations. The immigrants brought their wives and children with them, thus enlarging the mass base of Filipino youths. Compared to the

time of the bachelor and overwhelmingly male societies of earlier decades which saw Filipino youths merge with Latino groups, post-1965 saw the emergence for the first time of all-Filipino barkadas and other groups such as car racers and party crews. Reputedly the oldest and first truly significant group—significant in the sense that it reportedly was the first all-Filipino barkada to fight back against Latino gangs and consequently, draw the attention of the Police—was the Satanas. Spanning a collective group career of three decades (from the 1970s thru the 1990s), Satanas gave visibility to a perceived “gang problem” in the Filipino American communities of Los Angeles, and spawned other smaller groups and cliques. A great part of any accounting of Filipino American gang history in L.A., therefore, inevitably touches on the rich lore and history of the Satanas.

In 1972, a peer group of mostly young Filipino immigrant men began coming regularly to the Filipino Town area during the weekends, to play basketball and to kick back together. Some of them were from Anaheim, Eagle Rock, and Central L.A.: one of them would drive all the way from distant Delano. In the Filipino community, they were easily recognizable as a barkada, an age cohort bound together by common interests. Many of them grew up in the same neighborhoods and eventually went to the same schools.

What made this barkada distinct from others in the community was its preoccupation with cars, especially Volkswagen beetles. They were a car club too. The weekend get together was a chance to show off their modified engines, car stereos, magnesium alloy rims, and long distance two-way radios. On some weekends they

would drive to the high desert, where one of the boy's parents owned a ranch. There they would barbecue and spend endless hours target-practicing.

As the yet unnamed car club became more and more visible, Latino gangs such as 18th Street, Diamond, and Echo Park began "hitting them up" or challenging them by way of throwing the question," Where're you from?" "They were a car club but apparently, they were being mistaken for a gang," ventured Ahas, a veterano who knew many of the car club members. "Being hit up regularly and eventually attacked, they began fighting back."

This pattern of being provoked into fights with Latino gangs could have led the car club to seek the help of "toughies" in the Filipino community, such as those who belonged to TST (Temple gang) and other street gangs. A small Filipino barkada called "13 PI" was already known in the local street world, with some members carrying indigenous monickers like "Palos" (eel), and "Ipis" (cockroach). Sometime that year (1972), some 15-20 men belonging to the car club and "13 PI" reportedly met in a garage in Anaheim; although the details of that meeting are, as yet, unknown, those in attendance formed the nucleus for what would eventually be known as "Satanas."

In the informal gang history and lore, the members of this founding nucleus are called "OGs" or "originals." A close friend of the Satanas and prominent Filipino community leader recalls that the OGs did not commit serious crimes, "just minor things." For instance, when a Filipino ran for L.A. City Council in the early '70s, "the boys" threw their support behind him. The boys played a unique role in the political battle against the well-funded campaign of the anglo candidate: in the dead of the night

they would roam the streets in a VW van and collect as many campaign posters and paraphernalia of the opposing camp. One of them would stand through the van's sun-roof and pluck the posters from the walls and electric posts!

The OGs did not dress like the Latino cholos: they wore Levi's jeans, t-shirts, and jogging shoes: conventional, informal attire of their time. Neither did they write graffiti, flash handsigns, and have placas or gang monickers. They had no set leadership and were basically egalitarian in orientation. Not till the emergence, around three years later, of the "second generation" did the group begin adopting some elements of Latino "cholo" tradition such as dress style, graffiti, and other symbolic devices.

Being newly arrived immigrants, the veteranos had to contend with the unfamiliar multi-ethnic environment of Los Angeles. Although Filipino immigrants had been arriving and settling in the area in large numbers, still there was that feeling of belonging to a smaller, powerless group vulnerable to other bigger groups like the Latinos. The Mexicans were lords of the streets, and the veteranos tell stories of being attacked without provocation by cholos. Tiger described this situation of powerlessness and vulnerability:

During the '70s and early '80s, Filipinos were nothing. We were oppressed by the Mexicans. We were like second class. Because the Mexicans were the majority, we Filipinos didn't want to make trouble. But at the same time we didn't want to be pushed around. That's why we became united—there was a common enemy. When we saw a Pinoy in need, we did not hesitate to help. During those days we didn't have nice cars, so when we rode the bus we became vulnerable. Pinoys standing at the bus stops became easy targets for Cholos in their low riders.

While they had never directly encountered Chicanos and other Latinos, basic Philippine History lessons had helped them define the “enemy” and, in the new environment, their identity. As Corky put it,

Most of us in our batch ('75--'77) were in Grade 6 when we arrived here. At that time we had Philippine History class, and that was Martial Law era (Marcos era)....the idea of Filipino identity was being vigorously propagated. So when we came here, and we were being harassed, we began to view the Mexicans as Spaniards—real enemies like our colonizers for over 300 years. Don't these Mexicans speak Spanish, and are bigger and fairer-skinned than us? Even if they were bigger than us, we knew their weaknesses. During those years Bruce Lee was very popular. We practiced our karate and used it effectively in our street fight against the Mexicans.

Within the context of this perceived situation of ethnic antagonism directed against them, the need for protection against gangs of other ethnicities, primarily Chicano/Latino, appears to have engendered the formation and rapid growth of Satanas. Even before it was organized, there had been Filipinos who joined Mexican gangs. Some veteranos said that before joining Satanas, they had joined Mexican gangs because they reigned supreme, and the “if you can't lick them, join 'em” mentality prevailed. One veterano said that he had joined a Chicano gang “out of disgust and frustration over the inability of the Filipinos to do something about the power of the Chicanos.”

During the mid 1970s, a steady stream of Filipino immigrants kept coming in; Filipino grade schoolers were slowly but steadily becoming visible in such city schools as Marshall, King Jr. High, Belmont, and Virgil. Schools played a vital role in consolidating immigrant Filipino youths and creating group identity consciousness. Furthermore, barkadas which grew out of neighborhood play groups became reinforced

by a common school identity. Thus, in addition to the streets and malls, schools became a venue for Latino antagonistic actions against Filipino youths. The second Satanas generation came mostly from the above-mentioned schools; they were recent arrivals who were touched by the “Jefrox” culture of Manila. Jefrox refers to the “Filipino hippie” counterculture which emerged in Manila during the turbulent late 1960s and early 1970s: a period characterized by growing socio-economic problems, rising crime, and political unrest which led to the imposition of Martial Law under Marcos. Jefrox is popularly associated with loud, rock music, drugs, and unconventional hippie-style long hair and bell-bottomed jeans. The dress style of the STS second generation was a cross between Cholo and Jefrox: they brushed up the hair and wore nets and bandanas; they also wore sandals and baggy pants.

At about the time of the emergence of the second generation cohort, the name “Satanas” had come into use. Surprisingly, none of the many veteranos I interviewed knew exactly how the name became adopted by the group. It seems that the name was not deliberately chosen but its adoption came about by accident. One late evening, as the boys reassembled at the bowling alley (their hang out) after a gangbang, a Filipino bowler and friend of the boys reportedly greeted them in half-jest, “Hayop kayo, mga Satanas!” (You animals, you Satans!). The word “Satanas” caught their fancy, and the name has stuck since then. The group is a purely social and secular one: in fact, they take pains to clarify that they are not Devil worshippers, as the name might erroneously imply. Many homeboys said that they did not believe in the Devil’s existence. But the name is a fitting metaphor for the kind of terror which they wanted to bring upon their enemies.

1975-78 was a period of rapid growth. From the nucleus of 15-20, the OGs and first veteranos, memberships had risen to over 150 by 1976; some older homeboys claimed that as many as 500 had joined before the start of the 1980s. To give me an idea of their size as a group, Inca and Aztec referred to the quantity of empty beer cans and bottles collected after one big, memorable birthday party: no less than 40 large, plastic trash bags! Satanás was making its presence felt in the gang world; it was on its way to establishing a tradition of enmity with the 18th street, White Fence, and Diamond Latino gangs.

The rise of Satanás saw the decline of Filipino participation and membership in the Temple gang; once predominantly Filipino (according to veteranos of STS), it has become an almost purely Latino, although a new all-Filipino pee wee cohort reportedly arose in the early 1990s. However, Satanás continued to maintain cordial relationships with Temple; in street parlance, they “get along” with them because after all, “it was a Filipino group, and we share the same neighborhood.”

In 1979, a Filipino member of the Temple gang was brutally murdered by 18th street. He had been cruelly stabbed on the back with a screwdriver. Although not a Satanás, the death of a fellow Filipino in the hands of Latinos enraged the Satanás and, in their words, “unified the Filipinos.” “The Temple gang members were too old to gangbang, so we did the gangbanging for them,” Smokey said. “Even those of us who had cooled down became active gangbangers again. For nearly a month, we went on an almost daily gangbanging rampage against 18th street.”

When the LAPD Asian Task Force started cracking down on them, the Satanas fled to a well-known resort city out of state. Two weeks after arriving there, more STS homeboys began coming in stolen cars. They soon caught the attention of that city's press for reportedly "terrorizing the town." The homeboys claim to have fought and vanquished a big and well-known local street gang. After several months of hiding and regrouping in this city, they returned to Los Angeles. According to this group of veteranos, they returned to a "different L.A.": different because while they were away, new Filipino barkadas had formed.

While the flow of immigration from the Philippines continued unabated, the pattern of settlement in the 1980s differed somewhat from that in the 1970s. Whereas before, immigrants were entering and initially settling in the historic Temple/Beverly/mid-Wilshire corridor and Hollywood, suburban areas such as Eagle Rock, Glendale and the San Fernando Valley, Cerritos and West Covina saw the rapid growth of Filipino immigrant populations in the 1980s and 1990s (see appendix IV). Even families of some of my homeboy friends had begun moving to the suburbs. Consequently, demographic and social changes provided the larger context within which further barkada transformations were now taking place.

Fighting barkadas steadily sprouted throughout the 1980s in both urban and suburban cities and neighborhoods. To the south of L.A., groups like "KBB" (Carson Bad Boys), "SRB" (Scott Royal Brotherhood), and "CPC" (Carson Pinoy Compadres) arose in the Carson/Long Beach area. To the southeast, a clique of Satanas called "LKS" (Little Crazies of Satanas), "SSP" (South Side Pinoy), and "KSLG" (Knell Circle Gang)

came out of the upscale neighborhoods of Cerritos and Lakewood/Artesia. To the north, in Glendale, one would see the writings of “MP” (Mabuhay ang Pinoy, translated “Long Live, the Filipino!”) and “FS 13” (Flipside 13), or “TCS” (Tres Cantos) in Eagle Rock. If one drove a few miles westward on Wilshire from Filipino Town in the Temple/Beverly/Rampart corridor, one would come across the writings of “JFX” (Jefrox) and “FTM” (Fliptown Mob). Going down to Gardena, one would see the writings of “HSG” (Hellside Gang, founded by former STS homeboys).

But the bigger and most prominent suburban fighting barkadas that came out of the 1980s were the “BNG” (Bahala Na Gang, translated, “come what may!”) and the “PR” (Pinoy Real, translated, “real Filipino”). BNG emerged as the most formidable threat and arch-rival to Satanas; membership was spread all over L.A. County: Artesia, North Hollywood, Hawthorne, Long Beach, Montebello, Torrance, La Puente, West Covina, Chino Hills and Baldwin Park. “PR” originated in Atwater Village; its founders attended Marshall High School. It had significant membership in West Covina and Walnut, cities with huge Filipino American neighborhoods.

Satanas appears to have reigned supreme and unchallenged in the Filipino American communities during the 1970s. It had positioned itself as the “defender of the Filipino” and built its reputation through fighting Latino gangs and establishing a tradition of enmity against groups like White Fence and 18th Street. In fact, Satanas succeeded in driving out White Fence and creating as its symbolic neighborhood, a block of old style houses fronted by well-tended lawns and vegetable gardens in Carondelet and Coronado (streets that connect the parallel avenues of Beverly and Temple).

Satanas carried on its storied rivalry with Latino gangs into the 1980s, but it found out that the field was much more crowded than during the 1970s. It viewed with disfavor the rise of many other Filipino American groups. As much as Satanas wanted to maintain their position as “number one,” the newer groups were out to establish their own reputations by trying to bring Satanas down. In the 1980s Satanas found itself fighting on two fronts—against Latinos, and against Filipinos, notably arch-rival BNG and PR. But while it distinguished itself as a fighting unit, it also triggered suppressive action from police and law enforcement. Ironically, violent fighting both raised its name as well as brought it down.

In 1981, the death of a homeboy in the hands of Cholos and the swift retaliatory action mounted by Satanas to avenge his death brought a crisis that nearly drove the group to extinction. Sleepy, a popular and well-respected homeboy, had been gunned down in a well-publicized incident, reportedly by members of the Avenues, street lords of Eagle Rock. Within days of the murder, Satanas mounted a retaliatory gangbang. Several Satanas members were arrested, prosecuted, and given long prison terms. There are speculations that some individuals may have broken the code against snitching: an action that could only help the prosecution. Already weakened by unrelenting police crackdowns, this development severely divided and demoralized the group. “We were almost driven to extinction,” recalls an older homeboy.

But like a Phoenix rising from the ashes, Satanas staged a comeback engineered by a new, third generation cohort that embarked upon a frenzied and unrelenting gangbanging offensive against both Latino and Filipino enemy groups. The years from

1983-86 are considered the “glory years” of Satanas; in their own words, “those were the craziest, fucking times. We were powerful then...we got money, left and right...Drugs, guns, more pussies than we could handle...there were parties here and there....walang problema sa lahat “(we had no problems at all). The use of guns and high-powered weapons became common during this period, due to the need—according to veteranos—to match the firepower of the BNG, their Filipino arch-rivals whom they described as “rich kids and mama’s boys living in upscale neighborhoods.” The end of the 1980s saw the Satanas in retreat. As a result of massive police crackdowns following heated encounters with BNG and other rivals, they were forced to lie low.

The Filipino American gang phenomenon appears to have peaked during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Sometime around 1992-93, the “crazy times” seemed to have declined, as drag racing and partying caught on and intensified among the young. Social workers and counselors expressed pleasant surprise over the quiescent gang front. From the middle to the end of the 1990s, reports of gangbangs and other violent incidents in the Filipino American communities had significantly diminished.

Group Structure and Internal Dynamics of the Filipino American Gang in Los Angeles

As typified by the Satanas, the fighting barkada in Los Angeles presents an interesting case, being egalitarian in orientation and seemingly devoid of institutionalized positions of leadership. Intriguing cases such as this require appropriate conceptual tools; as such, I will utilize Victor Turner’s concept of liminality as *process* (1969) and F.G.

Bailey's dynamic "social action" model, a framework of analysis that arose in reaction to the rigidity and determinism of Radcliffe-Brownian structural-functionalism. Bailey (1969) argued that individuals are innovative and manipulative, always competing for scarce goods and working for their own advantage. He viewed social structure as fluid and changing; while individuals are not completely free, their behavior was not simply a reflection of social-structural pressures or constraints; in real life, people tend to circumvent norms and find the most advantageous routes to obtain their ends. Thus he states, "One of the great gaps in anthropology is that we have been too much interested in the "system," and although we know that people live half their lives finding ways to "beat the system," we tend to take serious notice of them only when they are caught, brought to trial and punished" (p.87).

Structuralists tend to regard marginality "as a state," thus reducing deviant behavior such as crime and delinquency to structural conditions like poverty, material deprivation, or family dysfunctions. Victor Turner, in contrast, views marginality as a "process," defining the marginal or transitional period as "an inter-structural situation" between two fixed states (a state being a relatively fixed and stable condition). His dualistic model consists of two aspects: **social structure** and **communitas**. By social structure, Turner meant "a system of social relationships" or "a differentiated system of structural positions." **Communitas** is an expression of liminality and is a condition characterized by egalitarianism, spontaneity, marginality, and structural inferiority. What type of group formations did the fighting barkada assume in Los Angeles? Were they truly leaderless and egalitarian as they claimed? What was the relationship between

structure and individual, and how were the tasks or goals achieved? What was the function of leadership in the maintenance of the anti-structure of *communitas*?

The fighting barkadas were not hierarchically organized in the manner that certain African American, Asian American, or Latino gangs are.³ They may be characterized as age sets or in the case of bigger groups, coalitions of age sets and cliques. The core organizing principle was cohorting based on age-grouping, concretely expressed through barkada bonding behavior. At times the barkada assumes greater importance than the family, especially among teenagers. Peer pressure is difficult to resist, for a core value underlying barkada relationships is *pakikisama*, the “ability to get along and subordinate oneself to the will of the group.”

Older homeboys at times referred to their peer group as “family” in order to convey the kind of closeness and caring that binds them together; structurally and in practice, however, they could not be a “family” which features superordinate/subordinate relationships between parents and children. Thus it was the barkada principle, with its egalitarian orientation that structured group relations. Many homeboys I interviewed disclosed that prior to coming to America, they had been members of high school fraternities in Manila. Interestingly, some fighting barkadas bear names of Manila fraternities such as “Tau Gamma” (Ta Ogama) and “SRB” (Scott Royal Brotherhood), Alpha Phi Omega’s high school contingent. This apparent socio-cultural slant towards involvement in brotherhood-type relationships is reinforced by the disclosure of certain informants that their fathers were members of fraternal associations such as Free Masonry and Knights of Columbus. It is clear, therefore, that the barkada is a

conventional type of institution deeply rooted in Philippine culture and society; it stands independently from the family and cannot be explained away as a “substitute family,” even in the case of groups that have been labeled “gangs.”

Some Filipino gang groups bore names of dreaded Manila street gangs like “Bahala Na Gang” (BNG), “OXO,” and “Sige-Sige Sputnik.” This appeared to validate the popular law enforcement narrative that Filipino gangs in Los Angeles had their origins in the dreaded prison gangs of Manila. Street criminals and ex-convicts belonging to these Manila gangs supposedly established some of the Los Angeles Filipino gangs; however, I did not come across any evidence of an organizational transfer of the Manila prison gangs. The “BNG,” one of the biggest (numerically and reputation-wise) Filipino American gangs in the Los Angeles area, hardly fit the profile of the real “BNG” in Manila—which was/is a group of hardened, slum-dwelling criminals and “dead-enders” heavily involved in racketeering, robbery, and other serious crimes. BNG members here were known to be affluent, sports-car driving, partying rich kids living in upscale suburban neighborhoods such as Diamond Bar, Walnut, West Covina, and Torrance. For years they engaged the Satanas in storied combat, often at weekend parties. Among other ways, it seems to me that symbolically appropriating the names of Manila prison gangs was a way of constructing a collective image of badness and validating “street elite” status (see Katz 1988).

The Los Angeles Filipino American gang provided a site for constructing ethnic identity. In contrast with Latino and African American gangs that bear specific names of neighborhoods, streets, or bounded space (i.e. 18th Street, Avenues, etc.), the fighting

barkadas bore names that proclaimed pride in their ethnicity and culture, rather than mere identification with place or space in their new environment. Thus some groups had names like “MP” (Mabuhay ang Pilipino, “Long Live, the Filipino!”), “PR” (Pinoy Real, “Real Filipino”), and “SIG” (Samahang Ilocano Gang, “Association of Ilocanos”); another group called themselves “LVM” or “Luzon, Visayas Mobsters”, clearly drawing attention and pride in Philippine regional/ethnic/tribal geographic designations. The group ideology promoted the idea of Pinoy superiority, whether it be with regards to fighting, morality, love-making, creativity, and even hygiene. Homeboys repeatedly told me how more good-looking they are, and how much more hygienic (i.e. Mexicans stink, they’re uncircumcised) compared to Cholos.

Even at this point, it becomes evident that the Filipino American gang functioned as a disseminator and preserver of indigenous Filipino culture, in the way it perpetuated indigenous social behavioral patterns and promoted pride in everything Filipino. The use of Pilipino (Tagalog), the national language of the Philippines, in everyday life sealed the gang’s effectiveness as a preserver of Filipino culture. Since a great percentage of members were Philippine-born, the Tagalog-based street lingo of Manila was widely spoken; some homeboys born and raised in non-Tagalog speaking regions of the Philippines in fact learned how to speak Tagalog through membership in the Los Angeles fighting barkada.

Filipino American gangs had a concept of territoriality that was not rigidly fixed or tied to specific geographic, bounded spaces. Again, this is reflected in their names or group tags. The principle seemed to be “wherever we are, or where we live, that is our

territory.” The Satanas veteranos of the 1970s identify certain neighborhoods in the Temple/Beverly and mid-Wilshire areas as their historic ‘hoods, but territoriality appeared to be more symbolic than concrete in the manner that Latinos and African Americans treat territoriality (to my mind, these veteranos were reacting to the aggression of their Latino enemies and actually borrowing or appropriating some of their subcultural elements). One of these borrowed elements is style of graffiti writing. However, Filipino American gangs used graffiti more as a means of communicating their feelings or intents against enemies and expressing their supremacy, rather than as a means of demarcating fixed territorial space.

I did not find the Filipino American gang to be criminogenic.⁴ Even among the more aggressive groups like the Satanas, a great part of the group’s waking hours was spent in conventional activities like hanging out and partying, going to movies, drag racing, fishing, going to the horse races, or seeking recreation and amusement in pool halls and bowling alleys. Based on field work, time spent in deviant activities such as small-scale moneymaking ventures or gangbanging hardly took 10 percent of their 12-15 hour day. However, when the group was at war with a rival group, level of fighting would significantly intensify. Homeboys tended to provoke or pick fights with rival groups during parties, where their manhood and fighting prowess could be on full display before bigger crowds. Life within the fighting barkada primarily revolved around the pursuit of fun and excitement, just like other types of groups like the car crews and party crews with whom they share a common “party culture.”

In the early 1990s, law enforcement agencies estimated that there were some 50 to 60 Filipino gangs in Los Angeles County. Whether or not this was accurate, I figured that there were no more than five truly significant “gangs” in the Filipino American communities. Most of those identified as “gangs” were small cliques ranging in membership from seven to fifteen. These small groups were often breakaways or off-shoots of the more established and bigger ones. Entrance (jumping in) and exit (jumping out) rituals marked the beginning and end of individual careers in barkada/gang life. Jumping out is said to be even more severe than jumping in; thus, it often happens that errant homeboys would avoid being jumped out. They did this by forming their own groups, thus avoiding the pain and humiliation of leaving, and at the same time providing their own human shield from reprisal or retribution from the old group. Many smaller groups had formed outside of Satanas via this route of avoiding being jumped out.

At any rate, the two major gangs that had become dominant in the Filipino American community, Satanas and BNG, represent two models: the Satanas I view as the “urban” type, and the BNG as the “suburban.” Satanas grew out of the inner city; its homeboys lived in predominantly Latino neighborhoods, thus getting exposed to Cholo culture. It is not surprising, therefore, that in constructing identities, Satanas had borrowed heavily from the Cholo tradition. Thus their dress style, hair, and other symbolic expressions like graffiti, are Cholo-like. The rough conditions of the inner city also forced them to engage in behavioral patterns that had survival value, such as fighting and other aggressive ways.

Satanas homeboys had come from the entire socio-economic range, from poor to middle class or upper middle class, but their families (often professional parents) came in the 1970s and settled in inner city areas like the mid-Wilshire and Temple districts. In contrast, the BNG originated in Suburbia during the 1980s. They were viewed as “richer and more well off” than Satanas homeboys. This was reflected in the way they dressed themselves—unlike the Choloized STS, they wore GQ style dresses and drove Japanese cars. They experienced relatively less of the inner city conditions familiar to the Satanas, but they were no less prepared to engage them in violent wars. Satanas veteranos claim that their BNG rivals used their superior material resources to buy guns and other high powered weapons. But like other suburban barkada, BNG was viewed by Satanas as more a “party crew” than a “fighting gang.” Partying and other hedonistic pursuits tended to be associated with suburban groups while fighting was a trait more widely assigned to inner city/urban groups.

A Coalition of Age-Sets: Levels of Inclusiveness and Structural Poses of The Satanas

The Satanas were a coalition of age-sets. Since 1972, the year it was founded, there had been at least 5 or possibly 6 “gang generations.” New gang generations appeared every 4 to 5 years. The youngest members constituted the “Pee Wee” age set, ranging in age from 13-15. Ages 19-20 appeared to be a transitory period, in which a homeboy stood the best chance of “maturing out” through any or a combination of the following: going back to school, getting a job, joining the army, or getting seriously

involved with a girlfriend. During this transitory period, the homeboy stood in between, neither a “pee wee” nor a “veterano.”

Some matured out while others stayed on to graduate to veterano status. Homeboys from age 20 to 25 called themselves “jr. vets,” in deference to those who came ahead of them, the full-fledged veteranos (anyone beyond 25 to mid-30s). The founders are called “O.G.s” or “originals.” They hardly had contact with the group, having acquired “mythical” or legendary status in their group lore and history.

Despite the horizontal orientation, Satanas was not without an element of “verticality,” in the respect and deference accorded the older generations. The veteranos were referred to as “matanda,” the term for old or senior in Tagalog. The pee wees were called “bata,” meaning “young” or “child.” The matanda were treated with respect because “they knew more than the younger ones” and had contributed their part in “raising the name of the ‘hood.” In the company of veteranos, pee wees were not expected to behave in a servile or subordinate manner; but they were expected not to behave arrogantly, in a way that could be offensive to the veteranos.

The respect and deference accorded the veteranos did not signify acceptance that the older ones were naturally superior to the pee wees or younger age sets: it was merely an acceptance and recognition of a chronological fact that the vets came in ahead of them. In turn, veteranos were expected to reciprocate the respect given them by not acting arrogantly and not treating the pee wees as their wards or subordinates (except during periods of initiation and probation). Veteranos who acted arrogantly toward younger ones ran the risk of being despised and abhorred. Subservience and timidity were not at

all encouraged in the group, and any perceived abuse gave the aggrieved younger homeboy a moral basis for rejecting or refusing an arrogant veterano's command. (Actually, veteranos detested a lack of aggressiveness on the part of pee wees; they wanted the latter to fight back. There was no place for servile and weak individuals in this group.)

The core barkada framework and the concept of gang generation both express the centrality of age as the basic organizing principle for the Satanas. However, age alone did not determine who grouped together with whom: commonality of interests or what are termed "trips" (i.e. a common pursuit or activity such as a hobby or favored recreation), residential contiguity, and even ethnicity (Philippine-born, American-born, non-Filipino) also shaped the membership of basic groupings (units) that constituted visible "levels of inclusiveness," namely: the two-men buddies, the tropa, the clique, and the coalition of cliques. Although the homeboy was aware of the geographic spread and location of the group and its various cliques, he spent most of his time in the relative intimacy and comfort of a few really close buddies. His experience of the bigger group was dependent upon how often a "situation" (usually a crisis confronting the group) or event calling for involvement of more (if not all) groupings would arise. The social structural set up of the Satanas brings to mind Fred Gearing's concept of "structural pose;" in his description and analysis of 18th century Cherokee Indian villages, he wrote,

"The notion of structural pose...draws attention to the well-established fact that the social structure of a human community is not a single set of roles and organized groups, but is rather a series of several sets of roles and groups which appear and disappear according to the tasks at hand.a series of social

structures come and go recurrently...rearrange themselves according to the task at hand (Gearing 1958:1148).

Two-Boy Buddies. Given the state of ongoing hostility amongst Satanas, Latino, and other Filipino American gangs, the real world was extremely dangerous: rival gangsters lurked in the streets, malls, and even bus stops. Cops patrolled the neighborhood, on the ground, and in the air. “You will note that us homeboys always go together in pairs; we have a buddy system much like Starsky and Hutch,” said Smokey, using the famous tv police duo as an example. He went on to cite some of the homeboy pairs: Rider and Bata, Solow and Dino, Tiger and Tarzan, etc.

One would see these inseparable duos in the places they frequented, depending on their interests and preferences. Being with a buddy was definitely safer than being alone. “When enemies see at least two of us together, they will think twice about hitting us up and jumping us,” said Rocky, a pee wee. A gang member is most vulnerable to attack when he is alone, especially when walking to and from school, or when shopping without buddies in popular malls. At the end of the school day, roving enemy bands would prowl the streets around the school, looking for solitary enemies to beat up. Buddies were the closest of friends that belonged to the same batch, grew up in the same neighborhood and went to the same school together. Some buddies were separated by a year or two (in age) but never by a gang generation.

The “Tropa.” A pair of buddies formed the nucleus of a larger grouping called the “tropa” or “troupe.” Normally, a tropa was made up of 5 to 7 homeboys that hang out together on a more or less regular basis. One belonged to a tropa based on membership on the same batch or a contiguous batch, residence in the same neighborhood or area, and commonality of “trip.” A “trip” was defined as “something you desire” or “something you love to do;” specifically, it referred to an activity or pastime favored by the tropa. For example, one tropa was well-known for discoing and partying, another tripped on horse-race betting, and another tripped on drugs. Although called a street gang by the police and conventional world, Satanas did not hang out on street corners like gangs of other ethnicities did. The tropa usually hung out in the house of a hospitable member; if it was an outdoor hang out, usually it would be the backyard where the likelihood of a drive-by was nil.

The “Clique.” A clique was the largest unit of inclusiveness that, within the overall Satanas coalition, would correspond to a geographic unit, area branch or “chapter.” The founding L.A. clique, then the oldest but not the largest in membership, was composed of several tropas, each identified by its trademark trip. Some newer suburban cliques had only one or two tropes. Unlike the tropa that hung out on an almost daily basis, the clique got together less often. Events that brought the clique together included general meetings prompted by conflicts with enemy gangs (planning and strategizing were done here), parties, and funerals for slain homeboys.

The Coalition of Cliques. During the mid 1980s the Satanas began spreading its sphere of influence to suburban areas like Cerritos, Baldwin Park, Carson, Long Beach, Glendale/Eagle Rock, and even distant Oxnard in Ventura County. But L.A. Satanas was the founding core, structural model and ideological fountainhead of the group. The newer cliques outside L.A. were founded by veteranos who had outmigrated to the suburban areas. Despite the numerical depletion of the founding L.A. clique towards the nineties, the suburban cliques continued to look up to L.A. for guidance and inspiration, because “L.A. had the name,” as admiring suburban homeboys put it. L.A. had the most number of veteranos and thus possessed a repository of tradition.

However, in no way did L.A. occupy a position of supremacy and leadership, and in no way were the suburban cliques subordinated to it. In the general meetings with all the cliques in attendance, everyone who wanted to speak was heard and a consensus was formed, based on the majority will. The coalition remained unified and solid, in so far as enforcing the code of conduct and meeting the threat posed by rival gangs was concerned; but it could happen that a clique would defy the majority will and cease attendance in the general meetings. One such clique broke away and was considered as much an enemy as other traditional STS enemies.

It must be emphasized that the existence of these levels of inclusiveness did not give rise to the formation of a hierarchical set up; these were simply the visible, practical formations or structural poses the homeboys assumed. There were no institutionalized leadership positions, no chain of command. At all levels, the peer, “equal footing” ideology pervaded. The most frequent level of interaction was experienced at the buddy

and tropa levels (partying, fighting, hanging out, stealing cars and other “deviant” activities were usually done by buddies). Cliques usually got together much less frequently: when in a state of war against enemies (which necessitated huge, general meetings), when a homeboy died, or when there was a bigger party thrown by a member (see appendix 6).

Satanas members did not merely verbalize their egalitarian aspirations—they reflected it in the **communitas** of the group. Individually, they may have come from different socio-economic backgrounds; but while some were “rich” (middle class, that usually is) and others “poor,” class distinctions were consciously set aside. No one talked or bragged about his family’s wealth or economic privilege. Instead, sharing of resources and taking care of each other were emphasized. Satanas was made up of Philippine-born and native-born (second generation, US born), as well as a few non-Filipinos. From its founding in 1972 to around the mid-eighties, the membership had been overwhelmingly Philippine-born (around 90 percent), with about ten percent being American-born. After the mid-1980s the gang continued to be largely Philippine-born, but new recruits had come to America at a much younger age; some were toddlers, others were of preschool age. They belonged to the “1.5” generation, in between, neither first nor second generation. Some could still understand Tagalog, a few could speak it and carry on a conversation. But they had vague recollections of their country of birth, and many of the cultural traditions seemed strange to them. This group shared an identity problem with the American-born.

Second generation (as well as 1.5 generation) homeboys joined Satanas not simply to identify with a group and feel a sense of belonging—a great part of it was the need to belong to a group that was *Filipino* or *Pinoy*. Seeing a big group of Filipino boys together made it much more attractive to join the group and feel a sense of “Pinoy Pride.” Solow, for instance, said that up to the age of thirteen, he hardly saw Filipino youths in his school; thus he hung out with Chicanos. But when he transferred to a school where there were many Filipino youths, “that’s when I started hanging out with my kind....and then I joined Satanas,” he said. Inca said that he joined Satanas because he wanted to learn more about his departed father’s cultural heritage. He said that what he learned about Filipino culture from his Philippine-born homeboys was just about as much and about the “same stuff” as he learned from his family. Aside from *Ilocano* (a major language in the North Philippines) that he acquired from home, he learned to speak some Tagalog from Satanas.

A linguistic and generational divide, however, at times led to generational conflicts within the group. Bomber of the second generation said, “The Tagalog speakers formed a separate group. They couldn’t relate to the people that spoke English. They tried to dominate, they’d talk shit, you know. That’s why I didn’t kick back with them.” Raider referred to the newly arrived as “FOB’s” (fresh off the boat). Inca and Aztec similarly felt left out. “Simply because I couldn’t speak Tagalog, I got left out of a lot of stuff....And you know, that kind of hurt, because you got a guy who’s trying to do something for the homeboys. The culture clash kind of slapped me in the face because it wasn’t the way I thought it would be,” said Inca as Aztec nodded in agreement.

But all the generations found themselves united when faced by common threats posed by enemy Hispanic and other Filipino groups. “When you gangbang, or if you were in danger of being suicidal, you know....We didn’t care....all we do is like...whatever happens, happens,” Raider said. Pride in the Filipino kept them together under the Satanas umbrella.

It is truly difficult to conceive of an organization or group that had no leadership of some kind, or that was not being led or directed in specific situations. Without fixed positions of leadership such as “President” or “Chief,” how did the Satanas perform group tasks and attain their collective goals? Many veteranos expressed the view that “a group never works” when fixed positions and hierarchies are in place. It was widely held that “it’s better to have one group name but everybody thinking for themselves and knowing what to do.” Instead of adopting a conventional structural set up, the Satanas set up a system of communication and mobilization that enabled the group to get together and build consensus that became the basis for unified action. The **meeting** was the mechanism through which consensus-building was achieved.

Any homeboy, pee wee or veterano, young or old, could call for a general meeting. Reasons for calling for a meeting were varied, but commonly, it was a state of conflict or tension with a rival gang that created the need for the homeboys to convene and talk; the homeboy or homeboys who were most directly involved in the specific problem would do the calling. Satanas had no fixed calendar of activities; meetings were held as needed, or as events calling for action arose. Every homeboy was duty-bound to attend all meetings. The more meetings there were, the better for the group, for not only

was consensus formed, the meetings gave the homies the chance to know each other better and get to see the new faces. Knowing all the homeboys was important, in order to avoid accidental fights amongst themselves; there are stories of members of other gangs who fought at parties and dance clubs because they did not recognize each other as belonging to the same 'hood. Finally, meetings were important because they provided a venue for enforcing group standards and norms. An unwritten but rigid code of conduct governed the behavior of all members; everyone was reminded of these rules, and any violation or breach of conduct was severely dealt with. At times, meetings could turn into "court sessions": errant homeboys were put on the "hot seat" and given appropriate punishments.

While everyone was free to speak out, the various tropas had designated "speakers" who spoke in their behalf or communicated their collective feelings, opinions, and positions on certain issues. Not just anyone who was articulate and outspoken was chosen by his peers to be their speaker. Those so designated were usually the homeboys, who, in the eyes of their peers, stood above them in terms of having earned "respeto" (respect). Collectively, the speakers present in the meeting constituted an ad hoc "council of elders": through them, the process of decision making for the group was primarily effected, and a basis for consensus was arrived at.

Respeto was a core value. There was an active individual striving to gain respect from peers. Respeto was viewed as an individual quality that can be "accumulated" or "lost," as if it were a commodity or quantifiable thing. Thus, one gained "points" by doing things that "raised the name of the 'hood" or contributed to its growth and stability.

The drive to accumulate respect thus resulted in an undeclared competition for greater respectability, leading to the formation of an undeclared “ranking system” within the group. Those who had been appointed “speakers” or spokesmen for their tropa, for instance, had accumulated considerably greater quantities of respect than others.

Contrary to popular belief, one did not gain pre-eminence and influence in the gang by simply being the most daring gang banger, or being the most aggressive in the group.

According to the homeboys, one had to show that he can gain respect not only through toughness and fighting ability, but through deeds and actions that promoted the welfare and interests of the group. For instance, an older homeboy who assumed the responsibility of guiding and socializing a batch of pee wees into the Satanas culture gained respeto. He accumulated even more “points” if he had opened his doors to runaway pee wees in need of shelter, and to older homeboys who needed a place to hang out or spend the night. Such a committed and generous homeboy would add more to his stature because he clothed the pee wees and even gave them pocket money at times.

The ultimate respect-generating act or deed, however, was dying for the ‘hood. In so doing, a homeboy ensured his place in the group’s mythology and lore; his heroism narrated and passed on to future generations. (Violent acts such as killing did not arise from some irrational urge or compulsion to hurt or destroy anyone in sight, or at random—as is popularly believed. Violence was directed at specific enemies.) “Doing time” or being imprisoned for avenging the death of a fellow homeboy or inflicting injury on enemies greatly increased one’s stature in the group. Similarly, when one did time for

not snitching on his fellow homeboy as to who actually pulled the trigger, he would be greatly respected and viewed as a role model for pee wees to emulate.

