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## CHAPTER SIX

# Chicano Gang Membership, Familism, and Social Support: A Critical Examination of Conflicting Theoretical Models<sup>1</sup>

*Jesse Díaz Jr., University of California, Riverside*

### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted in Southern California, and included 52 self-identified Chicano gang members over eighteen years old. The basic theoretical question addressed is whether Chicano gang members in adulthood would draw more social support from friends or family. Specifically, two contradictory theoretical models were examined, the *Multiple Marginality* and the *Surrogate Family* approaches. Drawing from the literature on familism and gangs, it was predicted that while gang members would become estranged from the family during adolescence, once gang members matured into adulthood, they would once again draw social support from their families. A linear regression analysis was employed to ascertain the correlation between friends and family social support. Although the prediction that the participants would seek more social support from their families than from friends as they matured was not supported, the outcome was nonetheless instructive and will hopefully help to inform the extant literature on the relationship between familism and

gang membership among Chicanos, and serve as an impetus for future investigations of a neglected and important area of study.

## **CHICANO GANG MEMBERSHIP, FAMILISM, AND SOCIAL SUPPORT: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF CONFLICTING THEORETICAL MODELS**

### *Introduction and Theoretical Overview*

This study examines an important but much neglected area of research, the association among social support, familism, and gang membership. The persistence of gangs and delinquency among Chicano youth is undeniable and has reportedly reached epidemic proportions. At the turn of the century, Carson, Butcher and Mineka (2000) claimed there were 23,388 youth gangs with 664,906 members in the U.S. Nearly a decade earlier, Knox and Tromanhauser (1991) reported that in a five state survey, Latinos made up 59.4% of the gang population. The Annual Report to the California Legislature (2000) reported that in the state of California there were 1,818 Latino gangs comprised of nearly 170,000 members.

The steady rise in gang membership is no longer exclusive to the Southern California area, but is endemic across the state and nation, prompting a steady flow of literature from the social sciences on the “gang problem” (Adler, Ovando & Hocevar, 1984; Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Miller, 1958; Mirandé, 1987; Rodeheffer, 1949; Stone, 1999; Vigil, 1983). Other researchers have looked at specific areas of gang affiliation, including group processes with respect to street identity (Vigil, 1988), ethnic identity (Bernal, Saenz & Knight, 1991), clinical treatment (Belitz & Valdez, 1994), clinical and physical assessment (Mondragon, 1995), coping responses (Brezina, 1996), social learning (Brownfield, Thompson & Sorenson, 1997), precursors and consequences to gang membership (Dukes, Martinez & Stein, 1997), gang intervention (Hunsaker, 1981), pride and prejudice among at-risk high school gang members (Wang,

1994), and cultural adjustment among generational delinquents (Buriel, Calzada & Vasquez, 1982).

In recent years there has emerged a proliferation of research addressing various aspects of Chicano<sup>2</sup> gangs and gang affiliation. Unfortunately, the bulk of this research has expressly focused on adolescents, and research on adult gang members is extremely limited. This study is unique in focusing on the relative role played by friends and family as sources of social support for a sample of adult Chicano gang members. Moreover, this study identifies and critically examines two contradictory theoretical perspectives found in the literature on gangs, relative to the relationship between familism, social support, and gang membership—the Multiple Marginality approach, and the Surrogate Family approach.

### *The Multiple Marginality Model*

The first, and prevailing theoretical model, termed “*Multiple Marginality*,” has been most clearly articulated and applied by anthropologist, James (Diego) Vigil (2002; 1988), first in his classic book, *Barrio Gangs*, and more recently in *Street Cultures in the Mega-City: A Rainbow of Gangs*. The Multiple Marginality concept posits that urban street gangs in general, and Mexican American gangs in particular; essentially develop out of poverty, discrimination, and the marginalized and tenuous existence of minority youth in urban areas.<sup>3</sup> Accordingly, Chicano gang members are socially, economically, and spatially isolated, thus marginalized from mainstream society. Because of their impoverished economic condition, many *barrio* parents are forced to work long hours to support their families, resulting in a decline of the “traditional family” and an “erosion of parental authority.” This is evidenced by rising rates of divorce and an increase in father absence, which creates a lack of consistent parental supervision. The breakdown of the family and their experience with school failure, consequently leads Chicano youth to begin to spend more time on the streets and increasingly turn to gang affiliated peers, rather than to their families or schools for social support, acceptance, approval, identity formation, and self-affirmation. These conditions lead youth to undergo a process, which Vigil (2002; 1988) termed “*choloization*.”