Satanas enjoyed a wide reputation for being a solid fighting group. There was no place in this group for “rankers” or “punks,” as the cowards or weak of heart are called. Individual defiance was strongly promoted, and while aggression was primarily directed against enemy gangs, it could also be directed against fellow homeboys. As some veteranos put it, “your enemy is not another gang—your enemy is you fellow homeboy. You’ve got to show him that, shit, you can’t push me around. That way, you gain respect.” Thus, there was a tradition of fighting between two homeboys called the “one-on-one.” The provoker was usually an older homeboy who tried to “push around” another homeboy—often in a bid to test the latter’s sense of self-respect and ability to stand his ground. The latter was expected to “show he’s got respect” by accepting the challenge to fight.

The one-on-one was a fair fight, a ritual of manhood (see chapter VI). Only fists were used. Guns, knives, and other weapons were absolutely prohibited. As all the other homeboys watched, the antagonists were simply allowed to slug it out until one of them went down in defeat. While serving as an outlet for ill-feelings and aggressive tendencies within the group, it served an equally important function: that of resolving disputes in an impartial and neutral manner—disputes that otherwise a “leader,” “judge,” or “mediator” would have difficulty adjudicating because of suspicions of partiality or bias on his part. Thus, in the absence of a bureaucratic structure and minimal role differentiation, the one-on-one was a vital mechanism with clear group-preserving and integrating functions.

Individual vs. “Group” Leadership

Since there were no fixed or institutionalized positions of leadership, everyone was free to ascend to a level of influence and thus position oneself for front-line, lead status in the group. There were two types of informal leadership in the Satanas: individual leadership and group leadership—that is, leadership collectively exercised by a group of homeboys who had assumed the role. I will first describe the latter type.

In 1981, Satanas went through a severe crisis that almost wiped it out of existence. A popular and influential homeboy had been ambushed and shot to death by the Avenues, a notorious Latino gang in Eagle Rock. Satanas quickly retaliated but in the process, mistakenly killed two Mormon missionaries. Unfortunately for them, the homeboys who did the crime were arrested and jailed. Worse, the LAPD mounted a massive crackdown; scores were arrested, others fled to the Philippines, while many simply decided to lie low and cool off.

Enter a new batch of pee wee recruits: a solid group of seven boys barely 15 years old at that time. All had just immigrated from the Philippines. Collectively, they assumed the daunting task of reviving their declining group. They mounted an aggressive and unrelenting gangbanging offensive against enemy gangs—both Latino and Filipino. In doing so, they regained visibility for STS in L.A., serving notice that they were still around. As their notoriety grew and word of their exploits spread far and wide, recruitment became easier, for young men tended to gravitate towards groups that had “a name.”

Each of the seven had a special ability that was channeled towards the achievement of their common goals. Two of them had entrepreneurial skills and were especially good at generating income through “money making” ventures. All of them were able fighters and gangbangers; because of their leadership, the gang was revived and in fact, it was they who carried Satanas through the “glory years”(1983-86) when they had “power, money, guns left and right, and more pussies than we could handle.” When homeboys today talk about that era and the cohort which guided the group, they do not single out one individual but speak of a collective “batch ‘82” as the leader.

As mentioned earlier, certain individuals “rose above their peers” so to speak, through acts and deeds that advanced and promoted the welfare and interests of the group. Such individuals gained respect and become “speakers” who articulated the feelings and ideas of his tropa. One such homeboy was Solow, a veterano who played a vital role in steering the L.A. clique through a critical period of revitalization.

Solow was born in the Philippines but came to Southern California with his parents when he was barely two years old. He does not speak Tagalog but understands the regional dialect of his parents and can manage a basic conversation (in that dialect). Solow grew up in a predominantly Latino neighborhood, and it wasn’t till junior high school that he came into contact with a sizeable group of Filipino youths. Finding company in other Filipinos whom he referred to as “my kind” helped establish his identity: it was “Pinoy Pride,” he says, which made him hang out with Satanas during those early years and led to his joining it.

Solow's pee wee years saw him go through the entire range of the gang career: ditching school, running away from home, doing drugs, partying, chasing girls, and gangbanging. He spent a few months in Juvenile Hall for an attempted murder charge, and escaped a longer prison term by gaining acquittal (for lack of evidence).

Solow's most active gangbanging years were over, and he maintained a job as an office clerk in a downtown L.A. bank. He was proud of his job and liked the economic independence that it gave: an apartment and health insurance. He and his live-in girlfriend (also employed) maintained two cars. He had "cooled down," he said, but he just couldn't stand seeing their tags crossed out by enemy gangs. While he maintained an 8 to 5 job, Solow did his part to keep the group together and rebuild it. His apartment served as main hang out and "club house" of sorts to pee wees and veteranos alike. "Unlike the Mexicans we take care of our homeboys," he said. "Mexicans leave their homeboys out in the streets." Pee wee runaways virtually resided with him; school ditchers almost predictably would head for his apartment and learn the ways of the gang from older homeboys. Veteranos who have been laid off from their jobs, or who had just recently divorced from their wives found sanctuary here. The place was a veritable bee hive, with homeboys playing cards or watching tv, cooking their meals, giving each other a haircut or doing other things.

Solow played a lead role in the recruitment and initiation of pee wees into the group. Most of the initiates lived with him and eventually got "jumped in" (ritually initiated) at his place. As mentioned earlier, older and younger homeboys maintain an egalitarian type of relationship, with the exception of the probationary or initiation

period; here, the initiates were subordinated to the mentoring veterano. Solow was generous with the younger ones; it was not unusual for him to give out some pocket money during payday, or to take them out to dinner at a Chinese restaurant. On the way home, he would at times drop by a department store and buy them some clothes.

When there was a crisis, such as conflict with enemy groups, other “speakers” would call on Solow for advice and leadership. His phone rang at any time of the night, and at times he would respond to a call at early dawn, to pick up a pee wee stranded in Orange County, or to rush to the County hospital to see a homeboy that had been shot or even killed.

Solow’s word carried weight. When he called for a meeting, the response was expected: a big attendance, with homeboys from distant places making it on time. During the meetings, he always stood for the pee wee recruits and acted as their protector and defender from older boys who at times “tempted” the young with drugs. Solow was an excellent mediator between older veteranos and pee wees. Culturally, he was strategically situated between the Philippine-born and the American-born, as well as the non-Filipino homeboys. Born in the Philippines, he came here at a very early age but had stuck to his “Pinoy” identity. Thus, both Tagalog and English speakers listened to him.

Competition and rivalry, however, were part of the internal dynamics of Satanas; Solow, at times, found himself fighting off challenges to his position of influence. Consider the following case: Tiger was one of Solow’s closest buddies. They got jumped in together, and were reunited in Juvenile Hall a few years later. While he spent only

four months inside, Tiger had to stay on for a couple more years (having been found guilty of the charge leveled against him).

Solow, therefore, had the time to build greater respect for himself as a homeboy, and had been able to build a base of support and following (in a non-stated or explicitly declared and structured manner). When Tiger was released from jail, Solow immediately incorporated him into his tropa of pee wee recruits; their partnership seemed to be doing well, and at one big meeting, the speakers “appointed” Solow and Tiger as “co-commissioners” for a specific area or locality.

For some time Tiger and Solow worked in tandem: a powerful and effective one. Tiger was permanent fixture at Solow’s place, and he was also seen as a “role model” by the pee wees. However, some minor irritants developed along the way, which caused a cooling of their relationship. Tiger stopped frequenting Solow’s place; word spread that he had been inviting the pee wees to hang out with him at his own place, despite the reluctance on the part of the pee wees—for fear of hurting Solow, and for fear of getting jumped by enemy gangs (Tiger’s place was located in Latino gang turf). One day Solow got wind of reports that his place was turning into a “den of baseheads” (drug addicts’ nest). Solow was indignant, and became even angrier when he discovered that the source of the rumor was Tiger.

Since the struggle between the two was beginning to threaten the unity of the fighting barkada, a veterano named “Flaco” stepped forward to attempt a mediation. Flaco arranged for a meeting between the two, in order to “clear the air” and perhaps resolve the conflict. The meeting was held at Solow’s place. Unfortunately, it started on

a wrong note, for when Solow pointedly asked Tiger whether it was true that he had described his place as a “den of baseheads,” Tiger admitted it without any feeling of regret. Thus, the planned conciliatory meeting ended briefly in a shouting match, with Solow challenging Tiger to a one-on-one, which was averted when Flaco stood in between them. Tiger then walked out, with Flaco following him out the door and crying out in exasperation over his failed attempt at mediation, “Fuck Satanas!”

Synthesis

From F.G. Bailey’s point of view, the Satanas was a team that appeared to work effectively without leaders. But what this means is not that there was no leadership, but that there simply were no rules in this group for the appointment of leaders—“no normative rules for allocating authority.” Satanas was a “moral team”: a group held together by a shared ethic” (p.82). And what is meant by the Satanas self-description that they are essentially egalitarian? Bailey, paraphrasing Orwell, states that even in the most egalitarian societies, “some men are more equal than others” and that in every society, even if only at a pragmatic level, there are at least some traces of leadership roles.

While it is accurate to say that there was an absence of fixed, institutionalized positions of leadership, it is inaccurate to conclude that Satanas, therefore, was devoid of leadership, for there were “speakers” who assumed leadership roles. Satanas speakers neatly fit into Bailey’s concept of “leadership as an enterprise,” indicated by the way speaker homeboys used their resources (like Solow) to widen their sphere of influence

and thus gain a bigger voice; they initiated recruitment and actively engaged in activities designed to maintain the group. As Solow's case informs us, a speaker is one who gained greater accumulations of respect through deeds and acts that promoted the general good of the barkada.

Internal competition and conflict are unavoidable in the game of politics, and this dynamic aspect of group life is amply illustrated by the conflict between Solow and Tiger, and the attempt at mediation by an older speaker, Flaco. Rumor was a common tactic used by homeboys to undermine the influence of a competitor. While conflicts were usually settled peacefully through direct mediation, settlement or resolution could be achieved through a one-on-one fight—should mediation fail. In a group characterized by minimal role differentiation and egalitarian aspirations, the one-on-one largely served vital integrative, group-preserving functions (in serving as a neutral, bias-free mode of resolving interpersonal conflict).

Bailey's perspective enables us to see that the egalitarian anti-structure of **communitas** is not an absolute state of equality among members; indeed, some men are more equal than others, giving rise to competition for influence and power. The same observation was made by Dumont (1993) about the Visayan male barkada. **Communitas** is popularly characterized in sacred, even religious terms, and egalitarianism is equated with love, sharing, goodwill, brotherhood, and the masking of conflict—in fact, Turner saw internal group conflicts expressed only mimetically (never directly) in ritual performances of the Ndembu. The Satanas appear to contradict Turner, in this regard; for while there was love and caring for each other, there was also open—not disguised—

aggression and conflict that paradoxically functioned to maintain the egalitarian structure of the group.

One of the truly unique features of the Satanas is the way in which individual aggressiveness was channeled to maintain the horizontal, relatively undifferentiated set up. The one-on-one tradition actually helped prevent the emergence of institutionalized, centralized leadership, or tendencies towards hierarchization. For if a great imbalance or disparity in terms of individual power and influence were allowed to develop, then structural differentiation could arise, or the group could simply fragment. Aggressiveness channeled through the one-on-one, therefore, did not weaken or threaten group structure and solidarity—it solidified it. And the family model served as an ideological prop to rationalize the internal squabbles and fights that at times broke out amongst themselves.

The formation of Satanas into small tropas built around a core of buddies was an equally effective means of managing intra-group conflict. As Inca, the philosophical homeboy put it, “Satanas is not just one gang, it is a lot of different people.” By grouping into relatively homogeneous, small peer units based on common “trips,” the kind of interpersonal conflicts that would threaten a larger grouping characterized by heterogeneity of interests were thus minimized. Such smaller units that operated on an intensely close, personal basis also tended to function more effectively and efficiently, and were more easily mobilized for fighting and other tasks.

It may be erroneous to describe the Satanas as “loosely organized or “decentralized,” terms used by conventional society to imply that Satanas was pre-

organizational and uncohesive. My immersion in the group informed me that they were cohesive and effectively functioning, and thus relatively long-lasting. Leadership was not concentrated on one person but on many; what occurred was a virtual diffusion or distribution of power throughout the entire structure. Thus, Jankowski's (1991) term "leadership structure" best captures, in my opinion, the essence and form of the Satanas set up.

To sum up, leadership in the Satanas exemplified and accentuated the **work of individuals**. The undifferentiated structure ensured the widest possible latitude for individual pragmatic manipulation, creativity, and personal initiative.

V. RITUALS OF MANHOOD: FIGHTING, PINOY PRIDE, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF ETHNICITY AND MASCULINITY

Back in the Philippines the barkada functioned as a gender-constructing and socializing institution for adolescent youths. Transplantation to America appears to have broadened the barkada's function: with teenage Filipino immigrants being attacked by hostile Latino youth groups, the barkada in Los Angeles assumed a defensive posture and became a significant vehicle for ethnic identity construction. It is important to bear in mind that historically, ongoing conflicts with Latino youths--from the Latino groups that harassed the barkadas of Pinoy laborers in the taxi dance halls of the 1920s and 1930s to the more recent Cholo gangs of the 1970s and 1980s that attacked conventional Pinoy boy groups—provided the context within which barkadas fought back and became “gangs.” Fueled by “Pinoy Pride,” fighting consequently served as a resource for constructing an aggressive masculinity.

For most of the 1970s and 1980s there was a state of war between Satanas and its traditional Latino enemies like the 18th Street and Avenues. Fighting and warring against them carried a sense of nobility and purpose, in the manner that tribes or nations wage war against enemy armies. Contact with other racial and ethnic groups clearly brought to Satanas homeboys a heightened sense of ethnic identity as Filipinos. Their sense of Filipino identity appears not to have been confined to regional or tribal origins, unlike the youthful laborers in the 1920s who named their groups after their home regions or towns back in the Philippines. Immigrant youths of the 1970s and 1980s had received basic Philippine History lessons and had been exposed to the heightened nationalism

propagated by Ferdinand Marcos throughout his dictatorial reign. In addition, many of them became exposed to ideas of Asian American and Filipino American empowerment while hanging out and becoming objects of gang intervention programs at SIPA (the social service agency). It's not surprising therefore, that the homeboy Corky (in the previous chapter) viewed the Latinos as "Spaniards" akin to the Hispanic invaders and colonizers back in Philippine History and cast the war with the Cholos as an extension of the Filipino anti-colonial war against Spain. On the other hand, Satanas and other Filipino American gangs also fought against each other, in a struggle for supremacy over who could "lord it over" the Filipino American community. For some, it represented an extension of the high school barkada or fraternity fighting and feuding that they had experienced back in the Philippines.

Satanas homeboys often bragged about their reputation as fearless fighters, a reputation that was widely recognized in the Filipino American community and the streets of Los Angeles. They built a name largely through the implementation of strict and rigorous recruitment standards and procedures designed to weed out the weak and unfit. No one was coerced or forced to join the gang, and no one got "walked in." Only those that possessed what the homeboys called "heart"—a combination of toughness and courage evidenced by the ability to keep fighting even when already on the ground, and those who passed the tests for loyalty--were admitted into the brotherhood.

Quality, rather than numbers, was emphasized. As one homeboy, Solow, put it,

It's better to have ten people than 100 people, see, at least in that ten people you know each other's face, and you guys know each other real good. You know who's not gonna snitch, like that....Cause if you have a hundred people, one of them might snitch, one t hem of them might tell things this and that. Three people

is more deadlier than 100, or then like that. Cause out of all these, there's going to be a snitch in a gang like that, or someone that's scared..."

There were varied ways of testing an initiate, but the most common method was for him to be sent to enemy turf where he would be "hit up" (verbally challenged) by STS homeboys who are total strangers to him. The verbal challenge is in the form of a question, "where're you from?" If he claims STS, he's okay. We know we can count on him, said Solow. "But if he ranks out and says he's from nowhere, we'll beat him up. We don't like rankers, they just use the name for girls, like that. When they go to parties and see girls, they'll use the name Satanas, but if they a group like BNG, five of them and there's only two of them, and they're hit up, they'll say they're from nowhere, see?"

Another test is what they call the "beer run." "If there's nothing to do, and we got no money, like that, and we wanna get drunk like that, we'll go pick a cruise to a 7-11 like that and make him do a beer run: we'll ask him, "are you down for Satanas?" He'll go, "Yeah!" All right, then go!" He'll go to the 7-11 and then he'll take like a case, a 12-pack and then he'll run away with it."

Jumping In

If the recruit passed all the tests and it was determined that he would not snitch, he was subjected to a final ritual of initiation called "jumping in." Here, he'd undergo a minute or two of physical punishment inflicted by a designated group of homeboys. The venue for the ritual might be a secluded corner of a public park or indoors—in the living room of a homeboy's place. Sometimes, the ritual was held in a most unusual place like a cemetery—right after the burial of a slain or departed homeboy. There was no set time

for holding the ritual: it could be at noon, late afternoon, or at night, depending upon the mood and availability of the homeboys willing to perform the ritual. It was against gang procedures for pee wees to perform the ritual without at least two older generation homeboys present. I witnessed the following jumping-in ritual at a public park in Los Angeles:

As the sun started setting and the trees started casting their long shadows across the park, the homeboys started preparing to jump in a young man 15 years old. He was fair-skinned and had Hispanic features. An ad hoc committee of three met to decide who among those present would participate in the ritual. 8 were selected, with all the generations being represented. The candidate took off his shirt and shoes, undressed to the waist and bare-footed. In the middle of the grassy lawn, the 8 homeboys formed two parallel lines (of 4 each) about 3 feet apart. The initiate stood at the front end of the two lines, while the timer stood a few feet behind him. The ritual took two minutes. At a given signal from the timer, the initiate ran in between the two lines of homeboys who closed in on him and had him surrounded. Instantly, they began pummeling him viciously with their fists and kicking him at will. The initiate fell to the ground but he valiantly defended himself. As soon as he fell to the ground, a homeboy applied an armlock around his head. As he rolled and thrashed about, his tormentors attacked him like a pack of wolves. When the timer signaled "time up," the initiate was carried to a nearby park bench and made to sit. The homeboys then started burning his left forearm with lighted cigarette butts; all the while, initiate maintained an unflinching, stoical face. I thought he displayed remarkable courage, endurance, and tolerance for pain. After about 10 minutes of burn-marking, homeboys began embracing him one by one, whispering words of encouragement and welcome.

Effort was made to make the burn mark big and visible from afar. "We make their burn marks big so they can see when you're walking like that. Then he's not gonna rank out, and if he ranks out, he's still gonna get messed up," a veterano explained. As for the severity of punishment and the length of time of the ritual, the homeboys said that normally, if the initiate had never been a member of any gang and is a first-timer, the punishment will be just right—neither too light nor too heavy. But if he once belonged to

a rival gang, the punishment would be much more severe, because they wanted to make sure they were not admitting in a snitch or spy. Solow said,

If we jump in a person, he used to be from no gang and he comes in, we're not gonna you know, beat him up real hard because he's gonna be our homeboy anyway, so why hurt him. But if the people that we're gonna jump in used to be from Jeffrox or PR lik that, that's a different story. Everyone that has grudges against that gang, just everybody will pile up on his ass. Like _____, he used to be from _____, he came to us, he said he wanted to join STS, so we broke his rib and things like that. Then he proved to us that you know, after we jumped him in, he gave us a ride to all the _____ houses, he knocked on the door, we took them out and then we beat them up in front of the house. So we trust him now.

Homeboys described the experience of getting into Satanas as one that radically transformed their persona and self-image. Atlas reminisced: "Before, as a member of another gang, I was one of the timid guys. I behaved like a pussycat. I allowed others to step on me. But when I joined STS, I lost all fear. I would walk down the street proud and tall, ready to take on anyone." Dino said: "STS is not a devil-worshipping group, and many of us don't even believe the Devil exists. But when I joined STS, I felt like possessed by Satan himself—I was afraid of no one. Once we shouted 'Satanas!' we became untouchable."

Indeed, new recruits reflected what in Tagalog is called "yabang" (arrogance, haughtiness), a demeanor that worried and at times, turned off older homeboys who had been humbled and tempered by the harsh realities of gang life. Witnessing the "yabang" being displayed by a pee wee, an older homeboy pulled me to his side and said,

Look at that kid...He didn't learn anything yet, nothing big happened to him yet. In _____ (former gang), they didn't teach him shit. All they teach him was steal cars and like....be bad and hit up people, you know....They didn't learn anything yet, you know. They haven't been there when people get stabbed, people get shot...they weren't shot at, you know. They haven't seen nothing yet.

They get into Satanas, they think they're bad already, you know. They think they know everything. They think they're more big, more bad, then they join a bigger gang. Like they didn't know what they got into, so like they think it's just fun. They don't know that what they got into, it's for life, and fuck, they go 'yeah, shit, man, I'm big and bad now. I'm Satanas.'

The One-On-One

Within a week after passing initiation, the recruit would become fair game to older homeboys who would trip on him; they'd test his temperament by teasing him, deliberately provoking him to anger, even insulting him, in a bid to see how much he could take. At least one of the homeboys would challenge him to a one-on-one, to see how well he fights. Individual defiance was strongly promoted, and although aggression was primarily directed against enemy gangs, it could also be directed against fellow homeboys. As the veterano Tiger put it, "Your enemy is not another gang—your enemy is your fellow homeboy. You got to show him that, shit, you can't push me around. That way, you gain respect."

The provoker would try to "push around" the rookie—in a bid to test the latter's sense of self-respect and ability to stand his ground. On the other hand, the provoked rookie was expected to "show he's got respect" by accepting the challenge to fight. This was an example of "tripping": a whimsical desire to pick a fight with a fellow homeboy. Most of the time it was an older guy tripping on a younger one. "We have to do that, to see how down he is," declared Solow. "Cause the real thing comes out of him, if he is a pussy or he is hard, see? If we know he's gonna fight back and we trip on him, that's good. Then if we trip on another homeboy and they'll just keep ignoring you, then the more they're gonna trip on you, if you're not showing balls."

In practice, a younger one did not trip on an older one, unless the former was convinced that the latter had disrespected or clearly wronged him. Continued Solow:

We always have respect for a guy that's been in longer than you. No matter what, always respect, see? But if they disrespect you, then fuck him. We always respect the older man. You cannot just fuck up a homeboy who's been in longer than you, his batch is gonna fuck you up and no one can do nothing. Like for instance, you've been in ten years before me and then you were tripping on me and I wanted to fuck you up, why, I have to tell the homeboys that you kick back with (older batch) and also tell my own batch; if they say, yeah, go for it, then you got permission.

While the Satanas reflected deep loyalties and bonds of caring and brotherly affection in their relationships, clashes of personality and intense disagreements over certain matters were part of normal interactions within a group that was composed of strong-willed and defiant individuals. If it was not a trip, conflict could arise from recent or old personal grudges between two homeboys, or an issue that had polarized the group. Open fighting between factions never happened; no matter how bitter the ill-feelings, it predictably would boil down to a two-men one-on-one.

The one-on-one was considered the honorable and manly way of settling conflicts within the group. To make it a fair fight, only bare fists were used. As all the other homeboys watched, the antagonists slugged it out until one went down in defeat. After making his point, the victor was expected to pull back his punches and allow the other homeboys to pick up the fallen one. "You don't want to break his bones—he's still your homeboy, no matter what," the boys chorused. One-on-one fights usually broke out during general meetings and big parties, when discussions would at times lead to heated verbal exchanges and hotheads could not restrain themselves. And there was no better time than a meeting or a party to show how well one fights.

The one-on-one not only displayed a homeboy's toughness and manhood; it served as an outlet for ill feelings and aggressive tendencies within the group. "We don't keep ill feelings and grudges inside," said Smokey. "We are brutally frank with each other—if we have something against another in the group, we let it out and settle it quick." "Homeboys may fight, but by the next day they are friends again," declared Dino. "When the hang over is gone, the antagonists will get back to their senses and ask each other: hey, what happened last night? The thing is forgotten and they become gangbanging partners again." Added Bembot: "After the fight, you guys are gonna hug and kiss. That's just a trip, man."

Gangbanging

The homeboy's most active fighting period were the pee wee (rookie) years; they assumed the role of frontline fighters for the gang. Being the most active, they were also the most visible. Conflicts with rival groups presented them opportunities to display their fighting prowess. The lure of girls, booze, and partying was hard to resist, but it was from fighting that homeboys said they got the ultimate "high." They talked about the rush of adrenalin felt when beating up on a rival gang member. When asked whether or not the pleasure derived from attacking an enemy was indicative of a natural, violent streak, homeboys obliquely replied by reminding me that "the streets are a violent and unfriendly world; if you don't do it, someone else is going to do it to you. So you might as well beat up your enemy before he beats you up. You got to survive..."

Dino described the experience of gangbanging as one of suspense combined with fear: “At first, I was really scared. My whole body would tremble and shake...But later, when I had gained some experience, I’d go look for some enemy bang member to beat up without provocation or for no reason at all.” Bruno reminisced on his gangbanging days: We had a lot of fun gangbanging. After the fight, we’d return to our hang out feeling thrilled and happy. Never mind that we had cuts, bumps, and bruises all over our bodies—we didn’t care! We’d just keep laughing and feeling good about ourselves!” Dino recalled: “When I was a pee wee, we were constantly looking for trouble. We’d get drunk, then go to school and pick a fight; we’d pick on anyone who was tough—including football players from the high school team. After the fight we’d go back to the hang out and have a noisy, happy time; each one would brag about his own exploits. There would be loud argumentations over who did the most damage to the enemy.” Rocket said: “Once you get jumped, you’ll get scared, you’ll be shitting here. But once you can take it no more, then fuck, you’ll do something about it. Once you jump someone once or twice, fuck, dude, you’ll like it! And you’ll do it more, and you’ll like fighting.”

When Satanas homeboys would encounter rival members or others whose affiliations they would like to determine, they would throw the question, “Where’re you from?” This question would initiate a ritual of encounter called “hitting up.” Although the question appears to be a formal attempt to establish the identity of the other party, it really was more of a challenge—an invitation to fight. Homeboys said that in most cases, they already knew the other party’s identity. But they would hit them up anyway, to see

if the other party was willing to fight. If the hit up party disclaimed his gang by replying that he was “from nowhere,” the Satanans would take it as a sign that the person is unwilling to stand and fight. He has “ranked out,” in gang parlance. Normally, the Satanans would simply let him go in peace, even if they knew that he was from a gang that they don’t get along with. However, if he belonged to the arch-rival “BNG” gang or other hated Mexican gangs, Satanans would dispense with the hitting up ritual and simply beat him/them up on sight.

When the party that had been hit up claimed their ‘hood, a heated verbal exchange of invective and insults would take place, triggering aggressive action, as the follow case illustrates:

One afternoon, Atlas was hit up by cholos while walking to a friend’s place. The cholos hit him up, “Where’re you from?” “Satanas, man!” Atlas yelled back. “This is Rockwood, the cholos chorused. “So what?” Atlas countered. “Fuck you!” said the cholos. “Fuck you too! Okay, you guys want shit? Two on one, put down your notebooks,” Atlas challenged them. He pulled out his Swiss knife with three blades. The two Rockwoods backed off. “We know where you live now,” the duo said as they retreated. “I know where to find you too!” Atlas defiantly shot back. “You only live up there, you don’t know where I live, man!” On his way back home, Atlas was chased by the same belligerent cholos, but this time there was a guy with a big jungle knife chasing him. Upon reaching his house, two guys from another rival Filipino gang were waiting for him. They, too, chased him; trapped, he ran towards the backyard and scrambled over the wall to safety. He could overhear his pursuers asking, “Where the fuck did he go?”

A “gangbang” referred to aggressive and violent action directed by a group against one or more individuals belonging to an enemy gang. The term covered actions ranging from beating up a solitary rival gang member in the mall or sidewalk to fights against large groups of enemies at parties, dances, and other chance encounters at public places. A “drive-by” was a kind of gang activity but different from other types of

gangbanging activity in at least two ways: (1) it was a gangbang in motion, always involving the use of a car (or several cars); and (2) stealth and speed were crucial to the success of the drive-by, hence the preference for doing it at night (especially early dawn).

Gangbangs were either planned or unplanned. According to veteranos of the 1970s, gangbangs involved more planning and advanced preparation than during the time of the 1980s, when the activity became more spontaneous and improvised on the spot. During those earlier times, mass fighting involving large numbers of combatants from opposing groups was a common fight style. The “rumbles” (Tagalog “rambolan”) were often pre-arranged: the time and place, as well as ground rules for fighting, were pre-agreed upon through representatives of both contending parties. One veterano recalled that weapons of any kind were not used in rumbles, but violations of this rule were not uncommon. “Only fist-fighting and kicking was the approved mode of fighting in a rumble, but a lot of those Latinos brought weapons anyway—hidden in their pockets,” he recalled. Rumbling was usually held in open, vacant lots or public parks; as many as a hundred combatants from both fighting groups would be involved.

Pre-arranged rumbles were virtually unheard of during the 1980s. The gangbang group was smaller and more mobile. Whereas homeboys of the 1970s either walked or rode the bus to the scene of battle, the 1980s and early 1990s boys rode cars and talked in terms of “carloads” in referring to the size of the gangbang force. A party usually constituted the “pre-gangbanging phase”; the heavy drinking and moderate drug-taking (usually marijuana) eventually put them in a fighting mood; cries of “Let’s go gangbang!” would soon be heard. The weapons would be prepared - shotguns, pistols,

knives, and objects such as baseball bats, fluorescent bulbs, and clubs were picked up. Usually, the marauding party was all-male, but there were times when homegirls came along, sometimes acting as drivers. Off they would go to the hang outs of the enemy.

An older homeboy usually led the convoy of at least two or three cars to an enemy hang out or social event. The shooters would sit in front; if it was going to be a classic drive-by, the convoy would merely pass by at moderate to slow speed, open fire, and then speed away from the scene. Sometimes they would be content with driving over and vandalizing the cars of enemies—deflating tires, smashing windshields with baseball bats, or riddling cars with bullets. More often, a few cars would stop a block away while the lead car would proceed to the enemy location. An unarmed homeboy would get off the car and hit up any rival in sight. If he succeeded in provoking a fight and drawing the other enemies out of the house, the other cars on stand-by would suddenly drive up with horns blaring and the homeboys yelling “Puro Satanas!” they’d open fire and speed off into the night.

Sometimes the marauding convoy was so big (up to 20 carloads) that an enemy party would be forced to close. Dion recalls one such incident: when the enemy saw them coming, all the lights in the house suddenly went off. They knocked on the doors repeatedly, and even broke some window panes. When the party goers refused to respond, they left and searched for other groups to gangbang. As the night wore on, the convoy became smaller and smaller; as enemy groups were spotted and chased, not everyone was able to keep pace with the lead pursuers. Gangbangs occurred most often during weekend parties, because the likelihood that individuals belonging to opposing

groups would meet was greater than at other kinds of social events. It was also easier for gangs to mobilize during weekend nights and get quick response for reinforcement when attacked, as other homeboys were out cruising in the streets, looking for excitement and trouble. Somehow, through the street grapevine and through ganghoppers (girls that hop from one gang to another), Satanas homeboys knew what parties were being held and where.

One particular tropa enjoyed gangbanging within or near school premises; they also preferred to gangbang on sight, rather than plan and seek out the enemy in other places. A tropa member said that in drawing enemies into a fight, one of them would assume the role of provoker, in order to embolden his other buddies. When other Filipino gangs were encountered, Tagalog was used as the language of confrontation. As soon as an enemy or group of enemies was within shouting distance, the provoker would hit them up: “Taga saan kayo?” (Where’re you from?) If the other party claims their gang and hits them back, the provoker will shout in an angry tone, “Lumapit ka nga rito!” (Come here!) If they refuse to come near, he will shout “Bakit ayaw mong lumapit rito, takot ka ba?” (Why don’t you come near, are you afraid of us?) This is done on purpose, to annoy the enemy and goad them into a fight. If they bite the bait and come near, the Satanas would then charge at them.

Partying and sexual socialization

While gangbanging and fighting are taken for granted as a gang’s main preoccupation, little known is the fact that for the Satanas, partying was an equally

compelling activity that consumed much of their time and creativity. In the never ending fight against boredom, partying was the one activity that packaged all the sources of fun and excitement in one event. Far from the gaze of “old fashioned” parents, teachers, and other agents of control, youths could do their thing in their own world: drink, smoke, and dance to the emergent rhythms of African American hip hop. Parties provided space within which boys could meet girls; and because brawls between rival gangs often broke out, parties offered a stage for homeboys to display fighting skills and macho behavior.

Partying was not confined to birthdays and major holidays; homeboys would seize every opportunity to party. For instance, the **binyag** (baptism) of a homeboy’s infant child, the coming departure for the Philippines or the impending return to prison of a homeboy would call for partying of some kind. Through the gang network everyone seemed to know where and when the next party would be held, especially on weekend evenings. The Satanas were keen about obtaining information on parties being planned by rival gangs; in this regard, girls (especially the “ganghoppers”) were the primary sources of information. Knowing when and where the next enemy party would be held gave Satanas the option of initiating contact in the form of a drive-by or simply vandalizing their cars and other properties. Gate-crashing was a way of expressing supremacy over all other groups. In fact, the Satanas “reserved the right” to attend without formal invitation all parties held within the Filipinotown area; veteranos of the early 1980s said that “People pretty much recognized our claim to the area and opened their gates for us, out of respect, maybe even out of fear, for the Satanas name.”

Bembot recounted how they would barge into a party and the DJ would announce over the PA system, “Ladies and gentlemen, the Satanas are here!” All of us would shout in unison, “‘We’re number one, Satanas!’ When they see us coming, okay, ladies and gentlemen, Satanas on the house! The crowd would go, ‘huu, huu, huu’... Then all the **bebots** (girls) would start, ‘There they are, let’s dance with them!’ Then after that, if the bebot likes you, take her home and _____ her” During those days (early 1980s) they didn’t have cars: they rode the RTD (bus) to the site of the party. “Could you imagine a big group of 20-30 homeboys all riding the bus to attend the party? We just took the bus to gangbang,” Bembot reminisced. “We’d get together at a pre-agreed site after school. Some homeboys would go direct to the party after school, without going home first. We’d kick back first at Inca’s house and get drunk, fight each other and get messed up. Then someone would find the address of the party and then we’d go to the bus stop and take off. And then we’d crash the party, we’d take over the party.”

Atlas was a teenaged immigrant who was basically a loner striving to get straight A’s. But after staying away from parties and socializing, he said that life became boring. He felt envious whenever he’d see other boys embracing their girlfriends in the hallways, but he felt shy and insecure to pursue girls. Then one day he got into a fight; no one came to help, he was all alone. He got clobbered. A classmate witnessed the incident; as Atlas was gingerly feeling the bruises in his arms, the guy told him that if he wanted back up, he might want to join a gang.

He was glad that many homeboys spoke Tagalog. But one of them advised him: “If you want to be known by the girls, you have to speak English good. You can’t talk

Tagalog in front of these bebots, man. They'll get turned off. Bad trip **talaga** (really).” So he resolved to eliminate his accent; alone in his bedroom, he would turn on the tape recorder and practice pronouncing “Hello?” “Hello.” “Hello!!” “Hallow!” (with various inflections). “I used to pronounce ‘palm trees’ with the ‘l’ clearly voiced. I got rid of the ‘l’ and now I say it like Americans do,” he said. Atlas worked very hard to improve his speech, and he got results in quite a short while.

He received the ultimate compliment from an anglo girl who told him, “You know what? Those guys from TBR, they all sound like FOBs (fresh off the boat). But you don’t sound like one, you sound like a White boy!” “No way, I am a Filipino! Do I really sound like a White boy?” he asked. “Yes, you really do,” she said. Then she asked, “Can you speak Tagalog?” He replied (and lied), “I can’t speak Tagalog that good.”

Joining the gang brought many new friends. “My mom was surprised why suddenly, the phone kept on ringing, and girls were asking to talk to me!” he gushed. Becoming a Satanas homeboy gave him a sense of identity, belonging, power, and sexual attractiveness. Apparently girls were his weakness; he said that back in Manila, he was only 13 when he had his first sexual experience (he said his first girlfriend was 4 years older than him). Atlas showed off his scrapbook containing photographs of pretty girls of many ethnicities. “Girls here are hot and more aggressive than girls back in the Philippines,” he lectured. “Back in the Philippines you had to pursue a girl, Filipino style; you know, they tend to be modest and conservative. Here, if they like you, they’ll go to bed with you.”

Only 17 going 18 (then, early 1990s), Atlas said that he had bedded more than 20 girls, and all but two were virgins. “That’s why I don’t use condoms because I know they’re clean,” he bragged. He said that of the many nationalities he went to bed with, Anglo and Mexican girls were the hottest and most aggressive (**pinakamalibog** in Tagalog). Atlas recounted one of his more memorable conquests:

There was this beautiful White girl I met at a party in Glendale. When we were just about to do it, she said, ‘Stop.’ I asked, ‘Why?’ She said, “I can’t do this.” “Why not? Don’t worry, if something happens to you, I’ll marry you.” I assured her. She believed me, and she undressed. “Are you sure?” she asked, seemingly having second thoughts. “Yeah..if you get pregnant, let’s get married,” I assured her. “Is this the right thing to do?” she asked, apparently conflicted. “Yeah, that’s the right thing to do!” I replied. Her mom came down the stairs. “Hi mom!” she greeted. “Mom, me and _____ are gonna go upstairs to my room, okay?” The mom replied, “Okay, I’m leaving right now. I’ll be back before midnight.” So we went up and made love. You know what? I found out she was a virgin. “Fuck, how come you’re a virgin?” I exclaimed. “So now you know, okay?” she said. “So I’m the lucky guy!” I exulted. “Yes, you are the lucky guy,” she replied.

Circumcision

Satanas homeboys said that being circumcised (“tule” in Tagalog) is a distinctive mark of manhood. They touted circumcision as a practice that differentiated them from the Mexicans, who they derisively mocked as being “supot” (uncircumcised). Already circumcised, the older homeboys took it as their responsibility to circumcise the younger ones. Peer pressure was brought to bear by teasing and mocking the uncircumcised as “supot!” One afternoon at the hang out, a veterano singled out _____: Look at him, we circumcised him but we left too much ah....skin, see? We pulled the foreskin over the head and then cut it with a pair of scissors (“gunting”)” (_____ displayed his _____ as everyone laughed.) How did you know he was “supot?” I asked. “Because

when we take a leak, we take a leak in one toilet bowl and there's someone, he's waiting, standing in someone's back, we call him, come here, take a leak with us. Then we look at each other's _____, the fuck....(laughter) you got a helmet! And then we go outside, we tell the homeboys, hey man, supot! (more laughter.) On another occasion after all night partying, Shortie, a non-Filipino homeboy, lay dead drunk on a couch. Seeing that his fly was partly unzipped, a few homeboys fully unzipped him and announced with much laughter, "supot!, supot!"

Pinoy Pride As Ideology

In the course of doing fieldwork, nothing intrigued and fascinated me more than the sight of the phrase "Pinoy Pride" tattooed across the bellies of some homeboys. At one of the more popular hang outs, the same phrase was written in bold letters at the top the wall filled with posters depicting terror and wickedness. I was reminded that decades back, youthful men in the fields of California had used the colloquial "Pinoy" as a term of reference and symbol of Filipino identity. The word "Pinoy" is slang for "Pilipino," used by pioneering Filipino laborers of the 1930s to refer to each other. The term, therefore, is laden with highly emotional and political meanings: by appropriating it, Satanas gang members established a symbolic connection with the pioneering Filipino immigrants and their experience in America.

No matter how "bad" and "deviant" they were, the Satanas had a cultural ideological system, with "Pinoy Pride" at its core. Although unwritten, and members did not consciously refer to an "ideology" of some kind, Pinoy Pride was expressed and

identifiable through anecdotes, gang jokes and humor, ordinary gang talk, body language, gestures, and through symbolisms expressed in dress code, graffiti, language, and tattoos. It was through ideological and symbolic expressions that one's identity as a Satanas Filipino gang member was constructed and defined.

When asked to differentiate between Pinoys and Latinos, a group of homeboys chorused, "We eat rice, they eat beans!" With much laughter Solow said,

The dressing, like that, we can tell between a Filipino and a Mexican. And the look. You can tell a beaner, a wetback....we look fucking neat, a Filipino cholo. Put a Filipino and a Mexican together and you'll see. How they're talking...plus, the Filipino, you'll gonna see how they put their tattoos. You think the Chicano has tattoo on their here? No, not their fingers on the middle....In our gang, we take care of the homeboys. We keep them. They (the Mexicans) leave them out in the streets. We don't leave them out in the street like fucking baseheads out there, man. We talk to them, 'Hey man, straighten out,' you know. Put them on the hotseat.

Satanas viewed the Filipino as refined and good-mannered, one who is respectful and worthy of respect. Titan declared that "The Filipino is not like a dog" ("hindi aso ang Pilipino"; Filipinos consider ill-mannered or disrespectful people as being like dogs). The homeboys claimed that unlike Mexicans, they did not kill each other over women. If Filipinos are better at gangbanging and doing other crazy things, the STS always attributed it to the fact that they do things in the "Filipino style." Even hated rival Filipino gangs (whom the Satanas viewed as not as tough as them) were characterized as being smarter than Mexicans. One homeboy said, "So you know how the Filipinos are? They're smarter. They rather stay home and let someone do the thing like that. So they're too scared to go jump; those Mexicans, they're all in and out of jail like that, so they make the Mexicans do all the gangbanging, tagging, all that shit."

The homeboys viewed the Pinoy as a tough and courageous fighter. At one big party I attended, a group of pee wees were listening to a veterano giving valuable insights on the Filipino: “Do you guys know why the .45 caliber revolver was invented?” he asked. He then went on to narrate that during the turn of the 20th century, when the Americans were trying to pacify the countrysides, they found out that they could not put away Filipino Muslim fighters armed with sharp machetes and other bladed weapons. Even as they were heavily fired upon, the Pinoy muslim fighters refused to fall: they kept charging at the enemy. The Americans, therefore, were forced to invent a more powerful handgun capable of downing the brave Filipino fighters.

Symbolic Expressions of Identity

Dress and Hairstyles. The Satanas heavily borrowed elements of the Chicano “Cholo” tradition. These elements, however, had been creatively modified and reinterpreted, such that STS homeboys referred to themselves as “Pinoy Cholos.” The veteranos of the 1970s were not as choloed out as the homeboys and batches of the 1980s. They wore Levi’s jeans and t-shirts much like the popular dress style of Manila’s hippe-style culture of the early 1970s. Some of them preferred wearing heavily-starched khakis—with the creases well pressed out. This kind of khaki outfit was commonly used by pioneering **manongs** of the 1930s as well as those of the 1950s. To many veteranos of the 1970s, wearing khaki was a symbolic expression of their unity with the pioneering traditions of the early Filipinos in California.

One second generation homeboy whose father once worked in the fields of the Central Valley believed that the characteristic oversized look of Cholo dress style was originated by the early Filipino farm workers. "I heard there was a joke about Filipinos being very short people," he said. "So instead of buying clothes that fit them, they had to make do with oversized work clothes; they wore them up high, 'cause they didn't want pants dragging on the floor or shirts untucked. It couldn't work that way, so they had to basically look like a cholo. Basically, they had to pull it up, jack it down and drape it over the pants."

In the 1980s through the 1990s the homeboys had become distinctly choloed out. Satanas preferred oversized baggy pants (usually black as night or at least dark in color), white t-shirts, and pendletons. The more muscular homeboys often wore tank tops to display their bulging muscles. Unlike Chicano cholos, however, who preferred wearing polished, pointed leather shoes (and for casual wear, Converse and Adidas), the Satanas wore white or black Vans or Kung Fu light shoes. Vans were especially favored because they were easy to run with, as are Nike Cortez (remember, the boys had to do a lot of running in the streets). White vans made the wearer look "hard," because they contrast dramatically with black baggies.

For parties, they would wear blue Levi's jeans (with slit on the middle, unlike Cholos who slit their jeans on the side), white t-shirts, and an army jacket. For funerals of slain homeboys, they would wear either black or white sweaters with the words "In Loving Memory Of" or "R.I.P>" inscribed in black, and their placas in small letters on

the upper left side of the chest. They would sometimes come with red bandanas bearing the “STS” monogram on one corner.

The Cholo “pampador” hairstyle—short but heavily sprayed or jelled and combed backwards with a rat-tail at the back of the head, or the “kalbo” (bald look) with rat tail were the preferred Satanas hairstyles. According to the Satanas veteranos, the style they wore was the long-haired “Jefrox” style which was then popular in Manila during the turbulent early 1970s. “Jefrox” was the Filipino hippie, drug culture style popularized by the Juan de la Cruz rock band of that era.

Tattoos and Body Markings. A dramatic expression of identity, tattoos are an extension of wall graffiti. In contrast to other ethnic gangs, Filipino gangs were considered by the police as distinct for being tattooed more extensively. The ultimate significance of the tattoo was that it signified the individual’s intention to remain a Satanas for life, since a tattoo—once inscribed on the skin—remains indelible.

Homeboys of the 1970s had a basic tattoo mark of three small dots forming a triangle on the left middle finger. Late 1980s batches began to display heavier tattooing; this development was related to the fact that more homeboys got into jail and became exposed to tattooing traditions there. When they got out, they became role models to the pee wees, who thought that one looked “bigger and badder” by having more conspicuous tattoos and body markings.

Satanas homeboys all carried body markings of some kind, but they varied in degree of tattoo-ization. Some simply refused to be “overdecorated” (as one put it), and

did everything to avoid being pressured into getting more tattoos, which were often located on the back, chest, abdomen, fingers, and lower legs. Across the upper back, some preferred to have “Satanas” inscribed in auld English letter type. Or the initials STS could be seen in the biceps, with a Devil’s three-pronged pitch fork underneath it. Others reflected greater creativity by having the likeness of the Devil tattooed on the lower leg calf area; quite a number of homeboys had “Pinoy Pride” tattooed across their bellies in huge letters.

Tattooing was usually performed by homeboys who learned the art in jail. Home-made paraphernalia and Indian ink were used. The process was a painful and thus memorable one, and a homeboy forever remembers his buddy who did the tattooing on him. Drinking several rounds of beer or some hard liquor was done about an hour or two before the procedure. The inscription of the full Satan as letters on the upper back usually took two sessions of roughly three hours each. Sometimes a homeboy would have the name of a woman tattooed in his chest, to the left of his heart. The name, encased in a heart-shaped drawing, was often that of his mother, wife, or girlfriend. Placing the name close to the heart was a deeply moving expression of love and affection.

The burn mark caused by lighted cigarettes at initiation time was perhaps the body mark most associated with Satan as. Found on the left forearm, effort was made to make the burn mark as big and conspicuous as possible, so that the homeboy could be easily identified even from afar. A big and highly visible burn mark made it harder for a homeboy to rank out or disclaim his STS affiliation.

Placa. The first act signifying an individual's new identity was the adoption of a "placa", a gang nickname or monicker that would stick with him through life; but he retains his original nickname, used in his interactions with the larger society. The recruit chose his own placa, but in many cases the homeboys assign a placa for him. A distinctive physical characteristic was often the basis for naming: thus, "Little Man" was small or short, as "Midget" might be; "Hunk" would be big and well-built. Some homeboys had Tagalog (or Hispanic influenced) nicknames like "Duwende" ("dwarf"), or "Tisoy," which means "mestizo" or light skinned, a person of mixed Filipino and Caucasian background. Other nicknames were based on perceived temperament of the homeboy, such as "Lonely," (always serious or lonesome), "Sparky" (jovial and alive), and "Crazy" (wild, fearless). Still others were nicknamed on the basis of ethnicity like "Chicano" (Mexican-looking) and "Chinito" (Chinese-looking). Duplication of placas was not allowed, in order to ensure the uniqueness of each homeboy's identity. In fact, adoption of placas of departed or slain homeboys was prohibited and viewed as "malas" (bringing bad luck to the adopter of that name).

Graffiti. Satanas wrote graffiti with a style that resembled Latino gang writing. There was no single style or script; each homeboy developed his own style and thus projected his identity through writing. The basic rationale underlying graffiti was to advertise the gang and the individual: to make their presence known. Or in adverse times when they were perceived to be declining as a group, writing was a way of saying "Hey, we're still around! Writers would attempt to place their writings in the most visible spots or places

possible, such as walls along sidewalks, billboards, freeway bridges, and even street signs. Blank, empty walls were most favored for writing. As one homeboy said, “Walls don’t lie, they’re there for everyone to see!”

Homeboys differentiated between tagger’s graffiti and gang graffiti. Taggers were viewed as crews of individuals whose main preoccupation was writing (chiefly spray-painting) their “tags” on walls and other spots. Tagging crews were not considered street gangs (an example then was the famous “Chaka”). Taggers created more beautiful and distinctly artful writings or drawings, according to the STS homeboys. Often, taggers would employ several colors in creating their wall art. In contrast, gang writing tended to be monotone, often rough and amateurish because they were hurriedly done. Under threat of being spotted by police or enemy groups, one could, at most, spend a few seconds spray-writing on the walls. Black and red, the Satanas gang colors, were favored for writing.

As a system of communication, graffiti was used by the gang to signify its supremacy over a place or area. Satanas, for instance, wrote their graffiti all over a neighborhood in the Filipino town area which was recognized by other gangs as the Satanas hood. Satanas, however, had a rather flexible and highly symbolic concept of territorial space, and homeboys were residentially dispersed over a wide area (LA and Orange counties). The homeboys tended to write wherever they lived, bringing them into violent conflict with other gangs.

At times Satanas would venture into enemy territory, cross out the enemy gang’s writing and then write their own STS tags. Crossing out is an offensive act that’s certain

to trigger a chain of counter-crossing outs, often leading to war. Writing in enemy turf was especially risky. One could get shot or beat up by enemy gangs while writing, or get arrested by the police, get jailed or fined. Thus, graffiti-writing forays were usually done in the wee hours of the morning, when the dangers and likelihood of being seen were considerably minimized.

Graffiti was an established mode of inter-gang communication; by looking at a wall filled with graffiti of two contending or warring groups, not only could a homeboy interpret the messages but also trace the historical sequence of the writings and counter-crossing out. In a given wall, for instance, the first writing was usually the biggest—occupying center space. This would be followed by crossing out lines across the original writing, and the enemy writer would then write his own gang's initials plus his placas beside it (e.g. to the left). Upon seeing it, some STS homeboys would cross out the enemy tag and write "STS" beside it, thus triggering a furious round of crossing out that often led to violent conflict.

Sometimes gang writers would employ more creative and subtle ways of communicating their messages. For example, if Satanas wrote "Puro Satanas" on the wall, members of the rival "PR" gang would cross out "Satanas" and the letters "o" and "u" in "Puro," leaving "P" and "r" uncrossed! STS would then retaliate by writing "Puro Satanas" once more and putting "Xs" over the letters P and r while writings were largely confined to gang initials and placas of homeboys, there was no limit to the number of words and letters that one may write. Insulting words and invective were at times

written—a common example being “cacas” (baby shit). Tagalog-speaking homeboys would at times write “tae!” (shit) after crossing out the writings of enemy gangs.

“Satanas” is one of several names by which Filipinos refer to the Devil. While many professed skepticism over the existence of the Devil or Satan himself, the choice of the name was expressive of the gang’s self-image as big and bad, and its aim to spread fear and strike terror among enemy groups. At times a homeboy would draw the likeness of the Devil (with ugly horns) on the wall, or draw a three-pronged pitch fork: short-cut symbols of STS.¹ In one of the homes of the boys, a secular shrine of sorts had been set up in a small room; displayed here were various portrayals and symbols of evil and terror, such as drawings of ugly-looking, beast-like Satans with horns on the head and chin, and woodcarvings of twin Demon faces both baring their fearsome fangs and teeth. At one corner was a rubber Devil fish (sting ray) with its long, barbed tail dangling. But the centerpiece of this bizarre display of Devil symbolism was a colored poster of the Grim Reaper; written all along its borders were “STS” scribbles and placas of homeboys.²

STS graffiti writing would rise above the level of casual tagging when a mural was created to honor a departed homeboy. For instance, a mural honoring _____ represented a unique work of street art depicting a muscular Devil resting his right arm on the cross, his STS-tattooed left arm raised in and clenched in anger, his face showing the rage of grief. To the left of the cross are the letters STS in massive, block letters (block symbolizing tower-like strength). Above the letters were written the words, “big”

and “bad;” behind the Devil is a second Devil while the placas of grieving homeboys are written to the right.

Language and Talk. Most Satanas homeboys spoke Tagalog, but actual talk in the interaction among Philippine-born, second generation, and those of other ethnicities reflected a curious blending of Cholo/Hispanic, African American and English slang, and street language of Manila. Every pee wee learned how to “talk shit,” as it was the way a “big and bad” gangster projected a tough image. Even when speaking in Tagalog, STS members would often end a statement with “man!” in much the same tone as Black street people would say it (example: “Ang ganda, man!” which means, “How Beautiful, man!”

Tagalog street words such as “parak” ((police), “bato” (ice), “bebot” (girl), “kantot” (fuck), “basag” (stoned), “erpat” (father), “siyota” (girlfriend), “sikat” (famous) and “chikot” (car) among many other words, had entered the vocabulary of the gang. Even non-Tagalog speakers learned to use cuss words like “putang ina mo!” (your mother’s a whore) or “gago!” (bad guy). Everyone, especially the US-born or non-Filipino member, had to know the cuss words or invective so that they’d know if they were being cursed by rival Filipino gangsters.

Body Language and Handsigns. Satanas homeboys projected their identity through what Haviland (1980) has called a kinetic system of “postures, facial expressions, and bodily motions which convey messages.” “Standing tall” and “walking proud” are kinetic expressions they learned from exposure to the larger Cholo influence in the Los

Angeles street world, as well as from internal socialization within the gang. Once acquired, a homeboy retained these bodily expressions for life—even when he has moved on and is no longer active in the group. Older homeboys said that they could tell whether a person had been a gang member or not—by the way he stood, walked, and looked. Inca cited the following case:

Rudy is married now. He has a wife, his wife is totally aware of gangs, but she's still naïve about it. She married my homeboy_____. She knew he was from the gang but.....the feeling that when he gets together with us, he starts walking a different way. He starts becoming a homeboy again. You can get a kid out of a neighborhood, but you can never get the neighborhood out of the kid. You may change your ways, but you will always be a homeboy. When Rudy walks with his wife, it's okay. But when he's together with his homeboys, up forward, hard please, he starts. I'm going, 'what are you doing, man?' He goes--'what am I....' He doesn't even know it! But see, he knows that part of his life. He doesn't know he's walking that way, but still remembers what he's been through. It's part of what he believes in.

Standing tall and proud with the chin raised, the head slightly drawn backwards, knees slightly apart with one foot drawn a few inches from the other at about 45 degrees angle; sometimes the fists are tightly clenched and drawn together just below the belt buckle, or the hands hang loosely on the sides: this what they called a "stance of defiance." "When you stand in this proud manner, you convey the message that you're ready to just charge or do anything: ready to talk, ready to fight, or whatever," said Inca. The stance of defiance, and the attitude which it conveyed, was described as a "shield" or "armor" of sorts:

The way we stand, the way we look, is armor. Like in ancient days. When we open our hands, it's like, "come on!" you know. In looking, you don't take your eyes away, you don't flinch, you don't back down, you just look at the guy in the eyes. That's how you tell how much you have over somebody else. In other words, you can scare a person by looking at him. And I really take it as an insult when somebody looks at me...Even if you're not a gang member, as a man, if

someone were to stare at you in a certain way, you question why. But with us, I've seen as a question, what's the reasons for looking at me that way. Either you want to fight....I mean, there's some reasons to it. So you stand in aproud manner. Normally, people stand like this, kinda weak, right? (He demonstrates the conventional way of standing.) But when you stand like this, you're saying, hey, I'm right here. Whatever you want. You're not backing down from a fight, you're not running away from a fight, and you're not actually calling the guy out. It's the way the other guy perceives it. A lot of guys learn that from being in a gang. Did you notice that when cars come by, I'm standing like this (stands proud)? I will stand proud and look...you listen to the sound of the car, you watch. That's something that is trained in us. I'm standing here and presenting my persona to you, and if I see you bow your head, I know that you're weak. You don't stand for nothing. You stand for yourself, for what you believe in.

Gang photographs are of great significance in the way they reflect the "Pinoy Pride" conveyed through kinesic gestures and motions. When homeboys posed for pictures, they wanted to look mean and defiant, to convey the image of what Professor Katz (1988) calls "bad asses" and "street elites." Before the shots were taken, some homeboys would hurriedly put on their dark glasses and Al Capone hats. Others would take off their shirts and expose the tattoos on their bellies; still others, already wearing tank tops that reveal their bulging biceps, would strike a pose that projects strength and power (many were into body building regimens). Some would stuff an unlighted cigarette in the mouth, in much the same way that Italian gangsters chomp cigars. And just before the photographer presses the shutter, scores of hands would be raised as handsigns were flashed.

The Satanas handsign system looks similar to the one used by deaf and mute persons. One favorite type of pose for photographs had homeboys standing in a line and forming, via handsigns, the letters "STS" or the full "SATANAS."³ Handsigns are a vital instrument in inter-gang communication, especially in public places when encounters

between groups occur. When Satanas would cross paths with unidentified gang members or enemies, they would verbally hit them up. However, if these individuals were not within verbal distance, they would flash the well-known Satanas pitch fork handsign. Another common situation wherein handsigns were flashed was when a group of boys was cruising rather slowly and then they spotted a group of unidentified gang members by the street or mall entrance. If the other group was ready to stand and fight, they would usually flash back their own handsigns: an act of defiance intended to project “Pinoy Pride” and challenge the enemy to fight.

Synthesis

According to Professor Katz and Jackson-Jacobs,

Violence makes youth groups into gangs. Young people associate in many different social forms. Violence is a critical “tipping point” for turning peer groups into gangs. Gangs do not make groups violent; violence make groups into gangs. It may well be that violence causes gangs much more powerfully than gangs cause violence. A few short-lived acts of violence can generate gangs that live over generations. Thus the causal impact of violence in constructing gangs is often far greater in temporal reach than the impact of gangs on violence.”(2004:108).

Violent Cholo actions led to the formation of Satanas. As detailed in a previous chapter, Satanas started out as a conventional barkada and car club that would meet regularly on weekends, to display their cars and show off the latest accessories and improvements. They were forced to fight back as Cholos in the area constantly provoked and harassed them.

Encounter with hostile Cholos heightened their sense of Filipino-ness and generated group solidarity and Filipino Pride. At the same time, however, the colorful style of Cholo dress, hair, graffiti, gestures and kinesic motions greatly appealed to the aesthetic sensibilities of the youthful Filipino men; they proceeded to construct a hybrid persona that incorporated these Cholo stylistic elements. Yet the Satanas often resorted to “ascribing values to their own ethnic group” (Waters 1994), stereotyping the Latinos and drawing contrasts that showed the superiority of Filipinos (being smarter, cleaner and more hygienic, etc.)

Within the Filipino American youth scene, Satanas were feared for their toughness and fighting prowess—honed by years of fighting with hostile Latino gangs. Filipino “gang” groups in the suburbs and bedroom communities of Los Angeles were perceived as not as tough and savvy - also known for engaging in “bad” behavior but being derisively dismissed by Satanas as “party goers” and “mama’s boys” (spoiled, rich) who were “better in chasing girls than fighting”. Boasting about sexual conquests and victories in combat, hurling insults at enemies and using profane or coarse language are not the mark of gentle manhood (see Garn 2000); but in a predominantly Latino neighborhood where the Cholos were lords of the streets and within the group itself, such practices were indicative of manly status.

Crime tends to be seen as a resource utilized by gangs in inner cities for constructing aggressive masculinities (see Messerschmidt 1993). This assertion would seem to apply to the Satanas, particularly with regards to fighting behavior and warfare that at times resulted in injury or death to enemies. There are, however, aspects of

behavior that leads me to think that not all violence engaged in by the Satanas must be considered “criminal violence.” In this regard, historian Carolyn Conley’s study of “recreational violence” in late 19th century Ireland (Conley 1999) is illuminating; she came upon cultural patterns of violence that did not stem from poverty or adverse social conditions—rather, people “enjoyed fighting as a sometimes lethal, but rarely malicious form of entertainment” (p. 17). Similarly, Hollan and Wellenkamp (1994:121) document kickfighting among the Toradja of Sulawesi as a form of recreational violence engaged in by village men; the sport was encouraged and even considered exciting and enjoyable. The Satanas “one-on-one” fair fight, motivated by whimsical “tripping” on another homeboy and fighting “for the fun of it” appears to be a form of “recreational violence” engaged in by bored boys who had nothing else exciting to do. Even the brawls that would spontaneously erupt in parties, and the weekend gangbanging forays into enemy lairs provided a sense of suspense and excitement and had a carnival air about it. “Rambolan” or “rumbling,” pre-arranged mass fighting that harks back to fraternity wars in the Philippines, likewise reflected a recreational air about it. Indigenous notions of Filipino macho (“pagkalalaki”) indicated by heavy drinking and womanizing (“babaero”) likewise served as resources for constructing an aggressive Pinoy masculinity. Tattooing can perhaps be viewed as a revival of indigenous practice; from historical records we learn that the early Filipinos were heavily tattooed (see Zaide 1957). Of great interest is the perpetuation of circumcision as a physical and symbolic mark of manhood, and the way Satanas homeboys used the “supot” (uncircumcised) label to pressure younger homeboys (including the non-Filipinos) to conform.

VI. THE YOUTH SAVERS: PROCESSING AND MANAGING TROUBLESOME KIDS

As part of a general movement to address problems and issues confronting the growing immigrant population, youth saving in the Filipino American community of Los Angeles was inspired by the African American, Chicano, and Asian American movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. “Youth savers” refers to a group of pioneering Filipino American activists and succeeding cohorts that sought to address youth problems arising from immigration and adjustment to social conditions in America.

Touched by the wave of Asian American activism that spurred involvement in communities and gave rise to ethnic studies programs, the youth savers took it upon themselves to draw attention and find solutions to perceived educational, social, and economic problems faced by youth such as dropping out, early marriages and divorces, drugs, and a crisis of ethnic identity. But it was the specter of youths turning into gang members that apparently worried the youth savers the most—a concern that galvanized them into concerted action and led to the establishment of a social service agency dedicated to saving Filipino American youths from the ravages of what they saw as a dreaded “gang plague” that threatened to turn Los Angeles into the largest “gangland” in the USA.

An equally strong impetus for the establishment of such a youth saving and community empowering institution was the drive for self-determination fueled by “Filipino Pride.” “The Civil Rights movement brought services to the people through the War on Poverty, but in these general programs, specific issues of minorities like Asian

Americans were not addressed, “ said Royal Morales, doyen of Filipino American community activists. “Services were strictly mainstream, through institutions like United Way and church- based organizations (Catholic and Protestant). There were, by then, some Japanese-led community agencies, but there was a clear indication that we needed specific Filipino services addressing Pilipino issues run by Pilipinos.”

The resolve for self-determination grew stronger with each conference held, each focus group or picnic, and each fledgling volunteer effort exemplified by various community projects undertaken by Filipino American students at UCLA. Finally, a historic two-day conference took place in 1970, in the seclusion of rustic Camp Oakgrove, a retreat camp in the San Bernardino mountains. Participants included community advocates, college students, and concerned parents. The discussions gave rise to the idea of setting up a Pilipino American social service agency, a dream that came to reality with the establishment of Search To Involve Pilipino Americans (SIPA) in 1972.

While it seems clear that the idea of SIPA is a product of group process, Morales identified the following pioneering community advocates as the founding core of SIPA: Helen Brown, Al Mendoza, Joe Abella, and Jeanie (formerly Abella, Joe’s ex-wife). Morales recalls that it was during one of their informal meetings at the basement of the Filipino Christian Church that the acronym “SIPA” was born. This catchy acronym evokes dynamism and energy: in Pilipino, it forms the word for an indigenous game popularly played to this day in the Philippines. In his own words, Morales wrote,¹

With its dynamic identity, SIPA, in Pilipino, means “kick.” Thus the phrase, ‘let’s kick it around.’ Sipa is also a well known, exciting Filipino sport, with the

sipa ball being kicked around and kept in the air, within a circle of players or over a volleyball net, using some of the rules of football, tennis and volleyball. There is also a sipa game where the winner wins through the accumulation of points within a designated period of time between a number of players. The material is usually made of tissue paper that is cut out and fitted into a small washer. Sipa balls are made of strong, young and flexible rattan skins. With six strands, patiently woven together by hand, the ball contains twelve perfect pentagon and twenty perfect triangles. SIPA, then, can be fun, exciting and challenging—it is just beginning to ‘kick around.’

Uncle Roy was a dreamer and a visionary. Thus, in the same document he wrote, SIPA’s “potentialities and its future are unlimited if and when it continues to implement the following:”

Promote and develop deeper awareness of Filipino American ethnic and cultural identity; help provide and make available manpower and planning of worthwhile goals with (if appropriate) other individuals and organizations; promote and identify entry and channels of communications between people and organizations and seek avenues for united efforts and activities; initiate and/or develop projects towards bridging the generational gaps within the Filipino communities; search for and identify resources that meet the needs and problems facing the Filipino American: health, education, employment, welfare, immigration, housing, etc.; promote and respond to youth activities (involvement and participation, leadership and training, exposure, education and enrichment); live, learn and lead in the promotion of better relationship of people regardless of race, creed, or origin.

According to Uncle Roy, the key word in SIPA is INVOLVEMENT: that is, getting Filipino Americans involved in empowering their community. But he quickly added, “Searching for the problems, searching for the issues...money and all that stuff....that was basically our emphasis.” Rattan vine, the material out of which the sipa ball is made, is tough but flexible, making it ideal for kicking. Thus, it made for symbolism of tenacity and flexibility in all actions and activities in pursuit of their goals. It is interesting to note that Uncle Roy and John Estrella designed a three-sided logo

based on the vine-woven pattern of the sipa ball. The symbolism of this SIPA triangle was explained by Uncle Roy thus: “Filipino youth stands inside the triangle, nurtured and protected by community, family, and school. Uncle Roy saw SIPA achieving its goals through “involvement and commitment in humanitarian activities, in and out of the Philippine-American circles, into the vast ‘cultural pluralism’ of this country.” He called for the mobilization and use of “existing facilities, financial resources, and manpower of individuals, organizations and fraternities—public or private.”

Playing Sipa

How did the youth savers perceive the gang problem? What actions did they take, and what activities did they engage in to persuade the community that there was a problem? What type of preventive and interventive programs did they carry out, and what images of gangs and troublesome youths predominated? What early influences and life experiences led them to engage in community activism? Short biographies of some of the SIPA founders, former administrators, and counselors will now be presented, in order to shed light on their motivations for engaging in social amelioration and reform, as well as their defense of cultural institutions such as the family, community, and indigenous values.

“Uncle” Royal Morales: Transnational Pilipino American

Since its founding in 1972, scores of community advocates and hundreds more of students and young Filipino Americans in the helping professions (social work and

counseling) have in various times and capacities been involved in SIPA's conception, establishment, and development through its more than thirty years of existence. None, however, figured more actively and visibly in this institution's life than Royal Morales.

An exceedingly warm and friendly person, Uncle Roy with his signature "Ho Chi Minh" goatee and gray bush jacket was a permanent fixture at community events, lecture rooms, and conferences. A community activist who strongly believed in coalescing with other Asian American groups and organizations, Royal Morales was well known to Los Angeles city and state officials and politicians. He lived a frugal and simple life, choosing small Filipino and Asian eateries over classy restaurants and tooling around in a beat up yellow automobile.

Royal Morales was born in Los Angeles on May 28, 1932. His father, Silvestre Morales, was a minister from the Philippines who had come to the United States in 1928 to attend the world convention of the Disciples of Christ, a Protestant denomination. Together with thirteen Filipino students then attending California Christian College (now Chapman University), Rev. Morales formed the nucleus of the Filipino Christian Fellowship under the sponsorship of the First Christian Church in downtown Los Angeles. This religious fellowship composed of students and lay leaders was formally organized into the "Filipino Christian Church" in 1933. It functioned as a spiritual and social refuge to Filipinos subjected to intense racial prejudice and discrimination, who were often unwelcome or even turned away at anglo churches.²

Royal was named after an anglo minister, Dr. Royal Dye, a colleague and close friend of his father. Royal was born in L.A.'s Bunker Hill area, where his family lived in

an apartment close to where the Music Center now stands. Hundreds of Filipinos working as house helps, cooks, gardeners, and chauffeurs had turned the Bunker Hill and Civic Center areas into a vibrant Filipino enclave in the 1920s and 1930s. As a little child, Royal grew up in this enclave's environment and vividly remembered the difficulties and deprivations experienced by the pioneer immigrants. Hundreds of Filipino bachelors lived in crowded quarters. When they got paid they'd walk down Bunker Hill and head for the taxi dance halls.

The Great Depression of the 1930s forced his parents to return to their native Ilocos province in northern Philippines. Royal went with them and spent most of his childhood and teenage years there. (This explains why "Uncle Roy" spoke Ilocano and Tagalog fluently and never had a trace of an anglo American accent common among US-born and raised Filipino Americans.) Upon finishing high school he was sent to Hawaii. He wanted to enter the University of Hawaii but he flunked the entrance exams, largely because he had forgotten so much English during his stay in northern Luzon. He came back to Los Angeles where he eventually earned collegiate and graduate degrees from Chapman College and the University of Southern California (AB Sociology, Masters in Social Work).

Royal Morales went on to become an ardent professional social worker, devoting his entire career working in and for the Filipino American community. He assumed many leadership positions such as Harbor Area Director for Neighborhood Association, Project Director of the Asian American Community Mental Health Training Center, and Director of the Asian Pacific Alcohol Program. He was one of the prime movers of the

Pilipino American Networking and Advocacy (PANA), a formidable community group. He was consistent and incessant in the search for problems and issues confronting the community, taking it as a personal responsibility to draw attention to such problems and find solutions to them. “The belief...that the Filipinos got it made in America is a myth,” Uncle Roy declared in reaction to a Los Angeles Times report³ suggesting that Filipinos were generally happy and content with life in America, “For the truth is: their difficulties continue in the realms of education and economics; professional unemployment and under-employment; youth, family, and elderly dysfunction; identity crisis; culture shock, subtle racism, AIDS, and alcohol and drug abuse and misuse.”

Whether the issue was workplace discrimination, minority health, immigration reform, or equity for aging Filipino World War II veterans, Uncle Roy was sure to be in the front lines. He opposed the Marcos dictatorship and participated in mass actions and activities directed against it (curiously, he and Ferdinand Marcos were “kailyan” or town mates from Batac, Ilocos Norte; Royal even became President of “Annac Ti Batac” [Children of Batac], an association that was strongly supportive of Marcos). But he had a special concern for youth. He seemed to be in his best element when working with young people, whether at SIPA or UCLA, where he taught the Pilipino American Experience course for nearly two decades. Many youths who had been part of SIPA programs will never forget how he taught them to make kites in the Filipino style (as Uncle Roy learned in Ilocos during his youth) and how to fly them. Or how he taught them the art of Filipino lantern-making (called “parol”) during Christmas. Even during the mid-1990s when he was busy with other community endeavors, Uncle Roy still found

time to do one-on-one counseling with gang probationers at SIPA, or join drug-free fishing trips for youth clients off San Pedro Harbor.

In 1974 he wrote “Makibaka: the Pilipino American Struggle,” a book that contains his ideas, values, and vision for the community; his most passionate writing dealt with youth problems. He expressed particular concern for second and third generation youths, who, he observed, are

the least known and understood among the younger crop of Americans..Empirical observations of this group suggest that they are physically and psychologically isolated from their parental origins, values and traditions. While there are success stories about them, indications point to more school drop outs, early marriages and divorces. Like their parents, the Pilipino Americans suffered, as they still do, the crisis of identity, and while accepting the theory of assimilation, more than perhaps integration, there are hundreds and one questions (sic) that are yet to be resolved completely in their minds.⁴

Reports of violent incidents involving Filipino American youth deeply bothered Uncle Roy. Thus, for instance, he wrote,⁵ “The shooting incident of a youth in San Francisco at an affair purposely to honor Pilipino American youths underscores the need of directing man-hours of study and work towards understanding and helping the youth....the violence of that nature cannot be ruled out for as long as the problems exist, and for as long as solutions are not provided.” He went on to cite non-social acceptance; low income; low educational attainment; lack of positive self-image which may be traced to lack of encouragement either at home or from schools; absence of proper teaching, counseling, and preparation for higher education and vocational training; lack of skill and understanding of the Pilipino American experience; the lack of cultural and historical identities; and the “ghetto thinking syndrome”⁶ as problems that needed to be addressed.

Morales had much to say about intergenerational conflict and the inherent clash of values between parents and youth, but in his writings it is clear that he lays more blame on the older generation. Thus he wrote,⁷

For all the well-known “virtues” of the Filipinos for social affairs, they fall short in providing the channels of understanding between the young and the adults. What happens really is that in many of the functions, whether baptismal parties, birthday shindigs or simple get-togethers, the elders keep so much to themselves. There is an unwritten law that what is good for the elders is not necessarily good for the young, which in many respects may be so. Take the business of card games or *mahjong*, the national pastime of the Filipinos. The elders will dress down the young for simple curiosity at the games, while they, the elders, will spend hours after hours to themselves in fun while losing a fortune in the process. Communication is shunted and no attempt on the part of the elders is evident except in admonition or some valiant attempt at being nice. ‘Now, there is a guy your age over there. Why don’t you two talk? You’ll find a lot of things in common.’ And they do find a lot of things in common—mostly grievances against their folks.

Uncle Roy noted that “the discord between the young and the adults extends into the areas of dating, courtship, choosing a mate, marriage, and discipline.” One father said to him:⁸ “The young people don’t listen to their elders and have lost respect for their culture. They are easily influenced by their friends and there is too much freedom in this country. They want to be like wayward kids who have no respect for their parents.” But Uncle Roy also wrote that “the young have just as much to say about the elders.” This is what one youngster told him: “We cannot live up to the expectation of our parents...the way of life in the Philippines being different from the way of life here. But they don’t seem to understand that. They don’t understand us, or is it that they refuse to understand us? They think we don’t know anything, but we know more than they think. We want to

know about their past, but they don't tell us anything. We are caught between many cultures, searching for an identity in a confused historical background."