Vigil (1988) operationally defined a Chicano gang not only as a marginalized group (for review see: Park, 1928), but also as a top-competitor with other socially grounded institutions, such as family and schools that help to guide and shape self-identification. Specifically, Vigil contended that the process of “street socialization” occurred when these institutions were non-existent or had simply failed. Furthermore, during the “*choloization*” process, Vigil (2002; 1988) posited that the gang becomes a collective broker of internal norms and functions, further claiming that the gang also serves as a role provider, offering the new recruit a model of what he should think about himself, how to dress, and most critically how he should act-- a socialization modeling process usually reserved for a parent, older sibling, or caregiver. Since gang members’ “*homeboys*” (e.g., fellow barrio residents, childhood friends, or in frequent occurrences extended family members) are afforded this window of opportunity to “*school*” (teach) him, it is very common for the individual to be lured into the involvement of deviant behavior simply to integrate with the group and gain “approval and acceptance.”

Although the early deficit model, which prevailed in the 1950’s and 1960’s, blamed the Chicano family for delinquency,<sup>4</sup> most researchers today are reluctant to attribute delinquency directly to the family. However, some researchers have found that the families of delinquents tended not to help their children with appropriate role playing, not to have prepared them to do well academically, and to have not aided them with the internalization of norms (Adler, Ovando & Hocevar, 1984). Other researchers have considered ineffective intra-familial relations among the immediate families of gang members as the root cause of the recent rise in gang membership (Calabrese & Barton, 1995; Lloyd, 1985; Paulson, Coombs & Landsverk, 1990). In a broader context, Dukes, Martinez and Stein (1997) pointed to a lack of social integration as being a liability, not necessarily resulting from family functioning.

Despite many years of researching Chicano gangs, Vigil (2002) remains steadfast in maintaining that it is family dysfunction brought about by social disorganization which plays the most significant role in prompting Chicano youth to join gangs, arguing that “Disruptions in family life place stress on parenting practices and duties...often resulting in abbrevi-

ated or curtailed supervision and direction of household children” (8). Although Vigil has offered much insight on these topics, he has provided limited data to support these assertions. While the Multiple Marginality approach is useful in explaining the socio-ecological circumstances that prompt gang enjoyment, it fails to pay sufficient attention to the role played by the family and familism in the creation and maintenance of street gangs.

### *The Surrogate Family Model, Chicano Gangs, and Familism*

This study was predicated on whether Chicano adult gang members were more likely to turn to friends or to family for moral or emotional support. For example, whom do gang members turn to for support or advice relative to intimate relations or sex? Another area examined is whether friends or family are more likely to be perceived as accepting them for “who” they are, rather than “what” they are? Most importantly, however, this study sought to measure whether the degree of social support between this sample of adult gang members and their family and friends increased, decreased, or remained constant, as they matured into adulthood, although focusing more on family and its relation to gang enjoyment.

As a result, another approach in contrast to the Multiple Marginality perspective sees the gang as a “*Surrogate Family*” (Morales, 1992; Belitz & Valdez, 1994; Ruble & Turner, 2000) and generally views gangs as reinforcing, not undermining, traditional family values. Rather than seeing the gang as supplanting or eroding the traditional Chicano family, according to the Surrogate Family model, Chicano gangs are extensions of the Chicano family. Chicano families are often virtually coterminous with Chicano gangs, so that family members are typically incorporated into gangs, and the gang becomes a sort of surrogate family. Chicano gangs, in turn, promote and reinforce traditional family values, so that they come to be and typically maintain themselves as extensions of Chicano families. According to the Surrogate Family approach, in terms of social support, Chicano families can often resemble a gang, and gangs, in turn, are like Chicano families.