Morales' community-based youth-helping endeavors found a perfect extension and complement in the classroom, specifically at UCLA, where he taught the Pilipino American Experience course for nearly two decades. He traced the beginnings of his involvement in Pilipino American Studies to a conference held at UCLA in the early 1970s. Teachers, students, social service workers and community folk attended this conference called "Asians Coming Together" (ACT I). "For me, ACT I was the beginning of ethnic awareness and interaction, the turning point of my lasting association with the minority movement," Uncle Roy declared. He continued:

Deeply touched.....I woke up from my slumber and began the search for history, roots and cultural consciousness. Immediately following the UCLA conference, the Filipino Far West Convention was held in Seattle. The agenda included discussion of ethnic studies, activism, youth and elderly problems and community programs. The convention laid the groundwork for united and collective efforts. Through speeches, workshops, skits, songs and poetry emerged the moods of Pilipino Americans—our tears, laughter and anger. Soon the noisy rhetoric shifted to community-oriented projects as students and community people joined in a hand clasp, a symbolic gesture of the movement.⁹

The 1980s was a rough time for minorities, the poor, and ethnic studies, due to the Reaganite conservative turn. Asian American Studies and other minority programs were threatened with greatly reduced funding, if not outright dismantling. Asian American communities like Filipino Americans had already reached parity with the whites and no longer needed affirmative action, so ran the conservative argument. One of the endangered courses was the Pilipino American Experience class. Students and

community activists held rallies in support of the course—ultimately pressuring the UCLA administration to retain it. During this turbulent period, Morales was invited by the UCLA Asian American Studies Center to teach this class. “Called upon as a lecturer, I took on the challenge, knowing full well that my background and training were in social work, human service and community organizing, rather than in academia,” he wrote. “Let it be said, however, that my personal experiences and involvement in the community provided the ‘community credibility’ to teach the course.”¹⁰

Morales strongly lamented the community’s lack of knowledge of the Pilipino American experience. In strong language, he laid the blame for the “mis-education” of the youth on the American educational system. He said, “It is not surprising that many are basically uninformed and mis-educated. While there is the lag in their knowledge, fortunately they have a strong desire to learn and understand their history and ethnic identity. It is easy to blame the students for their mis-education. However, the blame rests with the educational system.”¹¹

He also took to task Filipino parents, who “have not taken an active role in teaching their children their cultural values and historical roots.” He said, “They have taken their history for granted. Because of their economic struggles, they have abdicated their teaching role to the school system. We know that schools by themselves are ill-prepared to educate students. When asked to describe what they learned in school about their history, students respond in no uncertain terms about the lack of significant instruction. The fact is that there are few textbooks that contain more than a paragraph or two on Pilipino Americans.”¹²

Indeed, when devising his course syllabus and class reader, Uncle Roy was handicapped by the preponderance of articles on the “home” country and the dearth of writing on the Pilipino experience in America. Through the years, however, he tried to offset this problem by encouraging students to engage in fieldwork in the community—as a way of earning extra credits. Some students wrote research papers on community problems and issues by going to social service agencies like SIPA and FASGI. Uncle Roy pointed out that “much can be learned from the seniors and youth—their lifestyles, experiences, problems and concerns.” One of the more memorable features of Uncle Roy’s class were the fieldtrips to the Agbayani Village Retirement Home in Delano. This two-day out of town excursion enabled students to meet the Manongs (old time farm workers whom Uncle Roy called “living testaments”) and listen to their narrations of the struggles and difficulties they encountered, as well as their aspirations for the future.

But unquestionably the most interesting feature of Uncle Roy’s class was the customary tour of old Pilipino Town in downtown Los Angeles, usually held during the middle of the quarter. The tour would often start at the landmark Filipino heritage mural on Beverly Boulevard and Union Ave, to the nearby Filipino Christian Church, then down south Temple towards the corner of Glendale Boulevard—where he’d point to spots where small Filipino shops were located during the 1930s and 1940s. From there, the tour would proceed to the civic center near the Little Tokyo area, where taxi dance halls once stood (usually the highlight of the tour to many boys regaled by stories of pioneer Pinoy men finding fun and relaxation in these honky tonks). A quick drive up

Bunker Hill and back to Temple Street towards the FACLA compound would end the tour.

“I gained my Filipino identity in his class,” said Daniel Gumarang, a former student who grew up among Latinos in Los Angeles. “I learned not to be ashamed of my Filipino heritage but to be proud of it.”¹³ Paying tribute to Morales, Don Nakanishi (Director of the UCLA Asian American Studies Center) called him “a national living treasure who has influenced literally thousands of Filipino American students to be of service not only to the Filipino American community but to make America a better place.”

Royal F. Morales passed away on January 23, 2001. He was 69, “relatively young to die” by today’s standards. But his life of service to fellowmen was fully lived, and a grateful community expressed its gratitude and respect as throngs of colleagues, former students, and former SIPA gang counselees came for the viewing at the Inglewood Mortuary on Sunday afternoon, January 28, 2001. The following day (January 29th), mourners packed the Filipino Christian Church at 301 N. Union Avenue for a funeral service filled with moving tributes from colleagues, friends and family. Past noon, Uncle Roy was laid to rest at the Inglewood Park Cemetery.

“Auntie” Helen Brown

Now in her nineties and confined to a retirement home, Helen Agcaoili Summers Brown makes rare appearances at major community events. “Auntie Helen,” as she is

fondly called, was actively involved in community activities such as workshops and seminars on bilingual education, symposia on Filipino folk epics, and poetry readings. She is the highly regarded founder of the Filipino American Library (formerly PARRAL, or “Pilipino American Reading Room and Library”).

Less known is the fact that she’s one of the founders of SIPA, which in its early years she sheltered and nurtured at the basement of the Filipino Christian Church. Truly committed to the empowerment of Filipino American youth, Helen Brown was a strong advocate of affirmative action in the Los Angeles Unified School District, often appearing before its board to recommend ways of improving programs and services for Filipino American children, teachers, and other employees. She taught in Los Angeles public schools for 33 years.

A woman apparently Caucasian, with hardly any physical trace of her Filipino heritage, Brown is unquestionably a Filipino who passionately promoted Filipino American identity and spoke forcefully in support of many other community concerns. She was born in Manila, Philippines on May 16, 1915. Her father, George Robert Summers, was a “Thomasite” (an American teacher who went on the troop ship USS Thomas in the early 1900s) whose pioneer work gave birth to the public school system in Ilocos Norte. Summers married one of his pupils, Trinidad Agcaoili, an Ilocana and daughter of Katipunero and first governor of Ilocos Norte, Julio Agcaoili.

Brown and her siblings attended a school for anglo American children in Manila, and was thus relatively isolated from the indigenous social world. But come summer, the family would leave the anglo enclave and drive north to Laoag, Ilocos Norte, where

they'd stay from March to June. Auntie Helen considers these annual vacations as significant, shaping experiences in her life. "I loved attending fiestas filled with native food, dances, and songs," she said. "Being in Laoag with my family and relatives gave me a valuable immersion in Filipino culture; I think that's how I acquired basic Filipino values."¹⁴

After graduating from high school her family moved back to America in 1929. She entered Pasadena Junior College and earned an associate's degree in arts with honors. She was one of the first Filipinas to graduate from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where she obtained a master's in education with honors in 1939. She was inducted into Pi Lambda Theta, the national women's honor educational society. Her years in college and graduate school were a time of awakening to the realities of racial prejudice directed against mixed bloods—even though her Caucasian features shielded her from over racial discrimination. She was often asked, "Where are you from?" When she replied, "from the Philippines," she got puzzled looks and was asked, "Where's the Philippines?" "How did you learn English?" Having no support from other Filipinos and Asians, she felt genuinely isolated.

"I stopped identifying with Filipinos and denied that I was from the Philippines," Auntie Helen said candidly. "I passed myself as a Hawaiian so I would be accepted by the whites." Ironically, despite her Caucasian features, she was still legally defined as a person of "mixed blood." She and her husband had to obtain a marriage license outside of California due to harsh anti-miscegenation laws.

The strong currents of ethnic pride that swept across African American and Asian American communities during the 1960s awakened Brown's suppressed Filipino consciousness. As her work at the Los Angeles Unified School District brought her into increasing contact with growing numbers of Filipino schoolchildren (who came with the post-1965 immigrant wave of mostly Philippine professionals), she was reminded of her own difficult search for ethnic identity when she first came to America. She began actively lobbying for the recognition of special needs of the largely immigrant Filipino students and became a self-appointed guardian of the welfare of other Filipino teachers and workers who were starting to get hired. In organizing and leading the Filipino American Educators Association, Brown endeavored to orient the community on the benefits of a Filipino bilingual program. Doubling as a social worker, she also worked with troubled Asian and Filipino youths.

Uncle Roy Morales and Auntie Helen Brown inspired many other younger Filipino Americans to serve the community; SIPA provided a space within which the ideology of community empowerment was given concrete expression through serving youth and their families. Scores of bright and promising Filipino Americans devoted many of their youthful years through service at SIPA. This section features a few SIPA "alumni" who played significant roles in steering the institution and running the youth programs through the difficult and turbulent gang phase: Liza Javier and Meg Thornton, who both served as directors in the 1980s through early 1990s and Isaias Paja and Lisa Zarri, who served as youth counselors.

Now a practising medical doctor, Isaias made his mark as a caring and compassionate youth advocate during his four-year stint at SIPA. He immigrated with his family in 1977; they settled in Los Angeles where he attended Virgil and Belmont. During this time he came into contact with Filipino gangs, groups he described as “Filipino boys who wanted to belong, need protection, or simply joined because older brothers had been involved with the group.” Most of them were like family to him: he hung out with them, helped with homework, and sometimes with personal problems. He wasn’t coerced into joining a gang. They said, “let’s leave him alone...let him decide.” So he became like an “honorary member.” They protected him, even if he wasn’t a part of it. “We hang out, played basketball, did sports, but I was not in the gang,” Isaias declared.

Isaias says that he attended lots of parties and dances in the late 1970s to 1982, even witnessing a gang initiation ritual at one of them. He noted that some Filipino youths did not seem proud of their ethnic identity. Even some of his friends denied that they were Filipino. “This bothered me a lot,” he said. “They were passing themselves off as Hawaiians.” Graduating from high school Isaias went on to UCLA. There he saw an ad about a summer job at the Central City Action Committee—as a youth outreach counselor, under Mary Hayashi. At that time SIPA was in hibernation.

Asked what his approach was to gang members, Isaias said, “First, you want to have them trust you...And that’s the most difficult thing...cause...that’s why I decided to dress up like the way they did. Because if I dressed up in a suit..or you know, yuppie, they’ll think I might be an informant from the LAPD..And so I dressed up like one of

them, talked their language....wore Chinese kung fu shoes, baggies, oversized shirt...And I used the people that they know are already part of the program. Like I used my brothers and sisters, get to know their friends, start from there. Word of mouth, they heard about us. Then they begin to trust us, and eventually, get to talk one on one.” Allen Terre, a former SIPA youth counselor and now nurse practitioner, praised “Kuya” Isaias for being caring and understanding: “He actually went to my house and talked to my mom and said, you know...this is what we do...and this and that...and my mom trusted him. And the homeboys trusted him too. I was amazed how he could persuade the guys to play basketball at Elysian Park. When he said, let’s go, everyone would get into the car and go. I don’t know how he did it, but he did it.”

No other staff member at SIPA endeared himself more to youth clients than Isaias. He was virtually on 24/7 duty. “There’d been times when my parents would tell me, you have to make a choice—your family or your work....because it’s consuming you!” he said. “The kids would hang out at my house after work, after we close. If they run away, they go straight to my house! One time I got a call from this girl who just had a baby, she had a big fight with her mom, and so the mom kicked her and her baby out. In the middle of the night around Christmas time. And so, I went to pick them up, and you know they found a place to stay for the night. But the whole time I was talking to her on the phone.”

Coming to the rescue of youth clients was commonplace, but one incident proved to be life-changing for him. “A teenaged male client came running to SIPA, he was holding his arm. He said, ‘I got cut.’ I looked and saw that there was a big cut. The bone

in his arm was virtually exposed. I didn't know anything about medicine so...this guy's bleeding, I called 911....I drove to the nearest big hospital, they denied treatment because there was no paper work, so okay we went to this clinic. They said no, we don't do this kind of thing here. You have to take him to the hospital. So he and I were talking while I was driving...he said, you know, maybe you should talk to my parents, because you know, they have insurance under my name...and that was the time he was a runaway too...and so...I went there, explained to them what happened, and so his mom took him to the hospital because they have insurance. And that's the whole idea of taking this kid and seeing him get refused medical treatment because he didn't have paperwork or no insurance. To me, I thought, something needs to be done about that...So I decided to go into medicine. I was kind of like....biopsychology major. My parents were pressuring me into medicine but I didn't really like it much. But after that experience, I just thought, you know, something's got to be done. You're either part of the problem or find a solution. That's when I decided to quit SIPA and go to medical school," Isaias said.

Liza Javier, now a practising lawyer (UCLA Law), became SIPA Director after the few years (late 1970s to early 1980s) that SIPA went into hibernation. She came to the USA at a very young age (she's 1.5 generation) with her parents and other siblings. Liza said that she had always heard about SIPA, even as a youth growing up in Los Angeles. "I was kind of born in the Filipino Town area, for some reason...I think I started hearing more about it when I was in college at Loyola Marymount. Kevin Acebo was one of my mentors there, and he was actually on staff at SIPA. There were actually

two or three friends who were on staff at SIPA, back in the seventies: Kevin, Vivian Viscarra, and Marlene Gunio,” she recalled. She first met Uncle Al (Al Mendoza) and Uncle Roy (Royal Morales) in High School, when she received an award through the Optimists. She worked with the Asian Pacific high blood pressure task force before connecting with SIPA. (More about Liza in succeeding sections of this chapter.)

Lisa Zarri was barely five years old when she came to America with her parents. Now a practising nurse, she said that social work was her first choice because of her SIPA experience. “I kind of grew up at SIPA, so to speak. I learned a lot about myself, I became aware of my identity and things like that,” she declared. “I started there as a youth worker, and then I participated in activities. When I graduated from high school, there was a job opening there. I applied and got the job (I was hired on April 1992). My first encounter with SIPA was in 1985 or 86. I was about 14 years old, I got there through a job training program...They were supposed to train me for clerical skills, for the real world. I learned a lot there...Besides the clerical...filing, office work, phone etiquette, how to write response letters, etc. But I think the most valuable thing I learned while I was there was about Filipinos....I wasn’t really that aware of it because I grew up in another side of town and I had a lot of different friends—Latinos, Blacks...I had a few Filipino friends, and I kind of relished in being Filipino hey, you’re Filipino too but...nothing about history and tradition, cultural values and heritage.”

Now director for community outreach at the UCLA Asian American Studies Center, Meg served as SIPA's director, from 1989 to '92. She's second generation, born to Filipino immigrant parents from San Diego. Meg said that she'd always been doing community work, even while in San Diego. After finishing college (UC San Diego) she moved to L.A. and worked at the Asian American Drug Abuse Program. She asked the Director where the Pilipino community is in L.A., and she was referred to Uncle Roy and Lisa Javier at SIPA. To her delight, she found out that Lisa knew a cousin of hers in San Diego; they immediately struck a friendship that remains close to this day. Lisa told her what SIPA was all about. She was on the SIPA Board before she became Director. Looking back, Meg said, "I think SIPA at that time fulfilled a dream, I guess. Growing up in San Diego where we were a very new community there...track homes in the middle of the Desert...literally no infrastructure, no streets, no lights, no school. We had no community center to go to. And then in college, you know the whole concept of giving back to your community...So working in SIPA was a dream in terms of being able to work in a community organization.dealing with Pilipinos and especially, the Pilipino youth."

At UC San Diego, Meg was a biology major, with a minor in urban planning. She was interested in plants and conservation. But what inspired and nurtured her in community involvement was a Filipino TA (teaching assistant) named Antonio de Castro. Meg said, "At our junior high, having Antonio sparked a lot of us. He was a TA but to us he was a teacher, you know. A lot of us looked to him. He helped us form the first Pilipino student club at school. There were Pilipino clubs at San Diego State and

Southwestern Community College. San Diego State had an Andres Bonifacio chapter of Samahang Pilipino...they would come down to teach us dances, talk to us about martial law in the Philippines...We signed petitions against the blacklisting of Pilipinos ...so there were folks older than us talking about about cultural heritage and contemporary issues. All these sparked our interest in community work.”

Funding, Staffing, and Programming Through the Turbulent Years

Just like in other ventures, a non-profit entity needs money to operate and effectively carry out its activities. From the 1960s struggles of the Blacks, Chicanos, and Asian Americans, SIPA’s pioneering activists discovered a mission and formulated an ideology. And from Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty, they obtained funding that began to address specific Pilipino problems. SIPA’s first youth-focused service program, *Pilipino Youth Services* (PYS), was a federally-funded, locally run program with part-time workers. Under the leadership of SIPA’s first director, Jeanie Abella, PYS “would later embody the essence of SIPA,”¹⁵ offering programs that included counseling, recreational activities, and employment training.

So critical is funding to the life and functioning of a social service agency that SIPA’s history—its ebbs and flows through three decades have been shaped to a large degree by the nature of the fund-seeking process. While federal and other government (local, county) funds have been the main sources of funding, SIPA has also obtained money from private entities—primarily through corporate donations publicly announced and acknowledged during annual fund raising dinners.

SIPA's first location (in 1972) was at the basement of the Filipino Christian Church, corner Union St. and Beverly Blvd. Uncle Roy vividly remembered the early geography of SIPA, in relation to other Pilipino American institutions: "In front of Ongpin (Little Ongpin, a Filipino/Chinese restaurant that was a watering hole for community advocates), there was a SIPA office. Jeanie's (Abella) house was on Union and 3rd. Next to the mural at Beverly Blvd., there was a Pilipino Alumni Association office. We used one of the two rooms at the back. Then SIPA moved, to Beverly near Dillon for a while."

Uncle Roy reminisced on those early 1970s years: "There were recreational activities, cultural dramatizations, and involvement in all kinds of community activities and parades. There was Sunset Junction (an annual gay pride festival), dances, lots of interaction with students, and a lot of role modeling. There was some leadership training, but not very professional, for during the 1970s there was a lot of anti-professionalism throughout the country. Professionalism was being attacked in the sense that you guys (professionals) have been here forever and you've never changed the world. There was a lot of self-help, self-determination. Self-help was a key factor in the war on poverty."

Federal funding not only played a major role in starting SIPA's operations; according to Uncle Roy, the recruitment of Pilipinos for social work has to be linked to SIPA. He said, "There was training programs and government money that enabled us to recruit Pilipino students to go into social work, sociology, probation, community work....They were given stipends...Some worked closely with SIPA to provide social services or be a trainee... Angelina Alpuerto. Rachel Furbeyre both went into social

work...Lillian Fabros. There were a number of Pilipinos. Some of them disappeared, took the money and ran...got their degree, I don't know where they are now. But the training and leadership programs of the 1970s reaped dividends. Many of them stayed and got involved. We had ten years of that, through the Asian American Community mental Health Training Center, through the NIMH. There was some money every year parceled out to USC, UCLA etc. A lot of money to run the programs, part of Affirmative Action."

The end of the (failed) War on Poverty severely impacted SIPA's viability to operate, causing it to go into hibernation in the late 1970s (1978-82). Reminisces Uncle Roy: "When it folded, the equipment ended up at FACLA. The other things went to Joe's house. When that happened, that's when Joe and Jeanie split up. Matter of fact, FACLA wanted SIPA as an extension of its services. When they found out there was no money, they threw away all our books, the cabinets and all that. And so the organization became defunct, but the structure stayed. SIPA was always like a book....you put it in a shelf when nobody's reading it. Then after you read it, you know, share it. That kind of thing. Then you put it back in the shelf....When Joe and Jeanie were running the show in the 1970s, I was into my other activities, we were no longer actively, directly involved. They had their own staff....But Jeanie got burned out..."

Isaias Paja makes special mention of Keith Umemoto, a Japanese American community activist, for keeping SIPA afloat and sparing it from consignment to oblivion. Through Keith's efforts, the "de-structured SIPA" was placed under the administration of

the Central City Action Committee (CCAC), a CBO led by Mary Ann Hayashi. Up to the time of SIPA's restart, it shared the same building and facilities with CCAC.

SIPA's revival in 1982 was spurred by a widely publicized case involving the Satanas. In retaliation for the killing of Yogi, an STS homeboy, STS went on a drive by, killing a member of the Avenues and Mormon missionaries. Seven STS homeboys were incarcerated. A lot of noise was generated about what's going on with the Pilipino youth. Isaias Paja, then working as youth counselor in the CCAC/SIPA collaborative arrangement, recalls that the Avenues and Mormon missionary killings received nightly television reportage for more than a week. He said, "The incident created a wake up call for the Pilipino community...Even in the walls, you could see graffiti, everything in Tagalog, but everyone was in denial. The old Pilipino 'hiya' thing, you know...you sweep it under the rug, na hopefully, it stays there..." Liza Javier remembers attending a meeting of parents, youths, SIPA activists and workers, and others at the Filipino American Community of Los Angeles (FACLA) center. The meeting was convened to discuss the incident and formulate a community response to gang violence. "Shame was expressed. FACLA members said it was shameful for Filipinos to be associated with the murders, to be gang members," she recalls.

"For most of its years in hibernation, SIPA had no paid staff, but a strong group of volunteers and the Board, composed of Keith Umemoto, Mary Ann Hayashi, Roy Morales and Al Mendoza kept it alive," continued Liza. With the War on Poverty funds long dried up, and Reaganomics putting a brake on social services, community advocates worked towards obtaining County money, through then Supervisor Edelman. Funding

from the L.A. County's "AB-90" Fund made it possible for SIPA to resurrect and operate, however tight and meager the budget, from 1982-89. Liza Javier assumed the Directorship. Basically, it was a two-person agency: Liza and Isaias. Their first program: working with 25 kids from supervisorial area I and 2---Hahn's and Edelman's areas covering Los Angeles, Carson, and Long Beach. It was called the "Youth Delinquency Prevention Task Force," said Isaias. "I didn't know about the paper work and all that stuff. I was more involved with the kids while Ate Liza did the management part. We were paid part time but were working full time, from 1982-89." SIPA was still housed at CCAC for three years (the latter served as SIPA's fiscal agent) until it moved to "the Hut" on Temple St. in 1986," right in the heart of Pilipino Town, and right in the center of Filipino American "gangland."

The move was made possible when SIPA became a United Way agency in 1985. This development is considered a turning point in SIPA's history, for United Way acceptance significantly expanded its resources and contributions from both public and private donors. United Way and juvenile justice funding enabled SIPA to deal with "at-risk" youth and run gang prevention and intervention programs. "The Hut" established a physical presence for the youth saving institution within a stone's throw of both the Satanas' hang out and defended neighborhood and the street corner hang out of the Temple gang (TST), one of the oldest L.A. Chicano gangs that was reportedly co-founded by Filipino youths in the early 1930s.

"The Hut" as an office did not offer much. Lisa Zarri remembers it as a "crumbling white hut with two rooms and a grubby kitchen." Teresa Valente recalls how

shocked she was the first time she went there, for a job interview. “I was looking for the house...and I looked to the back of the driveway, and I said, this is a counseling job...that can’t be the house back there...That can’t be a building with an office. They hired me and when I started.on my first day, the house was broken into. And mind you, this is a run-down house, windows were all knocked down...boarded up with ping pong tables, cardboard...whatever you could cover the windows with. We waited the whole day for police officers.” she said.

Liza Javier resigned the directorship in 1988, burned out by having to carry the burdens of youth clients and “the difficulties of getting funding, the whole politics of it.” Meg Thornton, who by then was already on board SIPA as a part-time worker, took over. Under her brief tenure (1988-91) the agency left “The Hut” and transferred to a more presentable two-story building on 3rd street and Parkview. The move became imperative due to the increase in organization staff and budget. SIPA’s funding considerably expanded and stabilized under the leadership of Meg and Board President, Gerald Gubatan, an achievement attributed to their active participation and support of broad-based coalitions with other Asian/Pacific Islander organizations (particularly through the Asian Pacific Planning Council or “APPCON”) and the largely Latino neighborhood.

Through the Asian American Drug Abuse Program (AADAP), SIPA became part of a consortium of Asian American community-based organizations that engaged in a multi-year project to prevent and combat drug dependency among Asian American youths. This project enabled the agency to outreach and deliver services to youth in the Carson/South Bay area, as well as in north Los Angeles (Eagle Rock). Collaborative

youth service efforts with neighboring Hispanic/Latino organizations through the Youth Advocacy Project (YAP) were also achieved during this time period.

Joel F. Jacinto is SIPA's current (and longest-serving) Executive Director, taking over when Meg Thornton left to assume a staff position at UCLA's Asian American Studies Center in 1991. Youth and family services are still maintained, and programs for youth education and youth leadership have been implemented. But SIPA under Joel's watch has diversified and achieved even greater financial expansion and stability. In 1993 he moved SIPA to its current facility at the corner of Temple St. and Robinson; the property is not rented but owned by SIPA. Over the past decade, the agency presented its first strategic development plan and has gone on to build apartments for qualified and deserving Filipino American seniors; SIPA also gained fiscal receivership and administrative support of Festival of Philippine Arts and Culture in 1994, managing it till the end of the 1990s.

Combating the Gang Problem

Concern over youth who were "falling through the cracks" prompted "an institutionalized response to the problems," said Uncle Roy. "Previous to that there was no institution...we relied on the family or on the individual. Family alone cannot address societal problems, it's getting more complicated. And family and individual has less power, because there are institutions out there, including the institution of the gang. So I guess, in order to sustain the structure and the vision, and the ambition of the things we wanted to do, we had to create an institution."

SIPA had the benefit of being founded by a dynamic and idealistic group of community advocates and youth, driven by ethnic pride. But it could not achieve its goals and sustain itself through time by merely relying on sheer exuberance and ideological strength alone. Through time, the logic of institutionalization militated its acquisition of trained personnel and the implementation of programs made possible by increasing funding. Uncle Roy said that “SIPA in the 1970s wasn’t very professionalized. At that time there was a lot of anti-professionalism...The profession was being attacked in the sense that you guys have been here forever and you’ve never changed the world. So the watchword was self-help, self-determination. A lot of white folks experienced backlash because most white folks were professional. I remember that some were critical of the ivory tower mentality.”

SIPA’s first federally-funded program, Pilipino Youth Services (PYS, 1972-78), offered counseling, recreational activities, and employment training for client youth. In order to more effectively reach gang members and other juvenile delinquents, the agency began the practice of enlisting the services of former clients and “delinquent youths” now reformed. Through the 1980s and early 1990s, the detached gang-worker model was the lynchpin of SIPA’s approach to gangs. Some former gang members were sent to the streets to minister to active gang members, and also to serve as counselors and role models to them. The 1980s saw the agency engaged in heavy gang intervention work, with virtually no prevention programs in place. Staff were busy setting up activities that would divert clients from trying to hang out and getting into trouble. Surveillance of client behaviors became part of the strategy. According to one former staffer who

preferred to remain anonymous, “We were just spending a lot of time tracking who’s who, what groups are doing what, in what neighborhood....trying to keep track of who’s putting up graffiti where...Some staff even tried to set up treaties between warring groups.” With data largely derived from law enforcement plus information gathered first-hand by SIPA counselors interacting with youth clients, the agency concretized its surveillance of youth clients in the form of a comprehensive chart showing the distribution of Filipino American gangs among inner city schools. The data included membership size and type of crimes and other negative behaviors for each gang (see appendix V).

The need to maintain a staff that included a mix of trained counselors and social workers plus individuals with street experience (usually former gang members) had always been viewed as an ideal for running youth programs at SIPA. But when funding was scarce, especially in the early 1980s, the agency with its skeleton staff was mostly untrained in social work or counseling. Liza Javier and Isaias Paja both did not have psychology backgrounds and were not trained counselors or social workers. “I didn’t know about the paper work and all that stuff. I was more involved with the kids while Ate Liza did the management part,” recalls Isaias. “I learned to do intakes on the kids and get them involved in our programs.”

The programs were intended to keep kids off the streets by providing alternatives to gangs and other delinquent behaviors, and get back truant kids to school. Youth and their families, especially at risk youth and hard core gang members, were the primary focus.

Towards the end of the 1980s, when Meg Thornton took over as Director, SIPA was addressing other youth issues such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy and kids running away from homes, aside from the main problem posed by gangs:

They needed a little bit of extra support to deal with issues of adjustment, acculturation, family communications, understanding of the new culture and negotiating...all of that...It was even just basic things...bread and butter things like jobs, just looking out for the kids 'cause some of the parents had two jobs. Some of the kids had never been out of that neighborhood. They just didn't know what else was out there beyond a few blocks of Temple St. Some didn't know what other opportunities existed for them. A lot of them were drop outs too, a few junior high, some high school. They could barely read, they couldn't fill out a job application, they couldn't write well. Drugs, especially crack or "bato," it was bad. We'd see kids strung out coming in to the office. Some kids suffered from neglect...they hadn't been fed that day. There were problems of teen pregnancy too...I remember one girl in particular, she was only seventeen and she had three abortions already. There was a lot of misinformation going around. One girl was told by her boyfriend that she couldn't get pregnant if he had been drinking or was drunk because his sperm would be slowed down or something like that...Or they'd just use the withdrawal method. Because they weren't talked to, either their parents weren't talking to them, but I mean usually parents are not the one who talks with their kids. It's usually either an aunt or uncle, or kuya or ate talks to them about it. So sometimes it fell to us to talk about it. And we only did so, because we knew they'd be in trouble if they didn't realize these things. So, you could point to some of the kids we were working with who were able to negotiate these difficulties. There were also kids in the middle, they were kids who were real bright and who really wanted to succeed...who'd go to college. Some of them were gang members but they were very bright!

To attract youth to the programs, Staff offered a friendly and caring environment. The hallmark of Liza's and Isaias' style was their personal touch; they made themselves totally accessible to the youth clients. They utilized the indigenous family framework of big brother/big sister relationships in dealing with youths. Thus Liza was called "Ate" (in Pilipino, referential term of address for older sister) and Isaias was called "Kuya" (referential terms of address for older brother) by the youth clients. A wider application

of this indigenous relational framework was the Big Brother/Big Sister program which featured UCLA college students providing tutorial assistance (called “Pilipino Enrichment and Recruitment Program” or PREP) to SIPA youth clients. The tutors acted as mentors and promoted Pilipino Pride through various cultural activities like dances and teaching Pilipino songs and music.

Liza, who came to the USA at a very early age, does not speak Pilipino but is naturally warm and friendly. She recalls that she and Isaias did a lot of crisis intervention, visiting homes and talking with parents of problem kids. They had art projects (notably the mural, “Choose” done by painter Orly Castillo with the help of SIPA kids) and lots of recreational activities. But she credits Isaias with effectively drawing youths and making them feel at home in SIPA. She said, “I think a lot of progress was due to Isaias...He’s very humble. Because he was from the neighborhood and because they knew him. He’s a good guy. And he had family members who were same age as these guys. Once they knew that it was safe to come, they would spill their heads out. We were counseling some kids who were very dysfunctional.” While Isaias concentrated on ministering to the boys, Liza attended to the girls. She recalls: “We had this thing called “salu-salong Pinay” (literally translated, “Pilipina women getting together to share a meal and talk”). All the girls would get together with me and some of the adult volunteers. We talked about different subjects or...what’s going on in school. We’d also give out tickets to sporting and other events.”

Liza and Isaias endeavored to transform SIPA into a haven for Pilipino youths—a sanctuary of sorts where they would feel safe and secure. “We encouraged them to come

and hang out, rather than let them stay out in the streets,” said Liza. The youths did come and stay, and they felt at home. For sure, the rest of Pilipino American gang world indeed viewed SIPA as a Satanas hang out, since many wee from STS, and the white, crumbling hut was located right by Temple Mart--widely known to be Satanas’ main hang out. “We had a big meeting with STS and we told them, the whole place is neutral turf...the people from RBS and BNG are gonna be here...and that no one is supposed to show colors or throw signs,” recalls Isaías.

One STS veterano recalls how he and his homeboys became virtually habituated to SIPA: “Some of us would go to SIPA real early, even before the door would open by like nine in the morning. One of my homeboys would drop off his sister at Rosemont and he didn’t want to go home because he has nothing to do there...So he’d go straight to SIPA. I could see him, he’d be outside smoking a cigarette, waiting for anyone to open the door.”

SIPA actually became a favorite meeting place of Satanas. “Like when we’re going to a party, okay, we’ll meet at SIPA at 7:30 p.m. And then we’ll go to the party...like that. When we had problems, we’re gonna fight, we’ll be at SIPA after SIPA closes. We would fight there, in the open yard! If we ever got into conflict, like one-on-one.. But I can’t stress it enough...We did RESPECT the space...we respected the building...we did wait for SIPA to close...See, so in that way, no one was there...We took care of the property,” the STS veterano who wanted to remain anonymous said.

SIPA’s move to a new location in 3rd St. and Parkview in late 1989 signaled some major changes with regards to counselor/youth client relationships. Liza felt burned out

and resigned in the early part of 1988; Isaias followed suit a few months later, after feeling burned out and deciding to go to medical school. The move out of the Satanas' defended neighborhood into a location that was known to be turf of the dreaded Hispanic 18th St and Crazy Riders gang made visiting SIPA a perilous proposition for STS and other unaffiliated Filipino American youths. To reach the new site by foot, youths had to traverse several city blocks of predominantly inner city Hispanic neighborhoods. Riding the bus did not offer a safer alternative, for the bus went through the same risky route. According to Gil Ayuyao, SIPA's relocation caused changes in the profile of the clientele: "It changed a whole lot...a change of...who would be going over and the kind of programs you ran, because of the accessibility/transportation issue." And due to incidents wherein youths got beaten up or were waylaid by rival Hispanic gangs on their way to the new site, counselors often had to pick up their clients from the Pilipino Town neighborhood.

SIPA, by then, ceased to be perceived as a Satanas hang out—not only because the agency had moved to hostile territory (a non-Pilipino neighborhood) but because the gang cohort which had established close relationships with Liza and Isaias was in the process of maturing out (of active gang life) and moving on to more conventional pursuits. Equally significant was the fact that due to a dramatic increase in funding, SIPA was now able to assemble a staff of trained social workers and counselors (armed with masters and doctoral degrees)—thus achieving a professionalization of services and programs at a scale never before reached. A more professional approach necessitated to a significant degree, a move away from the familial, highly personal and involved approach

of the “white, crumbling hut” years to a more detached “clinical” approach that professionalization represented.

The change represented more than a major shift from active gang intervention and street work to more of prevention and school-based programs: it gave rise to the preeminence of the trained social worker and the culture and world view of social work and the helping professions. Programs and case work in the hands of professionals could now be carried out more systematically and with objectivity, guided by knowledge on juvenile delinquency and deviant behavior offered by psychology and the behavioral sciences. From the narratives of former SIPA staff and workers and from field observations of agency activities, we gain insights into how funding shaped programs and how client participants were “processed” or selected, and how such programs designed to change behaviors were structured and implemented.

Claire (pseudonym) remembers how conscious effort was made to create some distance between client and professional service giver, in order to spare the latter from the burn out that often resulted from intense involvement in the lives of clients, and to prevent violations of state policies and regulations governing agency’s dealings with clients. She said: “There were just some practices that had to stop, like staff would give money out of their pockets to the kids. If they’re hungry, we could bring them to that little food place near the mall, but don’t give money because they’ll buy drugs or cigarettes. And at that time we’d go get kids out of jail; we’d pick them up because they had no ride. Some kids were running away in groups and staying in some of the abandoned buildings. We’d run around looking for the kids. But that just took a very big

toll. I felt like we had to separate it out a little bit, or else people weren't gonna make it... staying with the staff to be able to work with the kids in the long run. We were very concerned about burn out."

The agency continued to function as a vital community center for Filipino Americans, promoting ethnic pride through activities designed to increase awareness of cultural heritage. Kite-making and flying during summer months and parol (lantern) making during Christmas continued to be major activities. With trained MSWs in the staff, the agency could now offer professional individual and family counseling to at risk youths and their families. Increased recognition of the critical role played by parents in the acculturation process impacting youths led to the formation of parent support groups, parenting classes, and community education seminars. Sports programs and wholesome events such as off-shore fishing and mountain biking trips offered alternatives to gangs, drugs, and other negative behaviors.

According to Meg Thornton, SIPA had a hard time getting into the schools. "Some of it was because Staff weren't credentialed. There was also, I guess, credibility or trust factor...Most of us were under thirty, had no kids, some of us could speak Tagalog, others couldn't. and there weren't really any other professional groups working with the schools," she recalled. But she stated that that the shift from the streets to the schools constituted deliberate action on the part of SIPA: "We made a conscious decision to go into the schools, because we thought that if we got to them before they dropped out and intervened...to some degree with I guess some at risk behaviors or ditching or whatever that we could help them succeed. Because it was really, really hard

working with the kids who already dropped out. Some we could direct to getting their GED...But it took great effort...Once the kids were out of school, it was almost like knocking your head up against the wall.”

For most of the 1990s, SIPA reached out to Pilipino American youths in schools primarily through classroom-based lectures and group activities led by designated counselors. Through a referral and screening process that determined eligibility of participation in the program, certain youths became part of an exclusively boys or girls group that would meet once weekly over a period of several weeks or months (depending upon the contract agreed upon by the funding institution and SIPA). A curriculum covering a wide range of topics and group activities designed to address target problems provided a framework for behavioral change. Collaboration between social service agency and the schools contributed to intensified supervision, control, and surveillance of a segment of minority youths already suspected of being gang members or viewed at the least as “potentially troublesome.” The schools referred a list of “eligible” youths for membership in the behavior-changing peer support groups; in some instances SIPA counselors were given free access to computerized data bases on such youths. The most problematic youths were sent to the SIPA offices for periodic counseling.

The process of constituting a peer support group is of vital significance, as it gives us insights into the manner in which deviance is socially constructed—often much to the active resistance but gradual acquiescence of conscripted youths. As the narratives of former SIPA counselors and social workers bear out, dominant images of deviance underlying notions of “at risk,” “high risk,” or “gang member”; the contract-driven nature

of a program, with the agency having to satisfy its funder's expectations (esp. to "bring in the numbers" or "effect results in a short period of time"); and the implementation of client assessment and intake (and self-report questionnaires) as part of a larger phenomenon of control culture surveillance all bring into question popular notions of gangs as objective reality.

Who's In, Who's Not?

Who or which youths eventually end up becoming clients and subjected to preventive programs depends upon the degree to which they fit into institutional images of individuals "at risk" or "high risk." Gilbert Ayuyao, longtime youth counselor at SIPA, gave me the following profile of an "at risk" youth: (1) recent/newly arrived immigrant; (2) single parent here; (3) older siblings in gang; (4) area of residence; (5) area of school; (6) self-concept or self-esteem low. The "high risk" fits the following profile: (1) "wanna be," peripheral to gang culture; not yet member but hangs out; (2) older sibling in gang; (3) lives in bad neighborhood; and (4) lives in single parent home.

At the school, resident counselors pore through the records of Filipino American students and tally individual statistics on (1) truancies; (2) tardiness; and (3) number of times referred to Dean's Office. Grades are examined for evidence of poor scholastic performance, and the youth's behavior in class is evaluated. Out of the several hundreds screened at the screening process I participated in, from ten to fifteen per cent "made the cut" and were referred by the Dean for inclusion into the peer support groups. From my interviews with some teachers, I gathered that school performance (grades) is the prime

criterion for inclusion into the corrective program. One of them said, “If the kid has good grades, then they’re not at risk and ought not to join the groups. However, even if the kid has got good grades but is hanging out with “gangs” or “barkadas,” then they ought to be in.” Another teacher expressed the view that even if a kid is smart, “that kid could use that smartness for kalokohan or mischief.” These teachers rattled off names of smart but “mischievous” kids “who hang out with the wrong crowd.” Teachers often tried to give me an idea of the enormity of the gang problem in their school by citing that “there are 30 gangs in this high school alone.”

The SIPA counselors then meet with the school counselor(s) to decide the final composition of the peer support groups. Filipino American teachers have a strong say with regards to who should be in and who should not. At times, teachers and SIPA counselors clashed, armed with differing ideas of kids “at risk.” Renee A. (pseudonym) had a run in with Mrs. G., a teacher. The latter wanted Rachel (pseudonym) to be included in the girls’ peer support group because she observed that Rachel was hanging out with Hispanic girls. “She’s got to learn that she is a Filipina; she needs to be educated on her ethnic culture,” the teacher said emphatically. Renee A., however, disagreed; in her evaluation, Rachel was behaving conventionally and saw nothing aberrant about her hanging out with girls of another race or ethnicity. She argued that placing this girl in a group of “wilder” Filipina girls would be worse because “she might be influenced by the others and become “wild” too!”

Ronnie (pseudonym), a SIPA counselor, expressed his view on the matter, identifying a “culture clash” between US-born staff counselor and Philippine-born

immigrant teacher: “She (Renee) was part Filipino. She did not, in the teacher’s eyes, know that she’s Filipino...So the teacher’s view of why the student should be in the group was because she had an identity issue...The student did not want to be in the group...she did not feel that she needed to be in the group, and Staff concurred with that. However, Staff are younger than the teacher; teacher’s immigrant, goes by certain value of...your elder says something, you should follow it.”

At times, this type of culture clash tended to worsen when these competing agents of youth control felt that each knew the problem youths better than the other. One case involving a “disruptive kid” generated long-drawn enmity and angry verbal jousting between a teacher and another SIPA counselor. At the heart of this conflict was the “disruptive kid” and which peer support group to assign him. Teacher felt that she had a say, because she claimed that she “knows the kids more than anyone else” (apparently invoking her authority as a veteran teacher). Counselor, however, felt he had the free hand to determine who should be in what group (apparently because he had the training and theory to analyze and evaluate the kid and thus place him properly).

Greta (pseudonym), former SIPA counselor, reminisced on her days working with school kids and had this to say: “In the schools I think their thing is....that what walks like a duck, talk likes a duck, hey, let’s put them in the program! And some of the kids really....I didn’t feel they needed it....I think that when they see these kids, oh, this kid’s a loser...because he doesn’t look normal, doesn’t dress normal, you know...From the way they see this person, he’s probably not doing well in school.. It’s stereotypical...And that’s how they do the referral....Or teachers will talk among themselves....this kid said

this about this kid, hey let's refer him... That's how the referrals worked a lot of times. A lot of them were reluctant to join the peer support groups because by being there, it's like they were classified as delinquent kids."

Instruments of Judgment: Intake Forms and Other Questionnaires

At a social service agency like SIPA, a potential client goes through a ritual called "assessment and intake." A counselor interviews the candidate for clienthood; guided by a diagnostic instrument called an "intake form," counselor elicits a body of highly personal information that will enable agency staff to assign "client category" to the candidate client. For instance, categories could include "juvenile delinquent," "status offender," "gang member," pre-delinquent juvenile," etc. and thus determine his/her eligibility for a program. Depending upon the nature of the funding (whether it's for anti-gang, anti-substance abuse, etc.), the intake form could turn into a detailed clinical assessment/history evaluation instrument, with questions intended to gauge the extent of personal dysfunction or pathology. Most basically, the intake form will seek personal data on school status (i.e. expelled, suspended, enrolled full-time, etc.), current family situation (apparently to determine "dysfunctionality" or "normality"), generation (foreign born, first generation, etc.), civil status, age, place/date of birth.

Apparently, gauging from testimonies of former SIPA workers, the intake form represents more than just a questionnaire for clients to fill out: its relative simplicity or complexity is indicative and even symbolic of an agency's level of professional sophistication. Romy B. (pseudonym) recalls that during the mid 1980s when funding

was limited and the agency wasn't very professionalized, "The intake form wasn't as detailed...From what I saw, it was...okay, you want to be a member? Fill out this application, okay? If you do anything wrong to the SIPA house, you have to come here for a week and do chores..like that....And if you don't come, I'll remember your face." But with increased funding and expansion of staff with graduate and professional training came programs that utilized sets of lengthy, quantitative questionnaires--so cumbersome that Staff often groaned under their weight. "The tools they used were a lot harder, and the measurement was a little bit cumbersome. You had 8-paged pre and post surveys that you had to do...Who's gonna do 8 pages? What youth is gonna fill out an 8-paged questionnaire as best as they can or as correctly as they can?" Ted M. plaintively asked. "It was nice that we got that information out of that...but it was still problematic...Staff were always complaining....They shortened it up...but it was still cumbersome...Just because of the scope of information that was needed..."

At staff development training sessions, the importance of assessment and intake in the selection of clients and the overall program in general was often underscored. At one particular session I attended, the guest speaker [a clinical social worker] stated that "programs are driven by funding," thus they (funders) want specific demographic data. She admonished her audience to develop an intake form that captures the data needed. Lecturer cited "deficient assessment/intake forms" as contributory to producing "resistant" or "guarded" clients. I noted that in the ensuing question and answer, not one participant raised questions on youth preparedness to respond to intakes that are often intimidating and overwhelming to kids. At another time and place, I interviewed Eddie

Villanueva, ex-gang member and former counselor at SIPA; drawing on the street experience and world view that he shares with countless "deviant" clients, Eddie declared that he was not opposed to doing intakes per se, but he was against doing it to a total stranger. He said:

"A lot of kids get intimidated when you do intakes. Okay, to me, that's a no no in the beginning. Maybe later on, as they get comfortable with you. Then you can do an intake. But if you take that in the beginning, they'll start questioning, what do they want my name and number for? Doesn't the kid question it in his mind...if I do something wrong, they know how to get in touch with my parents....see? Instead of...when the kid is getting ready to fill out an intake form...they want out...Or here's our phone number, whenever you feel you need someone to talk to, or you need my help, call me. The kid shouldn't be pressured to give their phone number, or their address...Or being asked like, have you ever joined a gang, or done drugs? That is too personal, to ask right off the bat...you know what I mean? When they have that in the intake form, kids don't wanna fill that out!"

"Bring In the Numbers"

There was agreement among the counselors and social workers interviewed that the funding agencies largely predetermined the nature and outcome of programs; put succinctly, funder says in effect: "We're giving you the money, this is the kind of results we want." Programs were contract-driven, characterized by stringent guidelines on recruitment of what type of client participants (and achieving target numbers of clients or

“bringing in the numbers”), a schedule to follow, an evaluation component, and in the case of peer support group instruction—a set curriculum for the entire series of sessions.

There was also a common feeling that the agency was being “forced to do certain issues” due to trends in public policy or legislation that also affected funding. “It’s like okay, now...it’s a drug issue...let’s send all the drug money, and every community has drug issues. Now it’s gang issues. We’ll send out all the money for gangs, and every community now has gang issues,” ventured former social worker Vince (pseudonym). The agency also had to deal with funding sectors evaluations that certain ethnic communities were not as disadvantaged than others. Former director Meg Thornton said, “On the funding scene we had to contend with this notion that Asian Americans weren’t as needy as say, African Americans or Latinos,” a notion that tended to be reinforced by a Los Angeles Times survey showing that Filipino Americans were a happy and contented lot.¹⁶

Ted (pseudonym) expressed the view that the recruitment process is dictated by the funding Establishment, which manifests a bias against youths not performing well in school. He said, “You know...you only have to get this kind of youths...So you have to weed out....if a person was college-bound.....that precluded them from being in the group. But you know and I know...that just because they’re college-bound, school performance does not necessarily guarantee a problem-free life. I was college-bound but look who I was hanging out with.” Ted noted that despite guidelines for “weeding out,” “Staff dealt with it on different levels...Some excluded certain people, some kept

everybody...depending on what their personal beliefs in as far as working with youth in the community.”

Former counselor Anna (pseudonym) recalled that because of pressure to bring in the required number of clients, a thorough assessment or intake of the kids was not accomplished. “We took them in because we needed the numbers to meet, and we met those numbers by just filling out the forms but...we didn’t really find out what was the issue, what was the need of the child, if he really needed this peer support group or if they need something else! Maybe some of the kids taken in should not have been taken in, because some of them had already been through it...Some of them were too familiar with what was going on,” she declared. When asked what were the criteria used for bringing in the kids, she replied, “The thing was, they’re Pilipino. If they knew staff and they’re Pilipino, and the staff somewhat knew that there were going through issues. But they didn’t necessarily have to have issues or problem with parents, or anything like that.”

Strong opinions against funder’s demand for more client numbers and an unrealistic expectation to bring results (in terms of behavioral change in clients) in such a short period of time were expressed. Linda B. (pseudonym) said: “Unfortunately, a lot of funders look at numbers. In terms of how many kids you can work with in a year. What was frustrating with that is...it takes many, many years to get them out of that situation. We knew that. But they (funders) were not sympathetic to that. So we were always trying to work with a new grouping of kids...Well, in ten weeks, or a year...which is still too short.” Reinforcing Linda’s view, Tracey (pseudonym) said, “The unrealistic goal is at the end of six, ten, or twelve weeks, kids will be better. The government believes it.

They think hey, this program is great. They want a quick fix, you know. In a couple of weeks we're gonna have great kids, right? But it doesn't work that way. For me, I found that...you work with maybe a hundred kids, you will see...not an immediate change. But maybe in a year's time you'll see the change. Maybe out of a hundred kids two will see the light! It happens. But I mean, two out of a hundred? My God, that's two per cent. Even with that two per cent, you can't say that it will happen most of the time or all of the time for every year."

Eddie Villanueva, a street smart ex-gang member-turned counselor, could not hide his displeasure over guidelines that delimited group sessions to a few weeks. He said, "limiting the sessions to a few weeks wasn't right. They want the kids to be able to participate right away, you know...But the kid isn't going to participate unless he's ready. You don't expect the kid to open up and tell you his problems right off the bat, you know what I mean? He's got to feel comfortable first. Maybe he wants to feel you out first...to see where you're coming from. We have five weeks to work on this kid and in five weeks they don't participate, then, we will terminate that session...That's how we were working, right? You could be there for the kid, to tell him what's right or what's wrong. But if the kid is not ready to change, the kid will not change. He'll change on his own, with a little bit of guideline. I know that from my past experience."

“Give ‘Em Ethnic Pride”

The bedrock of SIPA helping ideology is Filipino Pride. Since SIPA’s founding in the early 1970s, community activists had seen a link between racism, colonialism, and minority oppression on one hand, and youth issues such as gangs, substance abuse, and school-related problems (dropping out, truancy, “mis-education” etc.) on the other hand. Thus the agency’s unique strength has been its vigorous promotion of Filipino and Filipino American culture and history, in a bid to alleviate confusion of ethnic identity and feelings of inferiority vis a vis other ethnic groups that seemed prevalent among the youths. Pinoy Pride emerged as a potent antidote to the lack of self-esteem that was believed to be driving certain youths to join gangs.

Helped by the popularity of the self-esteem movement (and its influence manifested in lay as well as professional gang expert discourse), the propagation of Pinoy Pride as an antidote to gangs and other forms of juvenile delinquency became even more solidly entrenched at SIPA during the late 1980s and much of the 1990s. No longer was Pinoy Pride being solely advocated by political activists and lay people, and confined to community forums and conferences: in the hands of helping professionals, it became medicalized by its appropriation as a dominant element in anti-deviant, behavior-changing curriculums. Thus, when through the screening process youths were diagnosed to be lacking in self-esteem, the problem had to be treated, to a significant degree, through a regimen of several-week group sessions of indoctrination in Filipino history and cultural heritage. Not just any kind of positive, after-school activity to preempt or substitute for delinquent activities would be offered—the professional prescription called

for youth client engagement in indigenous craft (kite-making, parol, etc.) that would promote a sense of pride in his/her ethnic identity and lead to heightened self-esteem.

In retrospect, Anna F. (pseudonym) said, “The pride thing had to do more with building self-esteem. Yeah, that was when the self-esteem theory was very, very strong. I remember there was a regional or national self-esteem task force. I think that’s a good example of reaction, if you want to say, to...whatever the funders like....Trying to be creative...and write up something....so that we can say, in three months, turn around, trying to work with groups of kids..Definitely very much prevention..The self-esteem is only one component. It leaves a lot to the individual....which is very difficult. A kid might have a pretty healthy self-esteem and supportive parents. But he might be getting it up on the side...or influenced by other people so...I think it’s just difficult. Or at some point, he might get tired being the Brady kid...That’s one component...and it can’t be just for ten weeks.”

Similarly in retrospect, Greta (pseudonym) expressed in strong language her disagreement with the self-esteem movement’s premises. “That was what we said then (low self-esteem stemming from lack of pride in Filipino ethnic identity) because we were very contract-focused,” she began. “That was so bogus! Yes, we lacked a cultural identity, we lack Filipino role models. Yes, we lacked the knowledge and awareness of our history and our heritage because they weren’t available then...But lacking the identity and all that, that’s not the reason for joining gangs. We said it because we needed to say it, in order to get programs funded for our community. But if you take a look at it, African American, Hispanic, Native American populations are spouting the

same thing. And the only reason they're spouting that is to make sure they get funding for their community."

Greta paused momentarily, then resumed her animated commentary: "A lot of it came out of the 1960s and 1970s, you know...all those political movements were going on...And I'm not saying that we don't and didn't need it back then, because we did...I mean, I'm thankful that was the focus, and that we got funding, and now we have all these programs and these classes on Pilipino culture, arts, history, performance, heritage, music and all that. But you're teaching kids that are angry....Kids that don't know what to do with the pride, you're teaching an elitist point of view. You're teaching them that Pilipino Pride is the only thing to consider...which is good. But being Pilipino is not the only thing they need to know...They also need to know that...you can have the Pride...which is great...but unless you know a little bit about the heritage and the culture and your family, you're not really going to understand what that Pride is about. And it's not so much as Pride but how much of that Pride are you gonna share...or are you gonna use it to put down other people...And that's what I saw coming out of that whole Pilipino Pride era...is yeah, 'I'm Pilipino, and I'm number one, and Filipinos are the best,' but how much of that could they share with the next person and kind of educate him, hey, yeah, this is what my my culture's about...I'm gonna share it with you...won't you share me what yours is about? None of that came out...It's like yeah, Filipinos are the best..That's all I saw, not a lot of sharing, not a lot of educating, not a lot of understanding..."

“Walking the Fine Line” (Between the Cops and the Kids)

Every counselor or social worker dealing with youths on an individual or group basis prides in being a protective advocate for his/her client(s). Great effort is taken to earn the trust of clients, thereby establishing and maintaining a relationship conducive for behavioral change among the latter. Corporately, SIPA is widely regarded as a staunch advocate of local community interests and a pioneering leader in the promotion of Pinoy Pride. Much less recognized (if not totally unrecognized), however, is that like other social service agencies, SIPA, in effect, had become part of a wider State network of control and surveillance—in the way that it helped manage a minority community’s troublesome youth segment and their families through ameliorative, normalizing, government-funded programs.

While counselors and social workers as case managers are bound to strict confidentiality in dealing with clients’ private circumstances, they are duty-bound to report any instance of child or elderly abuse, incidences of suicide or even suicidal ideations. This responsibility to report is continually emphasized by agency administrators during staff meetings and by guest trainers in staff development training sessions. At one staff meeting, program supervisor looked the eye of each counselor and declared emphatically: “Even if you’re not sure, you must report! Even if information is not complete, report to school counselors if you’re in school. Especially when a kid shows signs of depression: sleep disturbance, alteration of eating habits, sense of helplessness, sadness, and suicidal tendencies. If there’s an intent or plan to commit suicide, you can breach confidentiality.”

Having to walk the ethical fine line between the cops and the kids was a common dilemma faced by SIPA youth workers—a dilemma vividly conveyed by Reby N (pseudonym): “I think we always felt compromised, to a certain degree. I knew we’re always walking a fine line between...ahm...working with the youth we’re working with...Like sometimes, on a Monday after a weekend, kids would come out...come in..and they would talk about what they had done that weekend. And a few times we’d hear stories about...you know...pulling out guns and shooting at this and that. Yeah, it was funny because of the adrenalin rush in their eyes and the spark...I would just sit there mortified...Not so much because they’re telling us the story but more because I felt compromised...as a service provider...If you want to say, knowing that it’s actually, you know, they were kind of on the road to committing a crime..Because someone could have been killed. Luckily nobody was...but still the fact that they had guns and they were shooting at other people.”

“Walking a fine line” was similarly reflected in agency’s dealings with Police. Great effort had been made by cohorts of SIPA administrators and workers to turn the agency into a safe and secure corner for Filipino American youths. But as its reputation grew as a reformatory or youth-saving institution, it became inevitable for the agency to relate in some way with the Larger Society’s premier agent of gang control, the Police. While no formal agreements or contracts tied SIPA to law enforcement (i.e. LAPD, County Sheriff), the fact that agency and police were both engaged in dealing with the “gang problem” rendered inevitable some degree of interaction between them.

According to former SIPA workers who wanted to remain anonymous, the agency relied on police for much-needed information that they could use in dealing with Filipino American youth clients. Law enforcement agents, especially those known to be Asian gang experts, were valued guest lecturers in staff development and training seminars. Reby N. said, "We felt very caught...because of our need to protect kids...and then consider the need to get some information from law enforcement. I think we tried to play a role with law enforcement or powers that be...advocating for them if they were wrong, and if they were right, we'll have to be working with you to correct this problem or to fix it...or, to hopefully find some solutions, you know. We also felt that we had to cultivate or have some kind of tie or relationship with them...so we can understand how they are looking at things. And share with them our experiences with youth."

Former workers, however, maintain that no information on youth clients was ever given to visiting police officers. Stan V. (pseudonym) recalls how they treated the police with cordiality and respect, but made sure they did what they could to advocate for their youth clients: "We would never work with them [police] because we would have to work with them. We would try to explain to them not so much to cite specifics about what was going on but....what was going on with the kids...We tried to do the advocacy of kids getting harassed...what to do with their rights. But we would never give them information."

Police intelligence data was deemed important in terms of helping SIPA Staff gain a handle on the problems and issues posed by their clients. But however appreciated, police info was at times open to questions of accuracy and reliability; and

some of the data gathered from seized personal effects and belongings of youth clients was particularly disturbing to counselors. "Some of the info seemed based on painstaking intelligence data-gathering, like those that started to look like Thomas Guide neighborhood maps pinpointing turfs of known Asian gangs in LA County," recalls Stan V. "But some of it was just off! Like when this "Pilipino gang expert" would give some names wrong and he'd start tracking things back to the Philippines. And they'd show slides that had pictures taken from seized photo albums where kids are posing with guns or flashing gang signs. Or showing even their tattoos. And so you know, we would tell the kids to be very careful with the photos that you take...because it can be used against you. I guess that's what's meant by 'walking a fine line....this dual role."

Since SIPA was known to both law enforcement and street gangs as a hang out of Satanas and other smaller allied groups, it became a magnet for patrolling police officers and enemies of Satanas in the gang underworld. Two police officers that loved to patrol the premises of SIPA and the adjoining neighborhood have entered the lore of Satanas, being nicknamed "_____" and "_____" STS homeboys detested the duo to no end. "All they do was come here to get information....That's why STS didn't want to trust SIPA," recalls a former youth client. Whether hanging out at SIPA or at the adjacent Temple Mart, STS homeboys were vulnerable to cop stake outs. The same former youth client narrated one such incident: "I was with three other homeboys inside our parked car across Temple Street. The other homeboys were all at the Plaza. And I was looking out the window and I said, oh shit, a bust! And my buddies were like, what bus? We don't see no bus. And I said, look, they're getting arrested over there. And then they looked,

and there was _____, he got everyone against the wall...They were taking pictures of all our homeboys there...I started the car and we hurriedly left. We were like, see you! It was funny, we're all in the car and I said, look--a bust! They said, what bus? We don't see no bus. You know, they think it was RTD. I said, NO, they're getting arrested, a BUST!"

Isaias Paja remembers the day a drive-by against some of their youth clients forced him to call 9-1-1 for police intervention:

"It was one of those afternoons and I saw kids throwing rocks at a passing car. They said, 'There was this guy from Coronado, they hit him up. He was on his way to the laundry. They beat him up and the younger brother called up.' The boys from Coronado came, and they were throwing rocks at passing cars. I was talking along the driveway, with them...what's this? This is neutral turf, you know. You guys should know better than that. After a while, they were on their way to Temple Mart. Suddenly I heard a big bang! I heard something whiz by....so I started running. And I didn't know the kids got hit too. They got lots of BB pellets all over. And so we called 911. The police came...and there was a helicopter...and all guns were pointed toward SIPA hut. And I had to come in, you know, looking like a gang member...and they had to pack me down! I told them, the people are gone, people are gone...And they said, okay, I guess that's it. And then the kids thought that I was killed, because I was closest to the guy that fired the shotgun. And so, after the police took the report and everything, I took the kids home on my car...and then I talked to the kids and they said, 'oh, man, we thought you were dead.'

I didn't realize how close it was until the following day when I saw some of the gun pellets hit the trash can. And so I was like....hell, that was close."

Liza Javier will never forget the day a fight between a Latino and Pilipino gang outside SIPA forced them to call the cops:

"A kid came running in, 'there's a shooting going on!' I could hear the boom, boom, boom! I remember telling everybody, 'hit the floor, hit the floor! And I remember thinking in my mind, 'God, we got kids here. We all hit the floor. Jennifer called the police. It was very quiet. And I remember the police yelling at us to come out. And the police had their guns pointed at the SIPA house. For whatever reason, the police thought the shooting was coming from the inside, when it was actually coming from outside. That was difficult for me.... some kids may have been grazed by the bullets. I thought that physically, we were so vulnerable. The police were there to help us, but we were also vulnerable to them. I remember coming out with my hands up like this (she gestures in surrender). And I remember saying to myself, 'Oh, my God, if my parents knew what was going on, they'd say I was crazy."

Synthesis

The youth saving movement in the Filipino American community of Los Angeles had founders and participants who were highly educated, largely middle class, and imbued with the spirit of community empowerment—inspired as they were by the Civil Rights movement of the Sixties, the emergent Asian American and other minority movements.

As exemplified by SIPA (Search To Involve Pilipino Americans), youth saving was driven not merely by a humanitarian concern over youths “falling through the cracks” but by a political ideology that underlay their social actions, and that attributed youth behavioral pathologies to conditions of minority/immigrant societal subordination and racial prejudice. As the biographical sketches featured in this chapter show, younger generation community activists and workers imbibed the “serve the people” and “Pinoy Pride” orientations that grew out of the politicizing and mobilizing events and activities of the 1970s.

The socio-political environment undoubtedly played a major role, but the individual familial backgrounds of two SIPA founders reveal a potentially deeper spirit of reform and “values” bedrock for youth saving. SIPA was literally conceived in the bowels (basement) of historic Filipino Christian Church of Los Angeles. Royal Morales was a “preacher’s kid” who remained an active member of his church until his demise in 2001. Although Morales was never known for religious proselytizing, it can be argued that his missionary zeal in saving youth from gangs and other problems stemmed in part from spiritual values (i.e. caring for those in need, concern for fellowmen) acquired from family and church. At the packed funeral service held in his home church, memorial cards bearing the biblical verse “Well done, thou good and faithful servant...” were passed out to mourners. Helen Brown was born into a “missionary family” of a different sort: her anglo father was one of the pioneering Thomasites that went to the Philippines to teach and propagate American ideals and values through education. She was the first Filipino American woman to graduate from UCLA. She experienced an ethnic identity

crisis but found resolution by engaging in lifelong advocacy of Filipino American concerns and inculcating pride in Filipino cultural heritage through the establishment and nurturing of the Filipino American Library.

It is clear that at the heart of the youth saving mission was the drive to perpetuate traditional Filipino values and to preserve social institutions, such as the family and community. The grave concern over the loss of traditional values and the erosion of family, as evidenced by intergenerational conflicts and its consequences for youth (gangs, runaways, disrespect for elders, etc.), is evident in Royal Morales writings and oral discourse. Thus the early emphasis on culture work, in the form of native Christmas lantern making, indigenous recreation and games like “sipa,” kite making and flying, Tagalog language learning, involvement in larger community celebrations and events, the “Ate”/”Kuya” (Big Sister/Big Brother) model of relationships between counselor/mentors and youth clients, and the designation of the SIPA building and premises as a safe place for recreation and hanging out can be seen as active ways of securing and revitalizing the Filipino family, as well as community: institutions that were viewed as threatened by the growing “Americanization” of the youth and the materialistic, overworking tendencies of parents eager to achieve the American Dream.

Family dysfunctionality was viewed as a major “factor” in gang involvement among the youth, hence the interventions that had parents and families of problem youth being subject to counseling and other therapeutic remedies. Filipino youths were seen as experiencing confusion of identity and feelings of inferiority vis a vis anglo American culture; hence the resulting lack of self-esteem drove the young to join gangs—so went

the popular theory. The youth savers then endeavored to generate Filipino pride through culture work, which was expected to produce heightened self-esteem among the youth clients. This “grow-self-esteem-through-pride-in-native-culture” approach became a technology of control when it was formally incorporated into therapeutic treatment programs in the early 1990s, as SIPA entered a dynamic phase of social work professionalization.

While documenting many laudable efforts in community building, self-sacrifice, and humanitarian endeavor, this historical narrative of the rise and development of SIPA from the early 1970s to the 1990s also details the youth-saving institution’s role in the “therapeutic state” (see Polsky 1991)): occupying a strategic site within a larger institutional gang control network that includes law enforcement, the social work establishment, media, schools, and funding institutions. This chapter has provided a micro-level detailing of counselors and social workers interacting with youth clients. Already mindful of popular law enforcement representations of “Filipino gangs having their origins in dreaded prison gangs of Manila,” social workers went about the job of processing, judging, and categorizing youth for prospective clienthood—whether “at risk,” “gang,” “wanna be,” or “non-gang.” As the cases cited illustrate, the process was at times contentious and highly negotiated, with counselors and teachers hotly disagreeing over which youths needed interventions and which did not. There was an apparent bias allegedly held by funders and teachers for academically achieving students—who were seen as college-bound. On the other hand, those that did poorly in school were seen as candidates for gang membership—a claim disputed by a former counselor

who said that even bright, college bound kids like him were hanging out with “gang” kids.

The task of managing problematic youth, compounded by the daunting requirement of seeking funding, brought constant stress to SIPA workers. Especially at the height of the gang problem in the 1980s, workers had their hands full dealing with youth clients and their parents, tracking down runaway kids, averting fights between warring gangs, and carrying out surveillance (keeping track of gang numbers, activities, and locations). “Walking a fine line between the cops and the kids” greatly added to the stress, as SIPA personnel had to maintain a precarious balance between youth and community advocacy on the one hand, and cooperation with the police on the other hand. Social workers at times got caught in the crossfire of police pursuing youth clients, or of the latter being raided at the SIPA premises by enemy groups. Despite deriving satisfaction and fulfillment from working with troubled kids, high stress levels ultimately led to “burn out,” partly explaining why SIPA youth savers reflected a high turnover rate.

VII. “WHO’S TAKING CARE OF OUR CHILDREN?”:THE COMMUNITY PRESS, YOUTH ACTIVISM, AND STUDENT WRITING

In his unpublished typescript titled, “Pilipino Americans: Youth Gang and Delinquency “ (undated, presumably late 1980s), SIPA founder Uncle Roy Morales opens the article with an extensive quote from journalist Clarito Samson’s article, “Who’s Taking Care of Our Children?” (see reference and critique of article below; Morales specifically cited Samson’s report about Filipino American kids dropping out of school, taking drugs, and committing crimes. Morales also quoted columnist Norbert Sacro’s ruminations about the plight of Filipino American youth (see my reference to Sacro below). These examples underscore the importance placed by community activists and SIPA on the community press in bringing issues like the gang problem to a wider audience. It shows that journalists are partners with community advocates in the claims-making process that is at the heart of the social construction of the gang problem.

At the vanguard of youth saving and empowerment in the Filipino American community, SIPA from its inception has maintained a working relationship with academia, particularly with the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. For many years Uncle Roy Morales taught the Pilipino American Experience course, thus helping to shape the minds of hundreds of young Filipino Americans and youth of other Asian American communities. The center places strong emphasis on Asian American community empowerment; through its course offerings, students become aware of issues faced at the community level. Theoretical learning is reinforced by actual immersion (field study) in the communities. Students are encouraged to intern at SIPA and other

social service agencies, or at least visit these agencies and gather information on social problems from counselors and social workers. Consequently, an ideology of youth-saving and empowerment combined with dominant structuralist/objectivist theories of gang and juvenile delinquency is effectively transmitted to college youths. This is mirrored quite clearly in student activist and college student writing presented in the latter half of this chapter.

According to Best (1989), claims-making is an act of communication intended to persuade. As claims-makers, Filipino American community activists in Los Angeles had been involved in raising awareness about the youth gang problem in various ways. Often it involved speaking before audiences in community events or at pan-Asian American conventions, in a bid to educate Filipino parents and community leaders about the dangers posed by the problem. At other times they met with government officials and submitted grant proposals for funding. At still other times they received support from members of a small, local Filipino American press that was willing to communicate SIPA's message and calls for help to a wider audience. This chapter examines rhetorical strategies (see Johnson 1989) used by news reporters, youth activists and college students on the subject of gangs and the gang problem. These include (1) Use of "grabbers" to evoke negative emotions; (2) Citation of expert opinions and use of official statistics [primarily law enforcement]; the bigger the numbers, the more serious the problem; and (3) Adoption of dominant structuralist/objectivist theories to explain the problem of gangs.

Evoking Negative Emotions

The news article often opens with a dramatic example intended to highlight the horrifying or dreadful consequences of gang membership. For instance, “Who’s Taking Care of Our Children?” by journalist Clarito Samson (Philippine Beat Feb/March 1989) begins with this dark introduction: “Somewhere up there Boogie (not his real name) is probably watching his fellow peewees, hoping that they do not succumb to the pressures of growing up and foolishly resort to the lethal game he played.”

This is an example of what journalists call a “grabber”: a provocative opening intended to elicit strong negative emotions like alarm, revulsion, and even fear among readers. Utilizing vivid and graphic imagery, the writer points to the tragic consequence of belonging to a gang: an early trip to heaven, never again to return to his buddies.

Other reporters open with a less dramatic but none the less dark and ominous pronouncement about a growing gang problem. For instance, in Cynthia Lopez-Dee’s “Yes, Filipino Youth Gangs Exist” (Filipino American News Aug 23-29, 1995), we read, “The Filipino young gang problem has worsened. Gang activities have turned more violent, membership increased and has become multi-ethnic, age of entry has lowered from late teens to as young as 12, and females have either joined their male counterparts or have formed their all-female gang.” Similarly, writing seven years earlier, columnist Norbert Sacro (“Kid Gang Growth,” Philippine American Free Press vol. 8 no.24, Sept 1-15, 1988) phrased his declaration of a worsening gang problem through questions in his opening paragraph, “Why the increasing crescendo of crime and violence in our

community? Why the worsening juvenile criminal gang behavior and senseless crimes against total strangers or innocent passersby?"

It is interesting to note that the developments cited by Lopez-Dee in 1995 as indicative of a worsening Filipino gang scene were already taking place seven years earlier (1988 was columnist Sacro's time of reportage; multiethnic composition, all-female cohorts, twelve-year-old recruits were already occurring). As for the "worsened" situation, my own extended field studies as well as historical assessment indicates that the gang phenomenon in the Los Angeles Filipino American community reached its heights in the 1980s; by the mid-1990s, gangs appear to have waned in appeal among Filipino American youths. What gained ascendancy and enormous popularity were party crews and car clubs that largely rejected violence while in pursuit of fun and excitement (see Alsaybar 2002; 1999; 1993).

My own research has shown that while gangs are more willing to resort to violence compared to other youth groups (like car crews, party clubs, college fraternities), it is not accurate to portray violence as an everyday occurrence or activity among Filipino gangs like Satanas (Alsaybar 1993). Perhaps because news reports are often based on one-time interviews between reporters that tend to carry stereotypes of violent gang members on the one hand, and of gang member interviewees that are eager to brag about their fighting prowess, articles tend to overstate the place of violence and criminality among gangs. Samson (*loc cit.*) for instance, cites a gang member named Mookie who told him that "violence is part of a gang member's daily menu"(underscoring mine.) At his tender age, he claims to have been involved in

numerous violent gang confrontations, seen youngsters get injured and die. He claimed he had used a revolver to scare away a rival gang member.”

An article published in a widely circulated Sunday news magazine in Manila, Philippines carried a subtitle that proclaimed boldly, “Filipino gangs are thriving and making war in the Land of Opportunity” (Frank Cimat, “Macho in America” in Sunday Inquirer Magazine, Jan 15, 1995). For readers in Manila, ten thousand miles away, one can just imagine the kind of scary mental images conjured by this type of report, despite field evidence to the contrary that by the time the reporter published his article, the phenomenon of party crews and car clubs were gaining in popularity and numbers while the appeal of gangs had been steadily declining.

Apparently to support his claims about “thriving” (proliferating), warlike Filipino gangs, the reporter presents a lone pee wee member of Satanas named Jose Dizon a.k.a. “Sharkie” (gang monicker). The report states that as part of his initiation into Satanas, Sharkie received an Uzi (a deadly assault weapon). (Note: in my two years of hanging out with the Satanas, I never saw Uzis and other kinds of handguns being given to new members as part of completed initiation.) “Their main weapons are high-powered assault firearms,” the report declares. It also quotes Sharkie as saying, “It’s common to see 12-year-olds with Uzis.” (Note: I am totally mystified by this claim.) The report also states that “entering a gang is easy, while getting out of it “may mean one’s life.” (Note: the getting out was indeed more difficult but the claim that entering Satanas “is easy” [based apparently on Sharkie’s testimony] goes against reality and would most certainly draw the wrath of the homeboys; see Alsaybar 1993).

Citation of Expert Opinions and Use of Official Statistics

News reports often bear testimonies of individuals that are considered experts on the subject of gangs. These include probation officers, police officers or sheriff deputies on anti-gang detail, social workers and counselors, and community activists. Expert testimony is deemed vital to the journalist's claim that there is a "worsening" gang problem or that Filipino gangs "are thriving" in America. The expert's opinion often includes an estimate of the number of gangs. Statistics often constitute the bedrock of an expert's testimony, as numbers are invested with an objective reality. Never mind that the experts will give an estimate with a wide range. The popular thinking, after all, is that numbers don't lie. Bigger numbers are favored, since they are assumed to "objectively" indicate the extent or gravity of the problem (see Best 2002). Their estimates are considered authoritative, since it is them (law enforcement officers) that engage in surveillance and intelligence gathering. Even when large numbers are cited, it is common to hear experts qualify that the estimate is "conservative," suggesting that the problem is far worse than surveillance and data gathering indicate.

Sometimes the news report will contain information on the number of Filipino gangs in Los Angeles County without citing the source. Sacro (1988) in his column states, "Filipino gangs are escalating so fast with approximately 250 youth gangs in LA County and a 'lot more are coming up...' Or as Samson (1989) put it, "They spring up in practically all cities where most Filipino families are situated.....with each gang having a constituency ranging from 20 to 200." (Note: even the Atty. General's report in 1992 [see Reiner] put the number of Filipino gangs at 50-60 in the County, way below 250).

In her lengthy report (1995), Lopez-Dee quotes a police officer who estimated the number of Filipino gangs in the city of Los Angeles at “30-50.” The officer added that “this is a conservative estimate since most gangs branch out or someone disconnected with the group starts another rival gang. Membership changes within six months or sooner thus the actual number cannot be determined.” Under a subheading titled “grim figures” printed in bold, another police officer cites the following scary statistics:

“Whenever a 12-year old joins a gang, 9 out of 10 will not finish high school. Before their eighteenth birthday, 75 per cent of them will have been arrested at one time. By their eighteenth birthday, 60 per cent will have been arrested two times. By their twenty-first birthday, if they stay in the gang, 8 out of 10 will be either in prison or dead.” (Note here that this recitation of statistics is so generalized, it does not take into account differences in arrest rates among different ethnic communities. Thus, in this particular context of a forum on Filipino community problems, it would appear that the statistics cited apply exclusively to Filipino gangs.) The same officer is quoted as having said that in Los Angeles county, out of roughly 1,121 homicides in 1994, 720 (64.2 per cent) were gang-related violence. (Note: many gang experts in academia like Malcolm Klein (1995) point out that the numbers depend upon the definition used; different police departments may have differing definitions of “gang-related.” The broader the definition used, the bigger the numbers will be and the narrower the definition, the smaller the numbers tend to be.)

Agreement With Structuralist/Objectivist Theories of Gang Causality

A reading of press coverage on Filipino gangs reveals that news reporters share the belief held by most community activists, youth activists and college students, law enforcement and social workers that gangs are “caused” by poverty and the breakdown of social institutions such as the family and school, or the failures of society. Sacro (op.cit) for example, states: “There are causes for these frightening problems. No society will ever effectively conquer crime unless it correctly identifies and eliminates the causes of crime....Many people blame rising crimes on the lack of police, on the easy availability of guns or drugs, or on under-employment, violent entertainment or poverty.” Manila-based journalist Cimatú (1995) writes that “Most Filipino Americans join gangs because of limited job opportunities, lack of family support systems, academic and racial harassment in school and communities.”

Lopez-Dee’s article (1995) stands out for presenting anti-objectivist, labeling perspective positions alongside conventional structuralist explanations of gangs. At the beginning of her article, she noted that there are conflicting views on the subject: whether to call the youths “gangs” or “youth groups.” She had apparently interviewed two community activists (Leo Pandac and Uncle Al Mendoza) who had decried the mislabeling of Filipino youths. From this perspective, police are so quick to deal with groups of Filipino teenagers as “gangs,” disregarding the reality that these boys band together based on the indigenous peer grouping called “barkada.” The preferred term is “youth group” rather than the police definition of “gang.” The barkada is viewed as a conventional socio-cultural institution, far from the dominant perspective that narrowly

views such groups as criminal gangs. After devoting a few paragraphs to this minority view, Lopez-Dee goes on to devote much more space to police officers' discourses on gang. In the end, her conclusion is evident in her report's title, "Yes, Filipino Youth Gangs Exist."

In Denial About Gangs: Focus on the Family

News reporters do not merely report news in a dispassionate and "objective" manner. In communicating concerns of community activists, they can go beyond mere reportage to advocacy and assumption of a quasi-parental, quasi-counselor role. They communicate a popular theme voiced by community advocates in various social events such as conventions, church activities, and symposia: that the problem of gangs is real, widespread, and growing, but parents and the community remain "in denial": hence, the need to intensify claims-making activities about the reality of the problem. For example, Lopez-Dee (op.cit.) quotes Gilbert Ayuyao, long-time youth counselor at SIPA as saying, "There is a problem out there. Yes, Filipino youth gangs exist. But the Filipino community would rather sweep it under the rug."

Journalistic empathy is reflected in Clarito Samson's titling of his piece, "Who's Taking Care of Our Children? (note the use of plural/possessive "our," and the parental air of the title.) Together with community activists there's a shared concern over the state of the immigrant Filipino family in the acculturative situation. After narrating the problems of troubled youth, Samson shifts his gaze and states, "one might wonder then

what kind of family background these kids have and what their parents are doing to maintain control over their children.” He then delves into the anatomy of dysfunction-breeding families where parents work double jobs, are out most of the time, and barely have quality time with children. His article promotes SIPA, the lone youth-oriented NGO that offers a wide range of programs and services for both youth and parents. The agency director at that time (Meg Thornton) is extensively quoted; she laments the lackadaisical attitude of Filipino parents towards help being given free at SIPA. “One of our main difficulties is convincing the parents of these children. Filipino families in general are not very receptive to social services. They do not like the idea of hearing from other people that their children are in some kind of trouble.”

Norbert Sacro bemoans the failure of parents to discipline their children; he makes the bold assertion that “The lack of discipline and self-discipline, are the major roots of all crime...” The SIPA Director and Eddie Villanueva, the street-smart former gang member both emphasize the importance of developing good communication between parents and children; Villanueva’s message to the boys was “don’t join gangs, it’s not worth it.” It is clear that the columnist wanted to communicate SIPA’s message to a wider audience, especially to Filipino parents and the community at large. At the end of his column, Sacro turns pastoral with this admonition: “Parents, how many of you strive to set a right example and train your children in the proper character education? The personalities of some children, maybe yours, demand more attention, guidance, a discipline coupled with affection and love.” (This admonition was immediately followed by a plug for SIPA: “If you have any problems about your kids write or call Eddie

Villanueva, Community Youth Gang Services. 144 S. Fetterly Ave. LA , CA 90022 tel. 213-266-4264”).)

Youth Saving Youth: Student Activists Against Gangs

Youth participation in claims-making about gangs and other problems confronting the Filipino American community dates back to the early 1970s; touched by the Asian American movement, Filipino American youths were deeply involved in SIPA’s formative years through various community immersion programs. Filipino American students at UCLA figured prominently in SIPA’s development. Their heightened political and social consciousness is attributable to the strength and vitality of UCLA’s Asian American Studies Center, which has maintained collaborative ties with various community service agencies serving immigrant Asian enclaves in Los Angeles. Many Filipino American youths discovered their ethnic identity and became “born again” Filipino Americans after taking courses at the Asian American Studies Center. Uncle Roy Morales’ Pilipino American Experience course was a major politicizing instrument of ethnic rebirth.

Courses that focused on the struggles and hardships of Filipino immigrants—from the pioneering farm laborers in the 1920s to the post-1965 wave of professionals in the 1970s through the 1990s, compelled many young Pinoy students to connect history with their own family and individual experiences. Many of them had come from cities and neighborhoods that were being swept by what was perceived to be a menacing “wave” of

gang activities. Having grown up in these neighborhoods, they were aware of gangs and even had friends that belonged to gangs. Back home they had most likely attended school or community seminars on the gang problem, often featuring police or sheriff's deputies as speakers. Being at a major research university that had strong ethnic studies programs gave them opportunities to venture beyond law enforcement perspectives and examine the gang phenomenon and other social problems in a broader and more critical manner.

As some of their writings featured here bear out,¹ they were introduced to dominant theories purporting to explain the "causes" of gangs; some even showed a remarkable facility in applying social science concepts. Others reflect a rhetorical strategy akin to that of news reporters (evocation of negative emotions, dependence on law enforcement testimonies and statistics). Student writers also express strong support for programs aimed at combating gangs and other youth problems. What stands out, however, in student writing (1980s and early 1990s) is the identification of "lack of identity" and racism as "causal factors" in the spawning of the gang problem in the Filipino American (and other minority) community. This lack of identity led to the kind of low self-esteem that was thought to be manifested by gang members and other troubled youths. Student discourse also reveals a closeness (or even connectedness that seems absent in journalistic reports) to the phenomenon that is the object of analysis arising from their real-life familiarity with gangs (i.e. having friends and family in gangs, encounter with gang members at parties and other social events). On the whole, student writing reveals that youth activists were no less passionate and perhaps even more historically analytical than their older community activists at SIPA, having the advantage

of being introduced to basic sociological/historical approaches to social problems, and having drawn from a common ideology that attributed youth and other social problems to racism and social inequality in US Society.

Precious insights into Filipino American youth constructions of the gang problem can be drawn from two particular issues of *Pacific Ties* (Feb and June 1990), the Asian/Pacific newsmagazine at UCLA. It is significant to note that these two special issues were published immediately after the 1980s: the decade that saw a moral panic arise in response to increased gang activity across virtually every ethnic and racial community in Los Angeles. The writers share the general tone expressed by media, community activists, and law enforcement about the “worsening” gang problem with no end in sight to the proliferation of more gangs. In an article entitled “Asian Gangs In L.A.,” (Feb 1990, pp.12-13), the two student co-authors employ the rhetorical tactic of provoking negative emotions by declaring in their opening paragraph that “gang activity has increased at an alarming rate in recent years” in the Pilipino and Vietnamese communities. It is significant to note that unlike newspaper reports that usually engage in routine citation of law enforcement statistics, this report omits numbers while making the claim that gangs have been increasing “at an alarming rate.” And towards the end of the article, a gang member is quoted to have aired this frightening prediction, “It’s never going to end because there are too many gangs for the police to do anything about us anymore.”

The prime mover behind these remarkable collections of student-written articles was the newsmagazine’s editor-in-chief then, Mark Pulido, who went on to become the

first Filipino American President of the UCLA Student Council.² In his editorial foreword to “Youth Issue 1990”(Pacific Ties Feb 1990), Mark discloses his deep concerns about the gang violence that was claiming young Filipino American lives and the youth criminality that had shattered the tranquility of his native suburban Cerritos, a more upper middle class city. What had goaded him to action was a letter written by a close friend informing him of the tragic death of a teenaged Filipina American; she had not been a party goer, but in this one party she attended, she had been fatally struck by a bullet in a drive-by perpetrated by Asian gangbangers. Mark notes that this incident stoked growing stereotypes about Asian Americans (specifically, Filipino Americans) as dangerous and violent. “Since then, there has been increasing tensions between the recent immigrant Asian groups and the long-time white community because of the increase in crime blamed upon us,” he wrote.

Mark waxes sentimental about his neighborhood, decrying the increasing high school drop out rates and the drug-trafficking that was allegedly going on in the school playgrounds. “That was the elementary school I went to!” he exclaims. “Those are the parks that I used to play at where they now jump 12-year olds into the local gangs. Those are my old friends whose younger brothers and sisters are getting pregnant and married. Things have seriously changed,” Mark sighed. Thus his decision as editor in chief to focus the month’s issue on the youth of Asian American communities. Ventilating the issues through the printed page was deemed by him to be a positive and constructive endeavor. Basically, he wanted to achieve two things: (1) to inform and educate the public, largely in denial, about the growing reality of youth gang violence in the Asian

American communities (he noted that youth violence and gang activity was not usually associated with Asian American communities but with Latinos and African Americans); and (2) to dispel gross misconceptions about Asian Americans as “model minorities” and of their children as all “whiz kids” and high scholastic achievers.

Mark Pulido’s discourse is reflective of the larger Asian American Studies Center and SIPA efforts to combat conservative (largely Republican, right-wing) attempts to eliminate affirmative action and other programs, on the argument by the latter that certain Asian minorities like Filipino Americans had become economically sufficient and no longer needed affirmative action. This special issue would serve to provide the public “an opportunity to see an alternative perspective on the status of our community’s youth,” Mark wrote. “I really think that some people have to wake up. Yes, Asians drop out of high school; yes, Asians run away from home; yes, Asians get pregnant at 15 years old; yes, Asians sell and abuse drugs like crack and ice; yes, Asian gangsters do “bang” and they also kill people with AK-47’s too,” he pointed out. In his view, the larger society’s media constructions were distorting Asian American reality; he said, “We are not immune to problems of this society. But the institutions of this society, like TV, the newspapers, and even the university, make it possible for Asians to remain so ignorant that they can be fooled into believing myths like these.”

Mark cites the activities of a Filipino student association in his native Cerritos to illustrate how high school youths had organized to combat stereotypes of Filipino American youths as gang members and juvenile delinquents. “Club Kaibigan” (literally translated, “club of friends”) endeavored to provide an ideal role model and a more

positive image of youth through cultural programs that would cultivate pride in Filipino cultural heritage and inform the wider multiethnic community of Cerritos about Filipino culture. The yearly cultural night was viewed as an outreach effort that, according to past president Emeben Baysic, “shows a positive side of Pilipino youth through the native cultural dances and song of their native Philippines.....From the start, we intended to put on this cultural night, overcome our adversities and hopefully shatter the stereotypes that have been placed on us---Pilipino youth....Our pride and concern for our Pilipino culture has kept us strong. Realizing how important it is not to lose our Pilipino culture [we] teach and educate others to that our culture will remain with the Pilipino youth forever. Even though we have experienced many hardships in organizing [the last cultural night], our determination didn’t stop.”

The activities of this high school ethnic youth club received the praise and support of a former president of UCLA’s collegiate Samahang Pilipino, who is quoted to have said, “We fully support them in their quest to overcome the problems and obstacles (stereotypes and prejudice in the city) they had to go through in order to put on their program. This performance serves as an inspiration to their parents, relatives, friends and the greater Pilipino community. We applaud their every attempt to preserve the values and traditions of our Pilipino heritage.” Some members of the club said that participation (in Club Kaibigan) was their way of dealing with community problems. Senior class President Larry Navidad felt that “by being involved I can be a positive role model...I can influence kids in a positive way.” Junior Michael Tabayoyong said that one of the goals of the club was “to show the rest of the Whitney campus and the greater community

what Pilipino culture is like and show that we're not all stereotypically Pilipino youth gang member."

"One interpretation of why there are so many problems among the youth is the lack of identity," wrote Mark Pulido. "This lack of identity is believed to be the result of ignorance about one's about one's own culture. Since many Pilipinos often loose their native culture in order to survive in America, many believe that this explains the feelings of low self-esteem and lack of self-importance among Pilipino youth." Mark quotes Larry Navidad as saying, "I think they are insecure because they don't know their identity. They don't know their past. See if they knew their culture for example, their native dances, or even their language, they would have a reason to be proud. But since they don't know any of these, they begin creating new things to become proud of like gangs....We're losing (our culture). Living here in America makes it hard to maintain our language and our cultural values, in fact you might call the gangs our new culture here in America, it's really scary but look around, it's happening."

The rest of Mark Pulido's report on Club Kaibigan describes and promotes an integrated government-funded program to combat gangs and other youth problems called "Southeast Partnership on Youth Violence." This partnership was made up of school board and city council members, concerned parents, and community activists. Mark apparently interviewed the director of this project, who expressed great optimism about it's acceptance by the community since he noted that "there's less denial and more open attitudes that 'yah we do have a problem—the media publishes the problem so we can't deny it" (Earlier, this director had been quoted as saying that denial seems stronger in the

higher socio-economic communities like Cerritos, where people “really refuse to see the problem.”) The Partnership had reportedly been lobbied by two Pilipino Clubs (Whitney’s Club Kaibigan and Cerritos’ Maharlika) to hold student-initiated after-school programs for elementary and junior high students, and to do peer counseling training sessions provided by another program called “Helpline.” The report ends with favorable evaluations by counselors and student participants of a ten-week youth leadership program that provided certain skills like listening, problem-solving, crisis intervention, group leadership and utilizing resources. There were also plans to set up after school programs featuring arts and crafts, sports, cultural dances, and tutorial sessions in area schools, to show that there are alternatives to gangs.

Mark’s closing note was this: “The problems of youth in our community have long been ignored and it is crucial at this point that everyone begin addressing these concerns. The concerned youth of the Pilipino community are the leaders of the future as they are leading the way for the entire community today. When dealing with the problems of the youth today, we now must look to the youth for the answers, they are too often misunderstood.”

Coming out four months after the “Youth Issues” issue, the Pacific Ties June 1990 issue was a special focus on Filipino and Filipino American history from a nationalist and Filipino American perspective. Thus it was dubbed the “Puro Pinoy” (translation: “all-Pilipino”) issue. In his editorial entitled, “The Need for a Pilipino Movement,” Mark Pulido proposed some solutions to the various problems facing the

Pilipino American community, including political empowerment that was sorely lacking in his native town of Cerritos: “education, organization, and involvement—by parents and the youth.” “Puro Pinoy” included articles such as “The History of Pilipinos in America;” “The Untold Story of the Philippine American War; Symbols of American Oppression;” and “Memories of America: a Conversation with Philip Vera Cruz” (revered farm worker organizer). Indeed, the development of a historical awareness and appreciation of indigenous cultural heritage was at the heart of Pulido’s idea of education as a tool for Pilipino American empowerment. “Rediscovering our own history is the first step in developing a stronger sense of pride and self-esteem that is being lost in the next generation of potential leaders. We need to develop classes, discussions, workshops on our history,” Mark wrote. At the same time, he envisioned a time when youth would engage in creative cultural endeavors in pursuit of an identity. A keen observer of youth cultural developments, he noted that “our youth continually support the African American community in its pursuit to express itself creatively and athletically.” Interestingly, he saw the Pilipino American youth cultural adoption of African American hip hop culture as “a result of a Pilipino cultural void here in America.” “Every generation of Pilipino teenagers seems to consistently produce its dance crews, graffiti artists, and DJs. Why is it that these dancing, musical, and artistic talents are so rarely continued after high school? is it so often that no one ever cuts a record or attempts to go to acting school, or even majors in art?” Mark asked.

Towards encouraging artistic and musical creativity among youth, Puro Pinoy interspersed poems, essays, and full-paged posters of Philippine heroes Bonifacio and

Rizal amid the more serious historical articles dissecting colonialism and racism. It featured an article on the indigenous music of the Southern Islamized Philippines; a complementary report featured Filipino American recording artist, Eleanor Academia-Magda, noted for fusing indigenous Philippine music with contemporary western musical forms. An article on Filipino martial arts (particularly stick fighting) dealt with the role played by Filipino warriors and their indigenous traditions of fighting in the struggle against colonial invaders.

Notable in the way it reflects Mark Pulido's concern over the problem caused by gangs is his lengthy article entitled, "Youth Gangs and the Pilipino Community." One would be led to think that this article perhaps would have fit better in the preceding "Youth Issues" issue, but Mark's opening statement in a way justifies the inclusion in "Puro Pinoy" of a treatise on Pinoy gangs as part and parcel of the ongoing history of Pilipino Americans: "The topic [of Pilipino youth gangs] is a crucial and highly relevant issue today in that it is not an isolated phenomena but in fact it has emerged and developed into a subculture for a large sector of our community and presents to us, a direct reflection of what lies ahead for the next generation of Pilipinos in America." Mark traces the origins of Pilipino gangs in America to hardcore Filipino gangs in the national prison in Metro Manila. The gangs migrated to America as part of post-1965 waves of migration; "gangs from the Philippines were seen organizing in large urban centers like San Francisco and Los Angeles." Pulido's account relating gang distribution and movement to patterns of Filipino immigration—first to Filipino Town area in LA in the 1970s and then to the suburbs in the 1980s is historically accurate. "Up until this

point [the 1970s] the development of gangs remained exclusively recent immigrant phenomena, but by the 1980s with the increase of Pilipinos moving into suburbs and having children, more gangs began to emerge out of the need for ethnic identification among these American-born youth,” Mark noted.

Pulido’s paper addresses commonly-asked questions like “why (what reasons) youths join Pinoy gangs” and “functions of gangs” (i.e. peer pressure, need to belong, feelings of inadequacy, need for protection, the glamour of being with a well-known gang, etc.). He also brings the reader into the Pinoy gang cultural world, providing descriptions of initiation rituals and gang hierarchy and structure. He describes gang activity by classifying various groups according to degree of conventionality and criminality—from harmless barkadas and DJs, party crews, and car crews to violent gangs which he said also engage in drug trafficking, gun-running, arson, murder, and rape. He described Pinoy gang attire and how it functions as a symbolic marker differentiating a gang from other groups. And he was politically correct in drawing attention to the emergence of Pilipina (girl) gangs and describing for readers the mentality behind joining, personality structure, close affinity to boy gangs (being auxiliaries to them) and their role in boy gang criminality. Reflecting on wayward young Filipina Americans leads Mark to expresses deep lament: “The gang situation in our community has evolved to this point, where our young girls are encouraging, even assisting our young men to digress. This is a truly sad situation.”

It is clear that Mark did not write this article merely to provide data that would be useful to counselors, social workers, and public policy makers dealing with the gang

problem. He had a greater objective: to convince a community “in denial” that the problem was real! Thus he declared, “Pilipino youth gangs are a reality within many of our communities such as Los Angeles, West Covina, Long Beach, Carson, and Cerritos, as well as other areas in Southern California. In order to effectively address the issue of youth gangs, our communities must first accept the fact that Pilipino youth gangs do exist.” To prove his claim that a gang problem was indeed real, he and two other UCLA students set out to gather statistics that would validate the “objective reality” of the gang problem. “We set out to do an informal random study of attitudes and perceptions of the presence of gangs and whether or not the community as a whole had a responsibility to deal with them,” Mark wrote. “Approximately one hundred high school students, dropouts, and parents were asked if Pilipino youth gangs were a definite problem in our community. We determined from our findings that 9 out of 10 students acknowledged the existence of gangs and 7 out of 10 students believed that something definitely needs to be done to solve the gang situation in the community. However, during a similar random survey of Pilipino parents in the community, only 5 out of 10 parents acknowledged that gangs actually existed and only 3 out of 10 parents believed that it was the responsibility of the community to find a solution,” he reported.

Mark used these findings to chastise the older generation that “had no concrete ideas on how the community should actually go about dealing with gangs.” He feared that because the older generation didn’t know what was happening “out there, then our future is in serious jeopardy.” He observed that the older generation’s way of dealing with the problem was “to move away from the areas of high Pilipino concentration, in a

futile attempt to get away from the problems....instead of attacking it from its roots.”

Mark felt that college students as well as high school students would be more effective in dealing with the gang issue, since they were much more accepting of the problem. He suggested that there were positive aspects in gangs that could be channeled for more constructive ends. “Perhaps, if our youth can find some way to channel the negative energies of gang life into more positive ones, then this may be the first step to addressing the issue. The unifying forces in the youth gangs exist; role models from the veteranos in the youth gangs exist; leadership development exists; and recruitment exists. Pilipino youth gangs have a lot of high potential in its structure. All we need is more acceptance, more understanding, and more positive outlets for our youth, now!” Mark wrote with passion and an acute sense of urgency.

Mark saw gangs as a grave problem that placed “the future of our youth in serious jeopardy;” in fact he feared that due to community inaction, it would take “an entire generation” to regain the leadership void. Against this gloomy outlook, he at the same time brought the good news that the problem was well within the Filipino American community to overcome. In his conclusion and analysis, Mark did not `primarily lay the blame for gangs on social, economic, or other structural factors; instead, he focused on the capability of the community to solve the “enigma” (his term) of the gang subculture that was “alive and flourishing.” He said that the problem was “a serious reflection of years of neglect and apathy towards the future generations of our people....the direct result of the lack of conscious effort to devise a well thought out plan to develop a

positive and constructive cultural identity for our people...” Lack of organization, blindness, and denial had led to the strengthening of the Pinoy gang subculture.

To “turn the tide” of this subculture, Mark proposed the development of “positive, intelligent, and conscious role models for our youth, to counteract the role modeling that the veteranos of these gangs have provided for them.” He saw education as the key towards attaining this goal, with more Filipino American students training for leadership in college. He envisioned an efficient state-wide network of support connecting college students with high school students. He wrote, “These role models need to be in touch with every major community in the state and begin to actively influence the masses of youth through programming that will entail raising the ethnic consciousness of our people.” In this regard, he called for the establishment of Pilipino youth organizations in the high schools and the promotion of other positive alternatives to gangs.

Synthesis

SIPA, the social service agency, received vigorous support from the local community press and from the UCLA Asian American Studies Center. The former buttressed SIPA’s anti-gang efforts through articles, news reports, and commentaries that drew attention to the gang problem and sought the help and cooperation of the community, while the latter encouraged field programs that had students going to SIPA for community involvement and research. For years Royal Morales, SIPA founder and moving spirit, taught the popular Pilipino American Experience course at UCLA; he

made this course an effective forum for orienting youth to community problems, among which gangs were of great concern.

Community writers and reporters used the rhetorical devices of evoking negative emotions, citing expert opinions and using statistics, and drawing on structuralist explanations on what causes gangs to drive home their message about a grave and deteriorating problem that was causing youths to “fall through the cracks.” By and large, the local community writers reflected a genuine aspiration towards finding a solution to the gang problem—a concern bordering on the paternal and familial, exemplified by the article titled, “Who’s Taking Care of Our Children?” But their reports and commentaries dramatically mirror the moral panic over gangs that had swept the Larger Society and the local ethnic community, giving rise to an overblown fear that the gang problem would only grow worse with the passage of time.

Mark Pulido’s discourses reveal an eagerness and commitment to connect classroom learning to real life social issues like youth gangs. Mark and other young Filipino Americans of his generation came to grips with the gang problem while growing up in their own neighborhoods; therefore, they reflected a better grasp of the phenomenon than the older writers and reporters. Many of the youth who joined gangs were their own classmates, boyhood buddies, or perhaps cousins or relatives. Mark Pulido was clearly aware of the youth partying scene, and he in fact saw a “cultural void” that was being filled by African American hip hop. Curiously, Mark was writing close to the time of transition which would see the full flowering of hip hop-oriented Filipino American

youth culture: the rise of party crews, car clubs, “dark boy” fraternities and sororities, and the widely unanticipated decline of gangs—the subject of the next chapter.

VIII. PARTY CULTURE: NETWORK AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF FUN AND EXCITEMENT AMONG FILIPINO AMERICAN YOUTH GROUPS

Conventional (structuralist) approaches tend to segregate or isolate “problem youth” from “ordinary” or “non-problematic youth” in the conventional world. In this chapter, I widen my ethnographic lenses by looking at both groups of youths interacting in everyday life, bound together by participation in a social network cutting across ethnic, spatial, and class boundaries. This fascinating network revolves around the pursuit of fun and excitement among Filipino American youth groups, giving rise to what I call “party culture,” a complex of partying and other related festive and leisure activities.

The groups that share Party Culture call themselves “crews,” groups of friends or peers that hang out on a regular basis, bound together by a common passion or interest. Party crews and car crews make up the core of party culture; smaller hip hop crews like breakdancers, graffiti artists, and all female dance groups constitute a second layer of this network. A third, outer layer, is made up of college fraternities, sororities, and other campus-based Filipino American clubs and organizations.

Partying among Filipino American youths is significant for a number of reasons: (1) it plays an important role in constructing social identities such as ethnicity and gender; (2) it reveals an emergent pattern of culture production and youth entrepreneurship previously undocumented—giving rise to a “niche market” and spawning youth-oriented businesses generating income to the millions of dollars; (3) it reveals that in the Filipino American community, gangs are far from being isolated—that they interact, to a greater degree than commonly thought, with conventional society; and

(4) by providing non-violent “fun and excitement” options, the rise of a youth lifestyle built around cars and partying appears to have diminished the seductive appeal of gangs. Thus, while social workers and probation officers are puzzled by the unusually quiet gang front, youths are joining the hundreds of party crews and car crews that have sprouted in Filipino and Asian suburban enclaves.

Although, to the outside world, gangs tend not to be acknowledged as integral units of Party Culture, insiders do not see any anomaly in gang members freely and actively mixing with them in the night clubs, for as long as they don’t create trouble. By and large, Party Culture maintains an environment that is friendly towards all youth groups, including gangs: in fact, gang style is “cool,” but violence is abhorred. A closer look, therefore, at this “gang/crew” crossover is crucial to understanding the dynamics of Party Culture and even addresses an important question raised by policy oriented gang researchers: how are gangs related to other youth collectivities? (Huff 1996).

The Gang/Crew Crossover

The image of gangs as “Other,” as isolated and distinct groups of individuals belonging to underclass and minority communities, has been romanticized in journalistic as well as social science writing. Popular images of deviance tend to be constructed when sole focus is directed towards identifying constitutive traits or characteristics that allegedly make a gang member “different” from other individuals, or when gangs are assumed to be confined to the underworld—bound to the group and isolated from the conventional social world. A close look at Party Culture suggests that far from being

confined to the criminal underworld, such groups carrying the gang label interact with conventional society and maintain more extensive social networks than is commonly believed—in the same manner that groups labeled “non-gang” cross the boundaries defining conventionality and deviance by maintaining ties with gangs and are attuned to hip hop, the cultural style closely identified with African American gang culture.

Off-hand, certain conditions underlie the “gang/non-gang” crossovers, the most basic being that since youth spend prodigious amounts of time and energy seeking fun and excitement, and are active consumers of a largely globalized popular culture, both “gang” and “non-gang” youths tend to gravitate towards common leisure pursuits. Generally, although each crew revolves around a dominant type of leisure activity, each will have a sprinkling of individuals that engage in the principal activities of other crews i.e. a party crew will have members who also race or fix up cars, or car crews will have members that party a lot, or perhaps break dance too. The same is true of gangs, says Ricky, a veterano-turned youth counselor: “In every gang you’ll always find someone who loves cars, one who loves partying. FTM, for example, was also a racing crew. They all went to the races together, they went all to the dances together, they all had meetings together. They all had fast cars. ”This partly explains why not unusually, youths will maintain multiple membership in groups or move from one type of group to another through time. And more recently, with the seeming decline of the gang appeal, some gang cliques have easily transformed into party crews and others have metamorphosed into drag racing crews.

Secondly, within the Party Culture network, gangs are hardly viewed as criminal "others" in the manner that social workers or law enforcement and media would view them. It is often the case that gang members are known to other youths and viewed no differently than other individuals in the community because they grew up in the same neighborhoods, played together in the same parks, belong to the same churches, and attend the same schools. And not unusually, youth social networks are reinforced by ties or interconnections within extended kinship and fictive kin (ritual compadrazgo) networks.

Thirdly, Filipino American youths seem less bound to ethnic community boundaries and spaces than their parent generation. Through Party Culture, they maintain networks across geographic/spatial and ethnic boundaries, are highly mobile (they drive fast cars, almost exclusively Asian/Japanese) and manifest a greater propensity than the parent generation for interacting with individuals of other ethnicities.

A basic egalitarian, barkada-type structural set up cuts across the spectrum of youth groups. Hanging out with crew mates or homeboys and engaging in common interests are the most significant preoccupations. The hip hop gang style is pervasive—Nike, Adidas, and Nautica gear for male and female; baggies, oversized shirts for boys, hoochie-style denim shorts and tank tops for girls. The "pampador" cut and bald look are the popular haircut among boys. Gang argot seems to be universal (addressing each other as "homies" or "homegirls" is standard; expressions like "hit up," "being down for the 'hood" are commonplace). Since gang style is so much "in," it is often difficult to

differentiate between “gang” and “non-gang” based on external appearance or rituals of interaction.

While there is a universal aspiration towards fun and excitement, gang members appear to exhibit a greater willingness to use violence to achieve certain ends, or to use it as a resource for constructing masculine and group identities. Said Ricky:

Racers and party goers will go to the night club and say, “let’s go pick up girls.” The gang members think a little differently; he’ll say, “let’s go pick up a fight.” When I was a pee wee (young homeboy), I wasn’t looking for girls, I was only looking for gangbangs. The dancers, the DJs, they’re all looking for girls. But still they’re all related because everyone is at a club...Everyone is at a race. They’re all related.

Fred, a party animal and youthful entrepreneur, expressed a similar viewpoint:

A gang will take care of each other. Party crews aim to have fun, not to look for trouble.

Gangs are always looking for guys they don’t like, or someone they hate. On the other hand, the party crew mentality is, “Let’s see who’s here, let’s go where the girls are...The gangster mentality is, “Who the fuck is here.” They’re looking for girls too, but they’re looking for what gang is here. If you’re a gang member, you walk in hard, you know. If you’re a party crew you just come in like..make a scene, a happy scene, you know.

The reputation for being “big and bad,” however, does not necessarily make them “pariahs” or lead to stigmatization or isolation within Party Culture, where they assume an “enforcer-protector” kind of role. Thus while most other crews profess sole aspiration to fun and violence-free leisure, they will “clique up” with gangs that are more than willing to provide “back up” and carry out retaliatory or punitive actions for them. Cliquing up represents a less serious type of involvement that stops short of outright

membership in a gang; it means that an individual or his crew can be friends and even hang out without being subject to the rules and obligations expected of gang members, such as participation in violent or criminal acts. Especially among the older adolescent age bracket, mixed gang---non-gang peer groups hanging out together in Filipino American enclaves is a common phenomenon. Fred, now in his mid-twenties, reminisced:

“I was with Jefrox (a Filipino American gang in the mid-Wilshire district). We were also a party crew. “Way Too Drunk” was the name of our party crew. So many Jefrox homeboys joined, so we became like Jefrox. We were half and half, half regular people, half Jefrox. When your crew goes out and there’s trouble, you get into fights too, you know. I mean, just like a gang, you take care of your family.”

Such mixed groups not infrequently find themselves in situations where they have no choice but to fight, thus assuming a “gang-like” persona. Break dancing, car racing, and partying crews at times find themselves being hit up and challenged to a fight for being identified with gangs they are cliqued up with.

Theta Delta Beta: From Party Crew to Filipino American Fraternity¹

While Filipino fighting barkadas were engaging Latino gangs in the streets, Filipino American youths at a university campus were dealing with their own social identity issues; at some point they became enthused with the idea of forming a brotherhood of their own ethnicity. A parody of the Greek system, they named their fraternity “Theta Delta Beta” or “The Dark Boys.” It was officially founded in 1990 at the University of California, Irvine (Alpha Chapter). Beta Chapter at California State University Fullerton was founded in 1992 while Gamma Chapter was founded at UCLA

in 1994. In an interview with researcher Grace Borrero, George Quitariano (one of the founders) expressed his feelings about the Greek system at UCI:

I hated all the fraternities on campus...Even though my freshman year I rushed, I found out that it was really a segregated type of organization....After a couple years at UCI, I did a parody. A bunch of older guys in Kababayan, they did one, too. It was called Phi Omega Beta, for FOB. Guys that were seniors when I was a sophomore. So, I kind of got the idea from them.

The Dark Boys started out as a **party crew** and a basketball crew. As they got more serious and membership was growing, Quitariano wrote a four-point creed that emphasized intellectual awareness, social responsibility, integrity, and brotherly love. Members perform community service such as assisting in hypertension screenings with Pilipinos in Community Health and helping out with regional food banks.

Every active member of TDB undergoes pledgeship, varying in duration among the chapters from ten to sixteen weeks. One of the components of pledgeship is “hazing,” an initiation ritual whose purpose and main objective is “to unify the pledge class.” Henry Cabillon of Gamma Chapter, Alpa Class, had this to say about hazing:

It creates character. Like they say, the body is the temple of the mind. Hazing promotes unity because the class has to work together as a unit. The more trouble or strife you go through, it makes you stronger and closer together because you guys have to go through something like that. You have to figure out how you’re going to get through it and hyou need each other. And that’s how hazing works....You’re forced to work with other people and, whether you like it or not, you’re going to get close. That’s why it carries on after you become active. You’re not ever going to lose that bond because that’s something that you and every other Theta has done. You guys have gone through something together and you guys made it. That’s how I feel with my bros and hazing is responsible for that.”

Pledgeship culminates in “Hell Night,” described as “a mental and physical test to see if they (pledges) have bonded and show a genuine concern for each other. One of the TDB founders said that “Hell night is all the weeks of pledgeship put into one night. Once Hell Night is complete, the pledges cross over. A line is made on the ground with the actives on one side and the pledges on the other. The pledges then cross the line and enter the ‘dark side.’”

Borrero writes that hazing in TDB became controversial. Samahang Pilipino, the Filipino American student association at UCLA, issued a statement addressed to its members that they were not affiliated with TDB and “did not support its actions.” Fear was expressed that affiliation with an organization that hazes could jeopardize Samahang Pilipino’s status as a recognized and duly sanctioned campus organization. Another controversy was sparked by racy flyers designed by two pledge classes at UC Irvine. The flyers featured partially naked women in provocative poses. One of the flyers had a caption that read, “Come....and bow down to The Dark Boys.”

Although TDB is a male fraternity, women who are considered good friends of the boys are invited to become their “little sisters” (“lil’ sisses”). These women friends often attend basketball games and hang out with the boys. “The main function of a lil’ sis is to support her big bro, just as the big bro supports his lil’ sis. The lil’ sis’/big bro relationship is one of mutual concern and familial love,” writes Borrero. Women who aspire to be lil’ sisses undergo a “rushing process that is not as challenging as that of the pledges.” They simply have to attend meetings and other events and “plan a dinner with the pledges for the actives. The main goal of the rushing process is to prove one’s love

and understanding of the family of Theta Delta Beta. Once that is established, she can become a lil' sis."

The Rise of the Filipino American Club Scene

The rise of Party Culture in the Filipino American community can be traced back to the mid 1980s when the youth scene was much less diverse and gangs were the dominant and highly visible type of group. In an ethnic community seemingly lacking in visible role models for the youth, one DJ (disc jockey) recalls that the Filipino homeboys (especially Satanas) looked cool and attractive because they had the proud look and stance of bad asses, drove fast cars, and had the company of the prettiest females in town. Some had the phrase "Pinoy Pride" tattooed across their backs. Back then, either being in a gang or being cliqued up with one was the "in" thing. House parties were vulnerable to drive-by shootings and the early flyer parties staged in Hotels in Downtown L.A. were at times abruptly ended by gang fighting in the dance floor.

In tandem with enterprising promoters (these pioneering youths were just in their midteen years), youthful Filipino DJs played a central role in creating a Filipino club scene in Los Angeles. Achieving this feat is attributable, to no insignificant degree, to getting cliqued up with the gangs (performing gigs for them on a more or less regular basis and in the process, being identified with them) and riding on the popularity of gang-associated hip hop culture. Since gangs treated the party scene as some kind of turf which they lorded over (and they were among the most avid of party goers), gang members were among the early youth entrepreneurs who saw the business potential in

flyer parties. But the biggest and most successful production crews realized early on that in order to bring the Filipino parties to the established night clubs, the outbreaks of gang-instigated violence in the dance floor, ticket lines, or at the parking lot after the dance, had to be curbed. A safe environment had to be created for the party goers. They accomplished this by imposing tighter security measures (at higher financial cost) and waging a “fun-without-violence” type of campaign among their ranks. Meanwhile, the production crews that failed to secure their parties lost their crowds, lost their business, and quickly faded into oblivion.

Isaiah Dacio, known to legions of party crew members and hip hop radio listeners as “Icy Ice,” is one of the founders of Legend Entertainment, the most celebrated production crew in the Filipino American club scene. One of the few DJs that managed to stay neutral during those times when being cliqued up with gangs was the norm, Icy Ice presents a disc jockey’s historical perspective on the rise of the Filipino American club scene of Los Angeles:

Legend started out like any other group that’s out there today—a group of friends that grew up together... We all lived in Carson; the core of Legend lived within a two mile radius of each other. So we’re always walking distance... we’d ride our bikes to each other’s house. This started in 1988. I was in 10th grade in high school. But even before Legend, we were part of a group called “Spectrum,” headed by a guy named Jimmy Corpus. He was from the Temple area... We were a bunch of young high school kids, and then he was I’d say, my age or older. This guy Jimmy is the father of our whole scene here; in the mid-seventies he was doing little parties in the Downtown area. And in the late seventies that’s where he started to throw parties at the Hyatt Hotel, the Biltmore, the Ambassador when it was still around... Those were the big Filipino parties back then. Coming into the eighties he started to work with Black groups and other people, and his biggest events were staged at the Sports Arena. Those events were not purely Filipino—there were African Americans and anglos. But he was always known for his Hyatt dances. That’s when the Omni was Hyatt then.

I first met him in New Year's of 1986. I was only thirteen then, and this was my first experience in a party and seeing a Filipino party...I was brought in there by friends of mine who I go to church with. They introduced me to Jimmy. He was looking for a new DJ, and so he found me. My friends said, "You should try out this young guy, he's really good." And so Jimmy came out, it was all good timing. The rest is history. I got into Spectrum and brought in my closest friends. We stayed with Spectrum for two years and then, things happened; we went our different ways. Jimmy was around for one more year. Then Legend started. But we learned a lot from Jimmy. We weren't old enough to do our own big production dances...we were just doing private parties, just things along the way...But when we graduated from high school in 1990, that's when we pulled our money together. Many of us were already working then. Another guy was Tom Corpus, no relation to Jimmy. Tom was the one who brought together Rene Log in Downtown, who was with Majestics then. And there were a couple of guys in Cerritos with Public Image; then there was another guy, Rhetmattic, who was in Double Platinum and Ultra Dimensions. So there were four groups that all came together and formed United Kingdom.

United Kingdom was strong till 1992. If Jimmy Corpus took the Filipino party scene to the hotels and small halls, United Kingdom took it a step higher and brought it to the night clubs—the first time Filipinos got into actual night clubs. In 1991 they got into Spice night club, right off Hollywood. Spice is not there anymore, it's now called the Diamond Club. We were just a small group doing school dances then. We were doing small dances in Carson at this place called Samerico Hall. We were doing all-ages parties, while United Kingdom was doing a lot of 18 and over, 21 and over. By the time 1992 came around, United Kingdom had died down...that's when we picked up the slack and we put together the night club called "Source" Downtown. At the same time we had our Legend in San Diego for our friends down there. The biggest dance we held with United Kingdom was in San Diego at the Hanaleah Hotel. At that party that's where the "Beat Junkies" was formed. All of us were friends, all the DJs of different groups from different areas. But back then, disc jockeying had already died out, because gangs were very dominant then...So there were only a few that were true to the disc jockeying art form. And that's where we started the Beat Junkies.

From about 1988 till 1992-93 gangs were heavy. That's about the time when everyone had to be cliqued up with a gang...STS, CPC, BNG, PR. PR was really big, from Glendale to West Covina...Oh God. MP, Rebel Boys. Gangs were everywhere, and everyone was part of a gang. That's one reason why Spectrum died because there was so much violence at their dances..But there was fighting too in our younger parties. United Kingdom was known then for safe parties, the more mature crowd 21 and up. After 1992-93 gangs started to decline and partying and drag racing were on the rise. I'd say, part of it that as the older

guys mature, not as many inflow of younger people came in, so that kind of killed the growth of the gang. Partying and the racing scene became so big that kids had alternatives...They went to either one or both, and the gangs were not an option anymore.

Network and Social Organization

The ultimate individual aspiration or goal in Party Culture is to achieve popularity: to “get known” for excellence in a type of activity that is highly valued (such as car racing, prowess in disc jockeying, breakdancing, emceeing, etc.) But getting known does not result from sheer strength of individual talent or abilities: it is largely dependent upon one’s ability to roam the social field and build effective networks. Led by innovative and enterprising DJs and promoters, the leading Filipino American party crew in L.A. is able to assemble together the largest crowds (up to 1500 or more) **on a regular, weekly basis**—a feat that adult organizations in the Filipino American community would find difficult to replicate. They are able to accomplish this feat largely on account of their networking abilities. Since they are the prime movers of Party Culture, I will first describe in brief the internal structure of the party crew, and then elucidate on the wider network involving other youth groups when I discuss the three basic types of partying events. Currently, there are around 30 party crews in the Filipino American community that are all engaged in throwing parties for fun and profit; however, if those other Japanese American groups that crossover into the Filipino American community are included, the number would increase to around 50, according to David Gonzales, the lead market strategist of Legend Entertainment. “The crowds crossover, they go to both.”

The Party Crew

Generally, a party crew is made up of “promoters” who promote the parties mainly by handing out or distributing flyers. A party crew is also called a “production crew.” Its core is made up of the main promoters and perhaps two or three DJs—usually the founding members. Among the bigger and older crews, this core is called the “production crew,” while all other promoters surrounding and supporting it are the party crew. The main promoter is the “brain” and chief strategist, wielding broad powers and authority with regards to business matters and the operations of the group. But it is the disc jockeys, particularly those with established reputations and have spots in popular radio stations, that function as the “heart and soul” of the party crew. It is said that every party crew has at least two or three DJs. Party crews vary in numbers, ranging from small groups of five to bigger ones made up of twenty to sixty promoters. They range in age from 15 to 25. Males outnumber females by a ratio of 3:1. Promoters tend to be “party animals” who may also be actively engaged in fixing up cars or drag racing and other pursuits identified with hip hop culture (like break dancing and graffiti writing).

The party crews generally tend to disavow or play down gang connections. But considering that gangs figured prominently in the early days of the Filipino club scene, it is not unusual for party crews to be led by older cohort gang members called *veteranos* or “O.G.s” (original, founding members). Unlike the late 1980s and early 1990s, however, the dance floors are no longer treated as gang turf, and even the *veteranos* themselves do their utmost to prevent violence from breaking out in their parties. But when violence does erupt, as it still tends to happen in all-ages parties, the gang rears its ubiquitous

head: it is often the case that fighting almost always occurs between individuals belonging to rival gangs. Or it may involve a gang member providing back up to a non-gang friend belonging to a non-gang crew. Even when gang members do not go to the club expressly to look for trouble, they are there “to back up _____,” the lead promoter of the party crew who is their *veterano* homeboy. Although private security guards are normally hired to preserve the peace, younger homeboys relish their roles as “protectors” and enforcers” of their ‘hood and of all the other crews that are cliqued up with them. While they often become a lightning rod for trouble, they view their presence in the dance floor as a necessary deterrent against rival groups that may have aggressive intentions.

The proliferation of party crews and car crews and their merger into a vibrant Party Culture reflecting both a Filipino American and trans-Asian youth lifestyle has provided alternatives to joining gangs. If gangs were the dominant type of social group during the late 1980s and early 1990s, party crews and car crews have become the most attractive youth groups to join today. Witness the long lines of male and female youth, many barely 14 or 15, patiently waiting for the doors to open at a flyer party in some night club. Currently, nothing is more “cool” or “in” than to belong to a party crew. Tantalized by the allure of partying and fixing up cars, youths in their early twenties and younger ones in their mid-teens have told me that it is “stupid” to join gangs. “Why join a gang when you can join a party crew and still meet girls and have fun, without getting hurt or even killed?” is a common sentiment expressed.

In the course of fieldwork, I came upon a party crew led by *veterano* gang members that subjects recruits to entrance rituals which appear to parallel the jumping in rituals of gangs. Gary, a gangly fifteen year old, narrated how he was “jumped in” by a small group of party crew lead promoters:

While riding with some promoters, one of the girls joked, “Peter hasn’t been initiated yet.” The guys picked up the joke; they took me to a two-storey house with a very high ceiling. I was blindfolded and led to a room. Then they asked me questions like “Are you down for _____ (name of the party crew)?” “What do you think of _____ (name of the arch-rival party crew)?” Then they took off the blindfold. Two big guys were holding baseball bats. Uh-oh, I said to myself, I’m going to get hurt. A third guy was carrying a chair, as if ready to throw it at me. “Don’t worry,” they said. “If you’re really down for _____, you’ll be able to take this. Bruises heal easily.” I was told to face the wall and spread my feet apart. The guys locked their arms around my legs and then threw me up, sending me spinning in the air. I felt both scared and excited, not knowing what was going to happen to me.

Initiation rituals such as this one cited may be the exception rather than the norm: bound to occur among newer party crews with strong gang leadership and connections. Especially among bigger and older groups, new promoters are introduced without fanfare at regular meetings. Based on her recollection of how she was formally introduced to her crew, Karen said, “You walk in late to a meeting, and of all a sudden the leader announces, “let’s welcome our new promoter!” Or the leader simply asks you to stand by his side, then he introduces you. And then you tell everyone who you are, and everybody looks at you, checks you out and see what you’re all about and stuff.”

Getting into a party crew means a lot, especially if the crew is a well-known one. The bigger and more famous the name of the crew, the more membership in it as a

promoter becomes a source of prestige and pride. And the more prestigious a crew is, the more difficult it is to get in.

An individual who joins a party crew assumes the responsibility of working to ensure the successful execution of the crew's ventures, the flyer parties. Promoters are generally not paid for the work they do. But non-monetary compensation comes in the form of the prestige and pride that comes with being part of the crew; the opportunity to work and rub elbows with some of the most famous DJs and promoters in town; the invaluable "hook ups" (opportunity for social and business networking) one makes; the privilege of free admittance to "the finest flyer parties and clubs in town," and being able to bring in a few guests for free via the VIP line.

A promoter is expected to show dedication and commitment to the one responsibility he or she has agreed to assume upon getting into the crew: actively promoting. To promote basically means helping inform the clientele (the dance crowd) of the coming dance party and ensuring good attendance thereat. Three complementary strategies for disseminating flyers are widely used: (1) direct mail; (2) manual passing out or distribution by individual promoters among friends, relatives, and strangers; and (3) manual distribution by groups called "promotion teams" that fan out to other competing clubs.

Corollary to helping out with the dissemination of flyers is attendance at crew meetings, usually held once a week at an appointed regular meeting place. Some crews take a weekly roll call, in order to see who's active and who's not. It is extremely important for promoters to attend these weekly meetings, since crew leaders give

briefings and updates on the projects and listen to the promoters' reports on the flyer dissemination in other clubs. But most importantly, it is at these meetings when stacks of flyers are apportioned to each promoter for individual distribution, and when the entire crew participates in placing postage stamps on the hundreds or even thousands of flyers sent to individuals in the direct mail list.

In actuality, crew leaders cannot determine whether individual promoters are passing out the flyers or not. One common practice is to mark the flyers with the promoter's name, so that the main promoters who constitute the production can know who's doing the job or not (assuming that the flyer's come back at the nightclub gate). But not every club goer knows that if you bring the flyer in, you get a discount; a great number of marked flyers do not return, thus minimizing the reliability of the practice. Most club goers throw away the flyers; others, especially younger ones, compile the flyers (tacking them to their bedroom walls or filing them in their scrapbooks).

Going in small groups or teams to other clubs in order to pass out flyers is called "hitting up clubs." The "promotion team" is a concept that Legend Entertainment borrowed from record companies—which fields out teams that distribute CDs, tapes, and other products at night clubs and dance parties. Sometimes promoters will pay their way into other clubs, dance for a while and leave a little early so that they can catch a good part of the crowd walking out of the main entrance. Teams that want to hit up more clubs do not go inside the clubs to dance; they spend the late evening moving from one club to another (where there are Filipino American flyer parties going on) hitting up cars of club

goers. However, this practice is not without some risk to promoters, as placing flyers on windshield wipers is technically illegal. One female promoter recounted an incident:

We were at Glendale one time, in front of the Chatannooga Club and Restaurant. We were all holding flyers when a police officer came by and he said, "I could arrest you for passing those out." Generally, you're not supposed to be putting flyers on the windshield wipers. It's like posting things. There are some places where it is illegal to solicit. That's what we were doing.

While hitting up other clubs is widely practiced by party crews, veteran promoters say that there's no substitute for hitting up your own club "the strongest." At Legend, for instance, you'll find promoters standing at the lobby at least twenty minutes before the last dance, ready to pass out flyers as the crowd walks out.

"Spread the Word": Legend's Networking Strategy

Legend Entertainment is the undisputed leader and pioneer in the Filipino American club scene. As such, it has become the model and inspiration for other aspiring party crews. What accounts for its success? What makes it tick? Is it the massive dissemination of flyers—10,000 by direct mail alone to announce the next club party series, not to mention the thousands passed out by individual promoters—that gets the job done? I had an extensive talk with David Gonzales, Legend's main promoter addressed as "Coach" by the crew; the son of a Filipina mother and an anglo American father, David is a second generation Filipino American whose ideas reflect a recognition and effective appropriation of the potency of family, community, and friendship ties, as well as the strategic value of geography in the overall marketing scheme of his crew.

David thinks that “the whole concept of flyers is misrepresented.” “People still believe that promotion comes from within the group. They believe that 10,000 flyers will do it. It doesn’t work like that.” When I asked David to sketch the organizational structure of Legend Entertainment, he surprised me by drawing a non-hierarchical set up of individual names (DJs and promoters) interlinked but spread out over space which he designated as “the community.”

Each one of these people (DJs and promoters) has a separate function within the whole community, because I don’t look at us as the only community. We’re placed in the middle of the community. The community is the whole paper, right? Now, although Ice, Delvin, Conquest...each one of them has a role outside of this core group...Each has a direct following. Icy Ice has a lot of friends...Everything is worked out of a lot of friendships...This guy has a lot of friends....This guy too....But then again, there’s our little promotion teams which are placed everywhere within the community, right? These are individual networks. It’s all individual networking, it’s not a big system that works within the community, it’s the community that works for the system. See, each one of those people has a community value because each one may know five other friends that they’re pulling in to the party, right? But the thing is that each one of these five other people also know five...which know five...which know five. And basically, what you’re having is the whole community networked off each person knowing each other. Added to this friendship networks are family ties—the promoters brothers, sisters, cousins, etc.

All of whom have their own personal networks too. We work off the solidarity and closeness of Filipino family and community. It’s a networking scheme that multiplies all the way out.

Technically, David thinks that “if you know how to work the scene right,” it is possible to pull more people than Legend without passing one flyer, as long as you network correctly.”

The problem is, it’s very hard to network it correctly in three weeks. That’s where the flyer value comes in. If I had one year to plan for an event...and I was able to network that plan with my promoters who by word of mouth spread it to their cousins and relatives and peer members, and spread it to the college

organizations....technically, if the word was strong enough and the time frame was right, you'd be able to pull more people than by passing out flyers. Flyers implement the idea of where everyone is supposed to be. They only implement the networking. I just know the same result can happen without flyers.

Another factor that accounts for Legend's success is its strategy of spreading out geographically—without necessarily fielding a huge membership, rather than concentrating membership and operations within a confined geographic locale, as is the case with most party crews. Thus, said David,

“People think we are big in membership, when we really aren't—we're just around 50 promoters and DJs.” Obviously, a lot of promotion groups have fifty members. Fifty is very common. But it's very rare to have fifty member spread...A lot of production crews have concentrated in Glendale, or 50 in Cerritos. And they believe that if Legend has 50, we need 50 to be successful. And I'm not saying that they have the wrong 50. Any 50 are good, as long as they're willing to spread the word...50 is good. But the reason why there is a Glendale promoter or a North side is because their promotions only span within North side. They can't get their promotions out on the East side. And the reason why is, they don't have any direct connection with family members out here, with deejays...Out deejays are coming out of Carson, Orange County...Delvin is also Orange County..So we have people in each area, let alone our promoters from each area. On top of that, our name is a lot bigger because most people look at the metropolis of L.A. like as in..L.A. is big..And San Diego is down here. Look at the gap in between. And the thing with us is we have groups here in L.A. and in San Diego. People say that Legend is a huge group. Across California. But did you know Legend is only this big in San Francisco and this big in L.A., and this big in Orange County? Most groups in L.A. are only localized (e.g. Glendale, Cerritos). We're always having our clubs in Downtown L.A. or Hollywood, which is the central focus of each market. Everyone thinks our numbers are big anywhere we go. They're not! It's just according to how we structure our parties. Now..I will do something in Orange County, like out here... But they're geared to be small, I don't put two thousand people. But I'll take a small venue and fill it, and they still think it's a big party because it's full. So a lot of promotion is appearance....

The Three Basic Types of Parties

Party Culture is built around three basic types of parties, namely: the house party, the flyer party, and the import show-off (really, primarily a festival of car racing enthusiasts but which I view as a party because it features virtually all the constitutive elements of a flyer party held in some night club). These three types can be arranged in a continuum varying in terms of venue, range of networks involved, size of crowd, and cost of undertaking the event.

The House Party. The most elemental type, house parties are held in residences. Individuals will hold a house party usually to mark birthdays or some other occasion calling for celebration. “House parties are fairly common,” says Ian, 15, of West Covina. “There’s one practically every week... You just have to know the people. If one is not found, we just hang out, play pool, get drunk....” If there’s dancing, this kind of party provides young adolescents the early experience of meeting individuals of the opposite sex and other genders. Usually, the living room or garage are transformed into instant dance floors. Many aspiring deejays use the house party to learn the rudiments of deejaying. The celebrant’s closest peers or crew (or homeboys) are usually mobilized to help organize the house party. Sometimes, parties can be planned “at the spur of the moment,” said Rocky, even without a birthday—without much preparation and at nominal cost. Rocky tells of how he and his crew organized one such event: Me, Jared, and Romy were talking on Monday, when people came to my house for a swim party. My Dad was away, on a trip to the Philippines. They said, “Throw party!

Throw a party!” We’re thinking of a day...Thursday was okay. Jared called his friend who had a DJ system...Romy helped me. I asked a few friends to come home early on the day of the party, so we could move the furniture. Kuya Josh and Ted didn’t have to help. My friends did everything...even the leaves in the backyard, it just took an hour to clean. Just a day before the party, we had a list...We started calling, just a day’s notice. Here are my ethnographic observations of this small-scale party:

I arrived at around 7 p.m. I stepped inside the house and noticed that the living room had been transformed into a dance floor. I had brought a Filipino dish from Goldilock’s, but Josh and company had not arrived by 7:30 p.m., as he had said. The youth started coming in trickles by 8:30 p.m. I noticed a minivan driven by a middle-aged man come into view. His face mirrored worry and anxiety. He disgorged a young girl, his daughter, escorted by a boy perhaps 10. Chaperon, huh. Later, the DJs came and unloaded their sound equipment. They set them up in the far corner of the living room and started doing their thing. By around 9:30 p.m. there were around thirty youths. Two girls, Latina and chola-looking, arrived. I whispered to Romy, “Who are those two?” He whispered back, “They’re go-go dancers. When they go clubbing, they go up into the go-go cages. That guy there is Pete, a breakdancer, one of the originators of Alpha Flight.” Mon, a gang member, was attracted to one of the go-go dancers but didn’t have the courage to approach her. He and a few others began taking swigs from a big-sized beer bottle. Although music was being played, the youths didn’t seem eager to dance. The pace seemed lethargic. The few girls who came sat very close to the DJ’s corner. The boys, meanwhile, kept moving in and out of the room, more often loitering in the front yard where it was cooler. The girls seemed uneasy and often went in and out. As they stood outside, Mon mustered enough courage to approach them. He chatted with them and a little later, they came back to the dance floor and started dancing. The DJs were playing some exciting hip hop music; Mon and his partner appeared loose and comfortable enough to engage in freaking motions (dancing with highly sexual connotations). It seemed that others picked up the upbeat mood and soon the small dance floor came alive.

At around 10 p.m. Josh called the two DJs, Dan and Jared; he brought them to the front yard, where I was cooling myself. They struck a friendly conversation with me. They said that the DJ is a very important person; one of the main attractions of parties are the

DJs who perform. DJs can control the mood and pace of the party through their creativity at mixing music. Thus, a DJ has to know the psychology of the youth crowd in order to liven up the part. DJs basically start learning how to DJ by joining small crews performing at house parties. As they gain experience and ability, they move on to flyer parties held in night clubs. Some of the guests had brought small bags of chips. Ian had reminded them “to make sure you eat supper before coming, and bring some Doritos.” The party ended at around 11 p.m. As we helped Jared load his audio equipment and records in Josh’s van, Rocky handed him a token \$20. “It pays to have hook ups,” he beamed. “Normally, I’d have to give a DJ at least \$80 for a small gig like this one.”

House parties are indeed relatively cheaper to organize or set up, requiring a small work force, and providing a more intimate setting for close friends and peers. Compared to night clubs which provide security and are often patrolled by police officers, however, house parties are extremely vulnerable to gangs on the prowl—eager to crash into it and disrupt the dance. Without security personnel in its premises, a house party becomes a sitting duck to drive-by shootings. The well-known DJ Icy Ice, for instance, recalls how a gang drive-by in Cerritos in 1989 caused widespread fear among parents and youth: A very smart honor student, a girl barely 16, attended a house party. Ironically, it was her first time to attend a house party. She was standing by the door at the precise moment when a gang drove by and shot at the house...She was killed on the spot. The case was widely publicized. Parents refused to allow their kids go to parties. More than anything else, it was this one incident that put Spectrum out of business.

The Flyer Party. On much larger scale, the flyer party is held in a night club or discotheque. Its name derives from the flyers mailed to individuals included in a mailing list; flyers are also passed out at other clubs where parties are ongoing, or distributed among a promoter's friends, relatives, and others. The flyer party represents an activity that recognizes the business or profit potential (in youth pursuit of fun and excitement) and proceeds to exploit it. As one young entrepreneur put it, "First, we did it for fun. Then we turned it into money." Compared to house parties, flyer parties are said to be safer because entry is restricted, tickets are required, and there are bouncers who enforce order and secure the venue.

As described in an earlier section, the promoters who compose a party crew are fully mobilized to promote flyer parties. But more often than not (with the exception of Legend and other big production crews), flyer parties require the combined resources and participation of youth groups that a party crew is cliqued up with, such as car crews, break dancing crews, graffiti writing crews, all-ladies dance crews, college fraternities, and other campus organizations. Crowds at a flyer party may vary in size from 200 to as many as 2,000 in one night. The older and more reputable productions tend to attract bigger crowds. One can gain a pretty good picture of a party crew's network by looking at the "shout outs" in a flyer listing or acknowledging the participating crews.

Flyer parties are of three kinds based on age bracket: the all-ages parties, 18 and over parties, and the 21 and over. All-ages parties attract hordes of thirteen, fourteen and fifteen year old boys and girls eager to experience the fun and excitement of meeting new people in an established night club, away from the scrutinizing eyes of parents and other

authority figures. Because they attract young gang recruits who are hot-headed and eager to carve a reputation, all-ages parties are notorious for being marred by violence in the dance floor or outside the club, especially at the parking lot or even at the ticket lines. There is less violence in 18 and over parties, as party crews are able to impose tighter controls through mandatory inspection of identification cards at the gate. However, many youths below 18 aspire for membership in party crews so that they can gain entrance to 18 and over parties. It is common for youths to fake ID cards or borrow ID cards belonging to brothers or sisters or friends that bear a resemblance to them.

The following is a transcript of an all-ages party I attended at the 1204 Club in Beverly Boulevard, L.A. last Summer of 1997:

I picked up Ben in West Covina. Jim says he can't come, and so can't Mike. Their Dad is arriving tomorrow from the Philippines so Jim has to clean the house. I asked Jim whether my shirt was OK for the party. He said it was too light; so he lent me a darker and more modish short-sleeved shirt. It was a little big for me, but it fit the style of loose clothing worn by youths. Ben and I arrived at the Club around 8:30 p.m. The lines were not long yet; there was a regular line and a special line for VIPs. Ben approached the checkers near the door; who talked to Jake, the guy who is a K.I.D.S. member (the organizing crew for the night). He was going to get us in for free. After about fifteen minutes I spotted _____ and _____ the two BNG homies. Ben walked over to them. Just before 9 p.m. we VIPs were invited to come in. I found a spot to sit just in front of the DJs room. Leon, the DJ was seated there, and I sat by him. I offer to buy him a drink but he demurs; shortly thereafter, he leaves for the DJ box and starts working. Ian went over to join the other boys from their side of town. The music was basically hip hop, very animated. By around 9:30 p.m. the dance floor had gotten crowded. Most of the youths occupied the spaces close to the walls, but many were seated on the fringes of the dance floor. As the night wore on, the dance floor became crowded, but most were just basically standing. I'd say, most were just standing, others were dancing. There was a crew of females called "SNG" that was very active on the floor, right in front of where I was seated. They'd form a tight circle and do their thing. Ian later noted that these girls were just dancing by themselves, not allowing boys to dance with them. Later in the night there was a group of Black dudes who did a live song and dance number. They were wildly applauded. A young Filipina with a good voice sang a solo

number. One of the more interesting happenings was the break dancing contest that took place right in front of me. A few young males tried to outdo each other in doing exceedingly acrobatic maneuvers on the dance floor. The onlookers lustily cheered the better ones. Then suddenly a fight ensued right in the thickest portion of the dance floor. When I noticed the commotion, I stood up to watch but my view was blocked by the crowd. I learned later that it was between BNG and PR boys. The BNG homies got thrown out the Club by the bouncers for being involved in the brief skirmish.

I struck up a conversation with the guy next to me. His name is Derek, from Glendale High. When I offered him and his buddy drinks, he warmed up and seemed interested in my research. “Did you hear all those crew names being shouted?” he asked. “Each crew in the house shouts its name, i.e. Vibe, SNG. They want to advertise their group, to show they’re proud of their identity.” Crews come to compete with each other. What struck me most about this event is that it looked like a “festival of youth energy, exuberance, and vigor.” These kids seem indefatigable! From 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. they danced and moved about, yet seldom did I see anyone ordering food from the counter. Rarely did I see youths ordering drinks (oh, well, this is an all-ages party, with majority being below 18). This party was well-secured. Burly bouncers kept a steady eye. Even when a fight broke out, things were pretty much under control.

21 and over parties are known to be better organized than other younger bracket parties, are relatively violence-free, and attract better-dressed crowds. The more established production crews specialize in this type of parties and often also throw 18 and over ones. It appears that the more established crews are no longer interested in staging all-ages parties, due to the difficulty of maintaining peace and order. Legend and other bigger crews spend more for security, as “poor security is a factor in fights,” said David Gonzales. “When the police come, it’s even worse because it looks like your fault.”

Legend's "21XL" dances are also known for its well-groomed crowds. At the gate, individuals not properly attired are turned away. "In our events they wear a bunny shirt, they comb their hair, they don't come in their white sneakers, they come in their dress shoes," said the Legend's main promoter.

The following is a transcript of a 21 and over party which I attended at a popular club in the Los Angeles area:

Parking was a problem when I arrived at around 11 p.m. I spotted a long line of youths at the entrance to the Palace. Refusing to park for 6 bucks by the theatre/disco, I turned around the bloc and found parking directly in front of the Palace for \$4. Being a guest of DJ Icy Ice, I was met at the lobby by David, who brought me in and led me to the DJ box. Ice was being spelled by two other DJs. Boy, was I glad to skirt the long lines waiting outside! As I stood by the railing, MC Lewis was by my side, doing his patented bursts that animated the crowd below. He told me to watch the crowd, "It'll keep getting bigger towards midnight." The crowd was made up of mostly Filipino Americans, some Asians, and some Blacks.

Lewis said that this was a regular-sized crowd for Thursday nights. Directly in front of the stage were two cylindrical elevated pedestals; two female go-go dancers kept dancing non-stop to the music. After every twenty minutes these girls would be relieved and replaced by fresh dancers. Security officers kept close watch, making sure the men did not come too close to the cages. An interesting break dancing competition was going on close to the stage, right by the go-go dancers cages. A crowd had gathered around these break dancers who were trying to outdo each other. Then the curtains opened and a group of Black rappers started to perform. They were widely applauded. The crowd started to thin out and disperse by around 15 minutes to 2 a.m.

"Surprise" a la striptease numbers by go-go dancers not unusually happen in 21 and over parties, despite being in violation of laws governing night club events. The more established productions like Legend take strict measures to prevent raunchy episodes in the go-go cages. Strip teasers may not be hired to perform, but there's no way to prevent females from paying entrance into the club and doing their surprise acts.

Such women reportedly do it in order to be able to brag or make a claim that they are go-go dancers for such and such a well-known production crew.

The Club Scene Spawns Youth Entrepreneurs

The growing Filipino American club scene in Los Angeles has given rise to youthful business enterprises. No longer just a place to have fun and meet new people, the party scene has become a strategic site for business networking and moneymaking. According to DJ Icy Ice, "The whole night club is a business, and other businesses feed off what our night club is doing." Record companies come to promote their records, stickers, and tee-shirts; they tack posters on the walls. Youth magazines like "Flip," a variety mag devoted to the Filipino American youth scene and "RPM," a pioneering Asian car magazine, come to write about the club scene, take pictures, and distribute free copies of their latest issues. Youthful clothing entrepreneurs like "Tribung Pinoy" promote their line of wear bearing indigenous ethnic designs. Car companies and other automotive-related businesses view the club scene as a target market with vast potential; they give away stickers, tee-shirts, and other promotional gimmicks. If the older and bigger production crews are able to gross close to half a million dollars a year, think of the 30 or more production/party crews in the Filipino American community and the multi-million dollar industry that they generate. Factor in the after market of automotive and accessory stores catering to the hundreds of car crews enmeshed in Party Culture; these youth-generated businesses are producing incomes of no meager proportions.

The Import Show-Off

The import show-off draws together the social organization of the Party Culture network at its biggest spread, drawing crowds of up to twelve thousand. It is staged and managed by a group of youthful racing and partying entrepreneurs in close collaboration with the major racing crews, party crews, and their sub-networks. The venue is usually a sprawling exposition park or fairgrounds (i.e. Pomona, Del Mar) capable of accommodating huge crowds and literally thousands of fixed up cars.

Dominated by Japanese imports like Honda Civics, Acura Integras, and a sprinkling of BMWs and Volkswagens, the car exhibitions are held in cavernous show rooms; cars occupy the main floor area while all the types of business enterprises active in the club scene set up booths along the floor perimeter. The cars are the center of attraction, but the crowd is at its thickest around a make-shift stage where dance contests featuring all-ladies as well as mixed male/female dance crew performances and deejay competitions (called “battle of the DJs) are held. While dancing is confined to the stage, the crowded showroom is actually transformed into a club-like venue where a mass “car-meets-youth” or “youth-meets-car” type of encounter occurs against a background of loud hip hop music and the animated burst of emcees.

Synthesis: First Generation vs. Second Generation Strategies for Identity Construction Within a Male-Dominated Culture

The decline of gangs and the rise of auto racing and partying in the Filipino American community points to differences between first generation (Philippine-born) and second generation (including 1.5) strategies for ethnic identity construction. As

exemplified by the Satanas, ethnic identity construction was primarily in direct response to the experience of initially settling in inner city, Latino neighborhoods and being harassed and violently attacked by Cholo youths. They came into direct contact with Cholo culture, out of which they appropriated elements for the construction of a “Filipino Cholo” identity.

In contrast, there was much less direct contact with Cholos in the experience of second generation Filipino American youths growing up in more upscale and affluent suburban neighborhoods. The second generation received a modified kind of gang aesthetic (or cultural style) via the medium of popular music and culture, particularly African American hip hop. Gang style had become so much “in” that it was often difficult to differentiate between “gang” and “non-gang” based on dress and hair styles alone. Dominated by the second generation, today’s crews aspire for multiple and overlapping identities (not only Filipino but also “Asian”), in contrast to the immigrant-led and Philippine-born gangs of the 1970s and 1980s that vigorously promoted “Pinoy Pride” alone. Party crew names, for instance, such as “Legend,” “Raw,” “Vibe,” etc. names that reflect an aspiration for fun and entertainment, are devoid of ethnic symbolism. Car crew names such as “Zoom,” “Jetspeed,” “Kosoku,” and “Kioken” reflect their mixed Asian and other ethnic memberships and hint at the development of a more “trans-Asian” type of identity. Contrast this with the names of Filipino American gangs of the 1970s and 1980s such as “MP” (“Mabuhay ang Pinoy” (“Long Live, the Filipino!”)), “Pinoy Real” (“PR” meaning, “pure Pilipino”) and “LVM” (Luzon, Visayas

and Mindanao, the three main island groups in the Philippines); the names represent symbolically translocated Philippine space and constructed identities with it.

From the 1970s through the 1980s, the gang was dominant, with the barkada and indigenized fraternity providing the models for group formation. From around 1992 to the end of the 1990s, the “crew” appears to have displaced the gang as the pre-eminent group formation. I argue that the Filipino American gang, largely but not strictly monoethnic with its ideology of Pinoy Pride, was the dominant youth grouping during the historical “gang phase” (1970s through end of 1980s) because it was overwhelmingly Philippine-born (first generation) in membership. That was also the time period when massive waves of migration saw the Philippine-born outnumber the US-born youths.

On the other hand, the crew replaced the gang as the preeminent grouping in the 1990s largely because the second generation (US-born, 1.5 generation) had grown in numbers and appeared to dominate the emergent youth culture network. Due to generational differences, the “gang” and the “crew” represent two differing but related phenomena: each reflecting varying strategies or orientations for constructing identities—one Philippine-born, the other U.S. born. Philippine-born gang members show a greater connectedness to Filipino culture and history than US-born party crew or car club youths, who seem more attuned to mainstream popular culture currents like hip hop. However, this seeming divergence actually contributes to a kind of dynamic “convergence” in the Party Culture network, where youths of different generations interact and engage in an ongoing process of creating a Filipino American youth culture. In their own constructed space, they construct multiple and fluid identities. Youths are able to draw from the

“Pinoy Pride” ideology that drove the pioneering gangs to the trans-Asian and incipient capitalist ideology that drives budding entrepreneurs in the club and car scenes.

Party Culture is a male-dominated culture. The same is even truer of car crews: they are a male institution, and female racers are viewed with admiration but treated as “oddities.” The “ladies” are the ultimate come on in the flyer parties and clubs. Promoters are urged to get girls to come to the dances, so that the men will come. Dee jays and promoters alike gear their efforts towards making the ladies “have fun.” “If the dee jays play good music, the ladies feel good and are in the mood, the guys then ask the ladies to dance, they have a good time.”

Flyers announcing upcoming parties often bear pictures of scantily-clad women in provocative poses (I know of boys who assiduously collect these flyers like prized items). Female disc jockeys are very few; a female DJ told me how she’s been booed and treated condescendingly by some male DJs and club patrons. Among the car culture, one of the motivations for owning a nice car (called a “head turner”) is to attract girls, because it is thought that even if you’re not good-looking, you’ll attract a pretty girl if you got a nice car. As it is in the dance floor where all-female crews perform (and go-go dancers mount the cages and sometimes do “streak-strip tease”), promo girls in tight shorts and bare midriffs hang around cars on display during import show-offs; calendars bearing pictures of “sexy” women hugging expensive sports cars are widely vended.

Arising out of the African American experience of racism and minority disadvantage, hip hop is said to resonate well with Filipino American youths, for whom experiences of racism and minority prejudice are part of growing up in US society. But

as one intelligent and articulate UCLA student and party crew member put it. “Filipino American youths do not go to the clubs in order to consciously express resistance to Anglo society. They go to have fun. But the fact that they have created a space of their own by getting together in their own place to have fun—and not in anglo clubs where they would not feel comfortable or in some other ethnic club scene—perhaps this is a form of resistance, isn’t it?”

At any rate, Party Culture illustrates the way Filipino American youths are actively engaged in creating their own symbolic spaces, cultural forms, and practices. The approach taken here hopefully demonstrates the benefit of studying groups of “problem youths” and “ordinary youths” interacting and networking with each other, thus pointing to the existence of behavioral/social patterns [specific to a relatively more affluent community] that do not fit into dominant theoretical models based on Latino or African American gangs. It reveals a burgeoning Filipino American youth entrepreneurship never previously documented and goes against popular thinking that portray youth as largely economically dependent and unproductive, rebellious and troublesome.

IX. CONCLUSION

The pursuit of recreation and fun, rather than the pursuit of crime, stands out in this study of how youthful Filipino Americans created (and continue to create) a vibrant and dynamic youth culture in Los Angeles. However, masses of Filipino children and youths that immigrated with their parents went through a difficult gang phase that covers roughly the 1970s through the late 1980s. Within an immigrant community that was highly educated and basically middle class, popular discourse attributed the emergence of youth gangs to families breaking down under acculturative stress. Largely unrecognized was the emergence of a “moral panic” sweeping across Los Angeles: a criminalizing process that turned groups of youthful minority and immigrant boys into “folk devils” and scapegoats for many of society’s ills.

The representation of Filipino immigrant youth that appeared to dominate within the context of the moral panic was law enforcement’s theory of Filipino gangs having their origins in prison gangs of Manila. Whether factual or not, this construction suggested that groups of Filipino youths tagged as “gangs” were part of a wave of hardened criminals invading American shores—thus striking exaggerated fear and dread across the communities. Historically, immigrant Filipino men were pursuing leisure and recreation, rather than doing crime, when violently attacked by others—from the barkadas of youthful farm workers in the taxi dance halls of the 1930s to the car club and conventional barkada of the Satanas in the early 1970s. And in more recent times, the virtual disappearance of Filipino gangs in Los Angeles Filipinotown and other areas and the rise of a violence-rejecting, partying youth culture puts into serious doubt the “prison

gang” model, as well as all the dire predictions (especially in the early 1990s) in the local Filipino American press about an even bigger gang problem that never materialized. **The historical “gang phase” that covers the life course of Satanas represents a rough but nonetheless transitory interlude in the evolution of Filipino American youth culture in Los Angeles.**

More than criminal behavior, the glamour of gang aesthetic or style has wielded a powerful attraction, providing a basis for cultural and group formation among Filipino and Filipino American youths. This “ganging” phenomenon has an interestingly transnational or globalized processual dynamic, traveling to Philippine shores via Hollywood gangster movies where it gave rise to a Manila teenage culture in the 1950s. It is significant to note that although local street gangs had been in existence in Manila since the American occupation (first half of 20th century), the criminal street gang did not apparently appeal as a model for constructing a youth culture. Instead, it was the American gang via movies that provided the model and basic elements—dress and hair styles, the swagger and other gestures, graffiti writing, joyriding, and even brawling and fighting a la West Side Story. Structurally, the conventional barkada was the group formation within which youths experienced and perpetuated this culture. But another American institution, the college fraternity, appears to have been indigenized and provided a second model that seemed more adapted for aggressive group competition and warfare. In Los Angeles, the barkada was transformed into an instrument of ethnic defense, but the fraternity—along with the Cholo gang—appears to have provided an equally compelling behavioral model. In fact, campus fraternity behavior at the

University of the Philippines bears striking resemblance to the Filipino fighting barkada of Los Angeles: fights breaking out over mad dogging, disputes over girls, macho behavior at the hang out, ritual hazing, and even the “war” mentality perpetuated by fratmen.

Many of the pioneering Satanas and other Filipino youths that immigrated to Los Angeles in the 1970s had been socialized into this Manila youth culture. This time, however, the youths came into direct contact with American street gang culture: significantly through the Latino Cholo, whose aesthetic they borrowed and appropriated, but whose members they engaged in often deadly physical combat; and African American street culture, particularly through hip hop, which has profoundly impacted the Filipino American youth culture of Los Angeles.

This historical and transnational approach gives us the benefit of identifying not only the evolving cultural styles through time but also changing masculine identities. In the Manila teenage youth culture, what men appropriated from the style of the local “siga-siga” or “kanto boy”(Filipino street elites) was now burnished with a heavy overlay of an American “Hollywood gangster” masculinity: “the low-waist pants, the unlaced rubber shoes with tongues sticking out, the fringe of hair looking like a plume of honor.” In the streets of Los Angeles, Filipino men aspired for a “street warrior” masculinity that projected toughness and street smarts. Courage and daring in combat was highly prized. This persona was constructed through the adoption of Cholo style dress, heavy tattooing, a muscular body (big biceps), and a “stance of defiance.” This tough street warrior masculinity was replaced in the hip hop-oriented car and partying culture in the 1990s by

a more tempered masculinity that highlighted non-violent skills and talents like excellence in racing or fixing up cars, promoting and holding parties, break dancing, graffiti art, wizardry in disc jockeying, and emceeing. Above all, an entrepreneurial masculinity became ascendant as celebrity disc jockeys, party promoters, and auto racers were hailed as successful producers of wealth.

Sharing center stage with gangs and others considered “at risk” during the historical gang phase was SIPA, the youth saving institution. Seeing that youths were “falling through the cracks,” a group of like-minded community activists drew attention to a growing gang problem and sought to convince a community “in denial” that something had to be done about it. Thus, the process of socially constructing a gang problem in the Filipino American community was set in motion by the youth savers: a process that was immanent and ongoing in the interactions between counselors and the youth clients. Following Foucault, Ong (2003) in her study of Southeast Asian immigrants, writes about the normalizing role of social workers—that is, in shaping the conduct of subjects being processed for citizenship in America. In case of SIPA, the normalizing function carried more serious implications because social workers were dealing with youth groups that were perceived to be disruptive and dangerous.

Because the youth savers were very protective of their youth clients, “walking a fine line between the cops and the kids” presented a real dilemma. To this day, many former clients speak admirably and respectfully of their counselors and wax nostalgic about their experiences at SIPA. But whether the latter were aware of it or not, the dilemma pointed to the strategic location that social service agencies occupy within the

larger state network of control. Social workers and counselors are uniquely positioned, having access to the homes and personal lives of youth clients and their families. They're not coercive or threatening like the police. At the grass roots level, they help the State manage populations in a non-threatening, ameliorative, and even culturally-competent manner, utilizing preventive or interventive programs (technologies of control) based on theories and images of "gang" constructed by the police and social scientists.

SIPA stands out as a valuable and venerable Filipino American community institution; this study documents the youth savers' gallant efforts to steer the youth away from gangs. Interestingly, the key towards eliminating gangs lay in the hands of creative and enterprising youths (some had actually been SIPA clients) whose partying ventures led to the formation of a violence-rejecting Party Culture. The 1990s saw the emergence of alternatives to gangs and opportunities for non-violent competition offered in the club and car scenes (at car shows, races, breakdancing and DJ battles, etc.). The novelty of the gang and the glamour of the gangbanger wore out, since one could adopt the gang aesthetic (i.e. dress styles, lingo) without being violent by being a car racer, a break dancer, or a party promoter. Youths got tired of all the killings and violent incidents; as one young man put it, "I can still make a name for myself, have fun, and meet a lot of girls without gangbanging." The youthful entrepreneurs realized that violence on the dance floor would hurt the business; they took steps to police their own ranks and prevent trouble from erupting in the dance floor.

Meanwhile, by the end of the 1990s SIPA continued to offer programs for youth; but individual gang caseloads and referrals (of "gang" boys) from feeder city schools

were steadily dwindling. Without ignoring other developments in the larger world that may have led to the decline of gangs in the early 1990s, I credit the safer Filipino American youth scene today to the pioneering DJs and gang veteranos. They illustrate the way youth are capable of shaping a non-violent culture and encourage legitimate moneymaking and artistic excellence. I find no better proof of how youth can be effective agents and producers of culture.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

CHECKLIST OF OPEN INTERVIEW TOPICS

(Adopted from Hollan and Wellenkamp 1994)

1. Locating data: name; birth date; birthplace; description of childhood house; Childhood eating customs; languages and literacy; movements; schooling; travel.
2. Childhood household; members at various ages; sibling pattern; caretaking agents for subject; time spent in and out of household; alternative households. General family background.
3. Nature of household relations (adult-adult, adult-children, children-children); Leadership; quarrels; conflict resolution.
4. History of immigration to USA (if applicable); year of immigration; initial acculturative experiences; comparison of life in native country vs. US life.
5. Childhood play; with whom; how chosen; activities; conflicts; special role in playgroup; solitary play.
6. Evaluation of childhood.
7. Special circumstances of childhood, including illnesses.
8. Puberty and adolescence; age at beginning; signs of transition; nature of transition; associations; relations with household, parents; major concerns; ideas about the future; sexual life; religious life; formal and informal learning; transition to adulthood; evaluation.
9. Present associations; with whom; length; activities; nature of the relationship; quality of relations with neighbors, relatives, villages, enemies.
10. Stress; illnesses; theory of illness; energy/fatigue; headaches; eating problems; sleep difficulties; irritability; depression; fear; anxiety; altered consciousness; experience with healers; major mental illness.
11. Aggression; causes, objects, frequency of anger; associated feelings; actions taken; evaluation and interpretation.

APPENDIX II

QUESTIONING ROUTE FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH COUNSELORS, SOCIAL WORKERS, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENTS

Introductory question: Tell me at least one thing about yourself, your family, and if you wish, any hobbies or pastimes.

Can you tell me how you got into your profession (i.e. counselor, social worker, law enforcement agent, prosecuting attorney, etc.)? What influences or circumstances may have led you to this profession?

Putting aside the theories and book knowledge acquired in college or graduate school, what—in your personal view—accounts for the existence of social problems such as juvenile delinquency, substance abuse, and crime? (Probe for theories or assumptions about human action i.e. that individuals are determined by environmental factors, or are capable of making choices.)

As a _____, what do you think is your role in the alleviation or solution of youth problems such as gang involvement and other problems?

Can you give examples drawn from your professional experience that support your view of your role in the solution or alleviation of human problems?

What brings you the most satisfaction in your career? What brings the most dissatisfaction?

How would you address the problem of youth violence in the Asian American community?

Can you cite a program that seems to be effective in addressing the problem of gang violence in the Asian American communities?

Compared to other control agencies or helping professions, are there ways in which your profession is uniquely positioned to address the problem of youth violence?

APPENDIX III

PHILIPINO POPULATION PROFILE Los Angeles County - 1990

Population Growth	% Increase		Immigration		
1960	12,122	123.7	American Born	60,870	27.3
1970	33,459	176.0	Foreign Born	162,406	72.7
1980	100,040	199.0	Immigrated since 1985	38,457	23.7
1990	223,276	123.2			

Age			Communities with 4,000 +		
0-4	16,242	7.4	Artesia	7,438	
5-9	15,833	7.2	Carson	13,061	
10-14	15,425	7.0	Covina	6,284	
15-19	17,026	7.8	Glendale	8,181	
20-24	18,124	8.3	LA/Echo Park-Silverlake	8,252	
25-34	39,295	17.9	LA/Hollywood	10,496	
35-64	80,544	36.7	LA/North Hollywood	4,656	
65-74	10,745	4.9	LA/Van Nuys	6,076	
75 +	6,419	2.9	Long Beach	19,328	
Total	219,653	100.0	Walnut	4,435	

Language			Education		
English Only	44,483	21.5	Less Than 5th Grade		3.2
Speak English Very Well	110,155	53.2	5-12th Grade, No Diploma		9.2
Do Not Speak English			High School Graduate		12.2
Very Well	52,442	25.3	Some College		27.4
Total Age 5 and Over	207,080	100.0	Bachelor's Degree or Higher		48.0
			Young Adults Enrolled in College		50.3

Employment			Occupation		
In Labor Force	129,328	76.0	Managerial/Professional	35,566	28.9
Unemployed	6,205	4.8	Technical/Clerical/Sales	55,586	45.1
Employed	123,123	95.2	Service	14,100	11.5
Male	57,673	46.8	Farming/Fishing/Forestry	237	0.2
Female	65,450	53.2	Precision Prod./Craft Repair	8,335	6.8
			Operators/Fabricators/Laborer	9,299	7.6
Self Employed	3,858	3.1	Total	123,123	100.0

Income			Housing		
Less Than \$15,000	5,662	9.8	Own	29,728	51.6
\$15,000 - \$24,999	6,377	11.0	Rent	27,918	48.4
\$25,000 - \$34,999	7,903	13.6	Total	57,646	100.0
\$35,000 - \$49,999	11,613	20.0	Vehicle Available	53,671	93.1
\$50,000 - \$74,999	15,155	26.1			
\$75,000 And Over	11,340	19.5			
Total Households	58,050	100.0			

			Poverty Status		
Median Household Income	\$46,497		Below Poverty Level	12,623	5.7
Median Family Income	\$49,838		Above Poverty Level	208,670	94.3
Per Capita Income	\$14,272				

**A Profile of Support Systems and Networks for Children, Youth, and Families
in the Pilipino American Community of Los Angeles County**

Top 20 Pilipino Communities & Zip Codes, Los Angeles County - 1990*

**Top 20 Pilipino Communities
By Name – alphabetical listing**

Community	Pilipinos	County Region
Artesia/Cerritos	7,438	7/East
Baldwin Park	3,610	3/San Gabriel
Carson	13,061	8/South Bay
Covina	6,284	3/San Gabriel
Gardena	2,933	8/South Bay
Glendale	8,181	2/San Fernando
Industry	3,500	3/San Gabriel
LA/ Eagle Rock	3,228	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Echo Park-Silverlake	8,252	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Glassell Park	3,073	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Highland Park	3,554	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Hollywood	10,496	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Mid-Wilshire	3,101	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Mt. Washington	3,490	4/Metropolitan
LA/ North Hollywood	4,656	2/San Fernando
LA/ Van Nuys	6,076	2/San Fernando
Long Beach	19,328	8/South Bay
Norwalk	3,836	7/East
Rowland Heights	3,060	3/San Gabriel
San Fernando	2,791	2/San Fernando
Torrance	3,924	8/South Bay
Walnut	4,435	3/San Gabriel

**Top 20 Pilipino Communities
By Name – listing by largest population**

Community	Pilipinos	County Region
Long Beach	19,328	8/South Bay
Carson	13,061	8/South Bay
LA/ Hollywood	10,496	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Echo Park-Silverlake	8,252	4/Metropolitan
Glendale	8,181	2/San Fernando
Artesia/Cerritos	7,438	7/East
Covina	6,284	3/San Gabriel
LA/ Van Nuys	6,076	2/San Fernando
LA/ North Hollywood	4,656	2/San Fernando
Walnut	4,435	3/San Gabriel
Torrance	3,924	8/South Bay
Norwalk	3,836	7/East
Baldwin Park	3,610	3/San Gabriel
LA/ Highland Park	3,554	4/Metropolitan
Industry	3,500	3/San Gabriel
LA/ Mt. Washington	3,490	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Eagle Rock	3,228	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Mid-Wilshire	3,101	4/Metropolitan
LA/ Glassell Park	3,073	4/Metropolitan
Rowland Heights	3,060	3/San Gabriel
Gardena	2,933	8/South Bay
San Fernando,	2,791	2/San Fernando

**Top 20 Pilipino Communities
By Zip Code – listing by population**

Zip	General Area	Pilipinos	County Region
90745	Carson	11,867	8/South Bay
90026	Los Angeles	8,252	4/Metropolitan
90701	Artesia/Cerritos	7,438	7/East
90810	Long Beach/Carson	7,101	8/South Bay
90004	Los Angeles	5,658	4/Metropolitan
90029	Los Angeles	4,838	4/Metropolitan
91789	Walnut/Industry	4,435	3/San Gabriel
91792	West Covina	4,423	3/San Gabriel
90805	Long Beach	3,954	8/South Bay
90650	Norwalk	3,836	7/East
91706	Baldwin Park	3,610	3/San Gabriel
90042	L.A. - Highland Park	3,554	4/Metropolitan
91744	La Puente/Valinda/Industry	3,500	3/San Gabriel
91402	Van Nuys/Panorama City	3,496	2/San Fernando
90065	L.A. - Glassell Pk/Mt. Wash	3,490	4/Metropolitan
90041	L.A. - Eagle Rock	3,228	4/Metropolitan
90020	Los Angeles	3,101	4/Metropolitan
90039	Los Angeles	3,073	4/Metropolitan
91748	La Puente/Rowland Hs	3,060	3/San Gabriel
90806	Long Beach	2,931	8/South Bay

*Sources: United Way of Greater Los Angeles (June 1994). Los Angeles 1994: State of the County Databook; United Way of Greater Los Angeles (January 1995). [Draft] Asian Pacific Factfinder: Los Angeles County.

APPENDIX IV

Gang Name	Area/School	Estimate #'s		School Attendance			Composition		Gang Activity *
		Genl. Members	Active	In	Truant	Dropout	Male	Female	
Satanas - STS	Temple/Rampart, Cerritos, Long Beach, Berendo Junior HS	80	40%	20%	60%	20%	X		a, b, d, g, s
Hellside - HSG	Temple/Rampart, San Fernando Valley, Gardena, Virgil Junior HS Grant HS	75	33%	10%	70%	20%	X		a, b, d, g, s
Crazys - CYS	Sunset/Mayberry, King Junior HS, Marshall HS	75	50%	15%	60%	25%	X		a, b, d, g, s
Little Pinoys of Satanas - LPS	Temple/Rampart, Virgil Junior HS	25	40%	40%	50%	10%	X		b, d, g
Tropa Hudas - THS	Glendale, Eagle Rock, San Fernando Valley, Eagle Rock Junior and Senior HS	50	40%	20%	50%	30%	X		b, d, g
Rebel Boys - RBS	Echo Park, San Fernando Valley	60	20%	30%	60%	10%	X		b, d, s
Pinoy Real - PR	Atwater, West Covina, Marshall HS, Nogales HS	75	40%	20%	50%	30%	X		b, d, s
Mabuhay Pinoy 13 - MP13	Eagle Rock, Highland Park, Eagle Rock Junior and Senior HS	60	33%	20%	60%	20%	X		b, d, s
Bahala Na Gang - BNG	Mid-Wilshire, San Fernando Valley	50	20%	40%	50%	10%	X		b, d, s
Samahang Ilocano - SI	Downtown, Santa Monica, Belmont HS	60	25%	40%	50%	10%	X		b, d, s
Jefrox - JFX	Beverly/Wilton	80	40%	20%	50%	30%	X		a, b, d, g, s
Tropa Ocho - TRP8	Alvarado/Beverly, LACC	20	10%	30%	60%	10%	X		b, d

APPENDIX V

SARA FILIPINO YOUTH GANG STUDY

Page 2 of 3

Gang Name	Area/School	Estimate #'s		School Attendance			Composition		Gang Activity*
		Genl Members	Active	In	Truant	Dropout	Male	Female	
Fliptown Mob - FTM	Crenshaw/Olympic Los Angeles HS	25	20%	30%	60%	10%	X		b, d, s
Flipside Gang - FSG	Mid-Wilshire	25	25%	40%	40%	20%	X		b, d, s
Flipside 13 - FS13	Eagle Rock, Marshall HS	25	20%	30%	50%	20%	X		b, d, s
Tau Ogama Pinoy - TGP	Hollywood, Western/Santa Monica Hollywood HS	50	40%	50%	40%	10%	X		b, s
Diablos	Temple/Rampart	35	40%	40%	30%	30%	X		a, b, d, g, s
Cavite Playboys	Temple/Rampart	15	10%	50%	30%	20%	X		b, d
Pinay Locas - PLS	Temple/Rampart, Marshall HS, Grant HS	20	20%	25%	50%	25%		X	b, d
Pinay Real - PYR	West Covina, Nogales HS	25	20%	30%	50%	20%		X	b, d, s
Amazonas - AMZ	Temple/Rampart, Marshall HS, Grant HS	30	10%	20%	70%	10%		X	b, d, s
Rebel Chicks - RBC	Echo Park	20	20%	40%	40%	20%		X	b, d
Mabuhay Pinoy Girls - MPG	Eagle Rock HS	20	10%	30%	50%	20%		X	b, d
Crazy's Chicks	King Junior HS, Marshall HS	40	25%	25%	50%	25%		X	b, d
Bahala Na Chicks - BNC	Wilshire/Fairfax	10	50%	50%	30%	20%		X	b, d
Luzon-Visayas Chicks LVC	Arcadia	20	30%	50%	30%	20%		X	b, d
Hellside Chicks - HSC	Temple/Rampart	25	20%	30%	60%	10%		X	b, d

Page 3 of 3

<u>SIPA Pilipino Youth Gang Study</u>									
<u>Gang Name</u>	<u>Area/School</u>	<u>Estimate #'s</u>		<u>School Attendance</u>			<u>Composition</u>		<u>Gang Activity*</u>
		<u>Genl. Members</u>	<u>Active</u>	<u>In</u>	<u>Truant</u>	<u>Dropout</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
Luzon-Visayas- Mindanao - LVM	Marshall HS	25	30%	50%	30%	30%	X		b

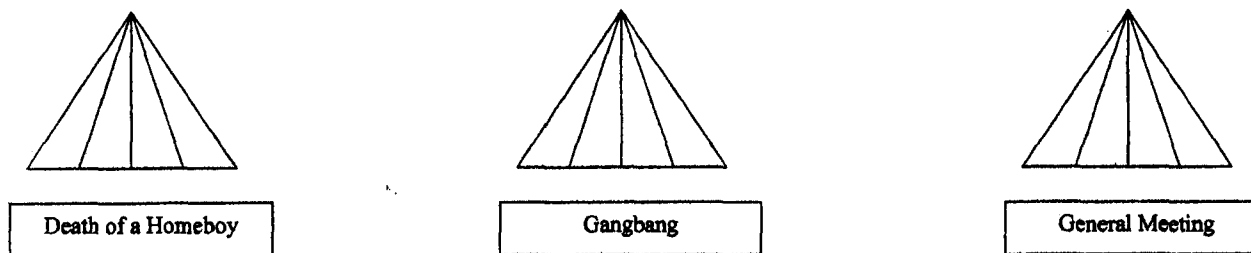
*a=auto burglary
 b=banging/fighting
 d=drug use/traffic
 g=grand theft auto
 s=shooting guns

This study is based upon SIPA documentation, SIPA staff assessment and data from Los Angeles Police Department, Los Angeles Sheriffs Department and L.A. County Probation Department. The 28 youth gangs listed are ones which SIPA currently has contact with. These gangs currently operate in the areas of Central Los Angeles. For many of them, their membership ranges to other areas of Los Angeles County with sizable Pilipino community populations such as Carson, Cerritos, West Covina, and San Fernando Valley. There are many other Pilipino youth gangs not listed in this study which exist in these areas. SIPA does not currently provide direct services to these youth.

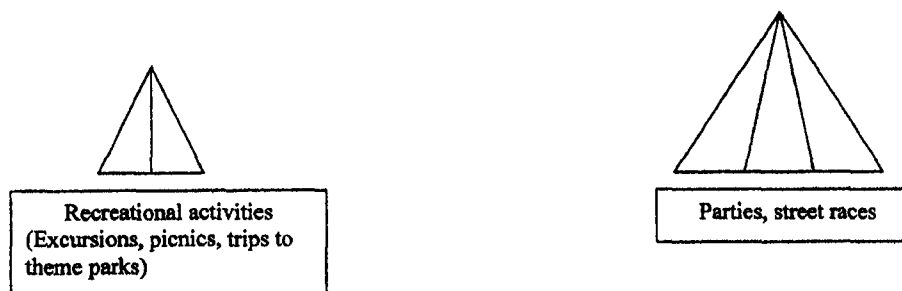
March 1989

IPA - Search to Involve Pilipino Americans, Inc.
 2408 W. Temple St.
 Los Angeles, CA 90026
 (213) 382-1819

Most Common "Structural Poses" of Satanas



Homeboys rearranged themselves to accomplish various tasks: Death of a homeboy, gangbangs, and general meetings brought all the units of the coalition together
 (Most of the time, Satanas was an agroupment of little "tropas" of 5-12 homeboys based upon peer cohort, "trip", and geographic area or residential contiguity)
 *time of pose unpredictable



ENDNOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. According to Professor Jack Katz (1988:154), “It has been traditional in American sociology to define the problematic phenomenon as that of the gang and to look for ultimate causes in the conditions of urban, minority group, adolescent poverty. But the guiding definition of the “gang” is not only somehow uncomfortable for its subjects; the concept is a fateful step in a process of circular analysis. As long as we define the problem to be explained as that of the “gang,” we tend to seek relevant data only in the adolescent segment of ghetto society. We then find that key background factors lie in the struggles of adolescence, the pressures of urban life, the bitterness of poverty in an affluent society, the resentment of ethnically oppressed populations, and so forth.”

By “structuralist” I refer to approaches that emphasize the role played by material conditions (i.e. Mertonian [1938] “strain,” developed by Cloward and Ohlin [1960], an influential work in the War on Poverty) and social forces said to lead individuals to engage in deviance or join gangs. In the 1980s and 1990s a newer type of structuralism had refined the causal link between gangs and poverty, inspired by Wilson’s theory of the underclass (i.e. Hagedorn 1988). For a critique of structuralist and underclass approaches, see Jankowski 1991. For a comprehensive review of urban street violence and the social forces that shape adolescent gang behavior, see Vigil 2003

2. As the political activist Royal Morales saw it, the term “Pinoy” (slang for Filipino) gained ideological significance within the context of the Filipino American experience. Morales advocated the use of “Pilipino” rather than “Filipino” to emphasize the historically unique identity of Filipinos in America (see his book, *Makibaka*). To avoid confusion, “Filipino” will be largely used in this study, but in chapter 6 where I discuss the rise of a youth saving movement and Royal Morales’ founding role, “Pilipino” will be used. In cases where individuals preferred to “P,” as in chapter 7 (discussing the role of the community press and youth saving youth, Pilipino will likewise be used.
3. As exemplified by an emic approach that analyzes cultural phenomena from an “insiders” point of view; it examines the shared perceptions or categories of thought that are deemed meaningful by members of a culture. Emic knowledge proceeds from an intuitive and empathetic understanding of a culture. “Emic” is contrasted with “Etic,” the latter referring to categories or concepts derived from

science that would allow for “objective” and cross-cultural comparisons. See Pike 1954 and Harris 1968 for a discussion of emic/etic distinctions. See also Vigil and Long 1990 for a direct application of these concepts to the study of gangs.

4. Since *barkada* will repeatedly appear, especially in chapters 1 and 2, from henceforth it will no longer be italicized.
5. A rare study that drew attention to the interaction between youth gangs and social workers is Malcolm Klein’s “Street Gangs and Street Workers” (1971). His analysis, however, was limited to an evaluation of the impact of a gang intervention program; he found out that detached worker intervention had the unintended effect of increasing gang cohesiveness, thus negating the goal of interdicting gangs.
6. *Satanas* will constantly appear throughout the text and will henceforth no longer be italicized.
7. I reference Basch et. al. 1994, the group credited with starting a serious consideration and application of the concept of “transnationalism” in chapter 3 (p.46) of this study. Ong’s (1999) treatise on the cultural logics of transnationality proved illuminating. The traditional acculturation model that Wolf (1997) refers to also appears in studies of immigration as the bi-polar, dichotomous “assimilation” model, which Yen Le Espiritu (2003) describes as overwhelmingly “America-centric:” viewing the process as a uni-directional flow from sending country to receiving (or host) country. She argues that transnationalism offers the advantage of highlighting the “range and depth of migrants’ lived experience in multinational social fields” (p.4).
8. Youthful Filipino men encountered and even fraternized with Latino barrio boys during the 1920s; but since pre-1950s data on Filipino youth group formations is rather sparse, my focus for this study will be on post 1950 transnational developments.
9. Connell (2000:65) refers to the “global circulation of gender images in US-dominated mass communications.” Clifford 1997 and Gilroy 1993 both discuss the circular flow of cultural elements and ideas within transnational movements of people.

10. As will become evident in chapter 2, the barkada has both its positive as well as negative dimensions. The barkada gives an individual a sense of belonging and identity, in the commitment and intimacy for each other that one experiences inside it. The barkada can also lead to “trouble,” out of a member’s “pakikisama” (“to go along, submit to the group’s will”). Thus the expression “nabarkada kasi” (because he joined a barkada) to explain why an individual has strayed momentarily from conventional paths. I say “momentarily,” because the Filipino concept of barkada makes allowance for behavioral shifts from conventionality to deviance and vice versa. In contrast, the anglo scientific dichotomy between deviance and normality is reflective of a tendency to cut up reality into often artificial “either-or” oppositions not mirrored in the real social world. The “gang” and “non-gang” dichotomy is a case in point.
11. See Nuwer 1999 and Sanday 1990 for historical and anthropological insights into the American fraternity system. See also Kimmel 1996 for a comprehensive coverage of “manhood in America” from a pro-feminist men’s studies perspective.
12. Simply click “barkada” on search engines and one will be led to websites of Filipino American student associations (across America) that either bear the name barkada or some other Filipino term for group or collectivity.
13. The Spur Posse were a group of white boys from affluent suburban Lakewood, California; their arrest in March 18, 1993 for crimes of a sexual nature generated considerable press coverage. They had a point system of tallying sexual conquests.
14. In the California Penal Code a gang is a group of three or more persons that commits crimes, has an identifying name and other trademarks (as cited by Ong).

CHAPTER 2

1. So far it is the male barkada that has drawn the attention of social scientists and writers, as this chapter will show. References to the female barkada are passing and rare; and even rarer on mixed-gender or gay barkadas. The topic represents vast territory waiting to be explored.

2. Dictionary definitions of gang and barkada in Rubino 2002 and Bickford 1988.
3. See website of Upsilon Sigma Phi, the oldest Greek letter fraternity not only in the Philippines but in Asia, founded 1918. It counts Benigno Aquino and Ferdinand Marcos among famous members, as well as countless government officials, leaders in the private sector, and many intellectuals. (www.upsilon.com).
4. Santiago “Sanny” Tan, personal interview September 7, 2002; Arnold Malabanan, personal interview, October 10, 2005.
5. See www.sunstar.com (Akrho, Tau as Crime Groups); Leilani Adriano, “Cops Requested to Deter Fraternities” (abs-cbnnews.com).
6. See atinitonews.com/jan2004/philippinenews.html (“Upsilon Mystique”). Mentions any prominent Upsilononians in government, national figures. See also upbetasigma-usa.net for information on another prominent fraternity and its members.
7. Mitchell, Mark, “Frat Brats” in *Far Eastern Economic Review* (1/15/01)62-64.
8. Aro, Chris, “Brod Wars: the Never-Ending Saga” in UP Forum Online Archive (March-April 2000). www.upd.edu.ph
9. Tau Gamma Phi/Sigma chapter, Triskelion online news; see also Atty. Monching Ocampo, “Is There Any Antidote at All to Fraternity Violence?” in www.taugamma-phionline.com/news.
10. Teodoro, Luis V. “Barbarians”; see also de Quiroz, Conrad, “The Outrage” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Feb 24, 1999) and “So What Do We Do About It?” in *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (Feb 25, 1999). www.geocities.com/onion/up/news

CHAPTER 3

1. See Philippines:gov.ph (official website of the Republic of the Philippines).
2. I use Takaki 1989 as my basic source for this capsule presentation on Filipino American history.
3. The quest for greater visibility as a community took a major step when “Historic Filipinotown” was created by a resolution sponsored by Los Angeles councilman Eric Garcetti. Inauguration took place on August 2, 2002 at City Hall; a huge 8-foot long street sign was unveiled before a group of city officials and Filipino American community leaders. The Historic Filipinotown district is bounded to the west by Hoover St., to the north by the Hollywood freeway, to the south by Beverly Blvd, and to the east by Glendale Blvd. The district lies to the west of Downtown Los Angeles.
4. The active alumni association of the Adventist University of the Philippines (AWESNA) and the now defunct Adventist Mission Society (AMSA).

CHAPTER 4

1. Both the police and older Satanas homeboys were in accord about Filipino boys being co-founders of Temple Street Gang. But back then, they were not known as “gangs” but as “boy groups” (see Bogardus 1926).
2. Professor Vigil shared with me his recollection about Filipino boys hanging out With Mexican gangs, after his job talk at the UCLA Anthropology Department in 1992.
3. See Jankowski 1991.
4. Moore and Vigil (1988) observed and concluded that the Chicano gang is not criminogenic.

CHAPTER 5

1. See Alsaybar 1993, Appendix F, for a homeboy's illustration of a muscular Devil bearing a three-pronged pitch fork.
2. See Alsaybar 1993, Appendix G, for an artist's illustration of the "Devil's shrine."
3. See Alsaybar 1993, Appendix J, for artist's illustration of STS homeboys standing in a line and forming with hand signs the name "Satanas."

CHAPTER 6

1. Morales, Royal F., "On Focus"—SIPA, Search To Involve Philippine-Americans. Typescript pp.2, 12/1/70. (Written after Camp Oak Grove Conference.)
2. See Morales, Makibaka 2, 216-224 (on historic Filipino Christian Church).
3. Connie Kang, "Filipinos Happy With Life in US, but Lack United Voice." Los Angeles Times, January 26, A1.
4. Morales, Makibaka 2, 126-27.
5. Morales, Makibaka 2, 127.
6. Morales, Makibaka 2, 127.
7. Morales, Makibaka 2, 130-31.
8. Morales, Makibaka 2, 138.
9. Morales, Makibaka 2, 190.
10. Morales, Makibaka 2, 191.
11. Morales, Makibaka 2, 192.
12. Morales, Makibaka 2, 192.
13. Morales, Makibaka 2, appendix K, no pagination.
14. See Alsaybar 1997, "House of Community Spirits."

15. From SIPA informational brochure.
16. Morales, Makibaka 2, appendix K.

CHAPTER 7

1. Student writing varies in quality and depth of analysis—from well-researched and well-written to seemingly “overnight” types of production. Ross Advincula’s “Filipino Street Gangs: A Public Policy Report” (Anthro 196A, Winter 1996 UCLA) stands out as a fine example of undergraduate work under the guidance of noted gang expert, Professor James Diego Vigil. 51 pages in length, Advincula utilizes Vigil’s “multiple marginality” framework of analysis; due to the paucity of writing on Filipino gangs, he was constrained to interview me and fall back on my *Satanas* study (Alsaybar 1993). Advincula’s paper revolves around life histories of six Filipino American gang members who were detained in CYA (California Youth Authority) facilities. He conducted the interviews inside the detention center. While looking into individual biographies, concludes that social, economic, and historical forces drive Filipino American youths to gravitate towards street gangs. Significantly, Advincula states that only 7 out of almost 1000 youths in that facility where he conducted his interviews were Filipino American (thus, representing a minuscule percentage of detainees).

Antonio (Tony) Ellorin wrote a term paper while pursuing an MSW at USC. Simply titled “Filipino Gangs,” his ten-paged paper described the “origin and nature of Filipino gangs, probable causes of the problem, intervention, and a new approach to gang violence” (paper dated 1989). Ellorin utilized data from the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Community Youth Gang Services (CYGS). He also interviewed community leaders like Royal Morales and Dan Guzman of the CYGS. The paper cited a good amount of current literature on gangs, mostly from law enforcement and social work. Like most students and community workers, Ellorin cites the “prison model” Theory of law enforcement: “Following WWII, many hardcore criminals who were released from prison in the Philippines formed gangs.” Among the factors precipitating the proliferation of Filipino gangs, he cited high stress experienced by newly arrived Filipino immigrant families and the long work hours put in by parents; consequently, children remain unsupervised for large blocks of time, resulting in maladaptive behavior and delinquency among children. Also, ignorance and denial of the problem, with parents denying that their kids are into gangs because it brings shame and humiliation to the family. Tony Ellorin was one of the resident social workers at SIPA while I was there as an outreach worker (1989-1990). In terms of strategy and intervention, he cites the social and community approach which saw SIPA creating a family atmosphere among its client youth (esp. the

“Ate/Kuya” big sister, big brother model of relationships. He also mentioned their attempts at mediation between feuding gangs, mobilizing community resources, and providing alternatives to gangs as effective in preventing the recruitment of new gang members.

Angel de los Reyes wrote a term paper, “Filipino Youth Gangs,” for the Pilipino American Experience class (AAS 197B; paper was dated 3/15/88). De los Reyes wrote about “Satanas” and “Pinoy Real” (PR), two well-known groups. He made the significant observation that Filipino American homeboys came from all classes, “from high class to very low class.” He interviewed two boys who lived in Beverly Hills and obviously came from well-off families; most boys, he said, were from middle class families. The short paper contains very sketchy descriptions of group, age, and racial structure and characterizes members as coming from troubled family backgrounds (i.e. divorced parents, estrangement from parents, an alcoholic parent, boy physically or mentally abused, etc.). Another important observation he made is that some of the gangs did not start out as gangs. Pinoy Real, for instance, “started out as disc jocks who played music for parties.” He notes that Satanas “was first a car club, but then a Mexican gang started messing around with them, they didn’t like that so they started getting more guys in to get back at the Mexican gangs. Some of the groups are not even gangs. They are just a group of people who go out together and plus (sic) have their own name. for instance, I have friends who call themselves Fresh Pinays in Style (FPS), and they are now being considered a gang by girls who live in Los Angeles. FPS is just a group of girls who go out together. Because a group of people “hang out” together, they are easily mistaken as a gang,” concluded de los Reyes.

2. Mark Pulido, a rising young Filipino public servant, serves on the board of the ABC Unified School District, which encompasses the cities of Artesia, Cerritos, Hawaiian Gardens, parts of Lakewood, Long Beach, and Norwalk in Los Angeles County.

CHAPTER 8

1. I rely basically on Grace Borrero’s observations about TDB, in the absence of data or writings on Filipino American fraternities. However, I have gained further insights into TDB via my conversations with my nephew Ian Almonte, a member of one of the TDB chapters. Interestingly, Ian had progressed from being active in a mixed party/gang crew to ethnic college fraternity.

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