The Chicano family has been widely studied and analyzed (Gowan & Trevino, 1998; Reuschenburg & Buriel, 1993; Schumm, McCollum,

Bugaighis, Jurich, Bollman & Reitz, 1988; Temple-Trujillo, 1974; Zapata & Jaramillo, 1987), but few studies have attempted to examine the relationship between la *familia* and gang membership. Zapata and Jaramillo (1987) attempted to analyze previous works pertaining to the Chicano family by focusing on the psychosocial development of sibling role perceptions, alliances among family members, and family management. Following this approach, a holistic method for examining gang affiliation should integrate the role of familism in promoting or deterring gang membership. I contend that what sets Chicano male gang members apart, then, is their incorporated value of familism indoctrinated by immediate and extended family members, which compensates for the often-reported absences by one or both parents, usually the father.

There is considerable support for the view that Chicanos, including gang members, value the presence of family members, making it important for them to contact or visit with their relatives regularly. Keefe (1984) offered that face to face visits, to embrace, to touch, and to simply be with one another to share the minor joys and sorrows of daily life are the most desired by Chicanos. Further, kinship networks can be as large or limited to the individual's choice, but it is the nuclear family household that serves as the basic social unit. However, Keefe (1984) posited that the extended Chicano family serves parallel to the nuclear family, especially to the native U.S. born Chicanos, who are more likely to have near-by significant relatives, visiting with them frequently and exchanging goods or bartering services. In addition, Chicano families may include "fictive kin," being of a religious or secularized nature, such as *Compadres*, *Comadres*, *Ninos*, *Ninas*, etc., but it is the ties between parents and children, and between siblings that are the most significant.

Citing Sotomayer (1971), Temple-Trujillo (1974) described the Chicano family as being largely segregated from the mainstream, holding the capacity of preserving human relationships and feeling the satisfaction derived from these interactions. Furthermore, she acknowledged that other researchers have misinterpreted this quality as dependence, resulting from strong interdependence within the family. Further, Temple-Trujillo (1974) asserted that a Chicano child growing up in a network of friends and relatives tends to have many caretakers and is cognizant and

sensitive to the fact that there are many alternative sources of love. Even further, Temple-Trujillo posited that when the family is viewed as a source of strength, it serves as a support system, reinforcing the capacity of the extended family to offer emotional support to the individual who suffers psychological stress incurred from external systems. In sum, the greatest strengths of the Chicano family are its' foci and stress on human relationships and communal orientation, or social support.

On the other hand, other literature has pointed to the gravity of an absent biological father, and to its function in triggering gang enjoinment among children (Adler et al, 1984; Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Negola, 1998; Wood, Furlong, Rosenblatt, Robertson, Scozzari & Sosna, 1997). In an interview with an active gang member<sup>9</sup> he reported the difficulty he and his brother have experienced not having a father around,

The only homies that I know who have single parents are moms...my dad is living on the next block in my grandma's house...it is hard, especially for my mom who is raising two boys. Sometimes there is some stuff you can't talk to your moms about, makes it hard when you ain't got your dad around. Sometimes I talk to my step-dad or my Nino (Godfather), they usually tell me the stuff that I need to know.

Most of the literature reviewed reported a higher probability of single-parent mothers as being the only present caregiver in the households of active gang members. The Anglocentric notion that an absent father is not only detrimental to the welfare of his children, but also causes children to join gangs, is inconsistent with the available literature on Chicano familism.

Specifically, this literature corroborates Spooks' experience and points to the presence of extended family members such as *Tios*, *Primos*, *Padrinos*, *Abuelos*, etc., who assist the nuclear family and often serve as surrogate father-figures for children, and also to the Mexican American mother as a strong force in raising her children, and maintaining the greatest concern to help her child "have a better life," with "health and happiness," and also to provide "safety and protection" (Zambrana, Silva-Palacios & Powell, 1992).



Because of the high prevalence of adaptation to family functioning among Chicano gang members, they are poised to integrate familistic values into interactions with associates. That is, a gang affiliate who has attained high valuation of familism may perceive his peers as siblings, or as extended family members, not simply as peers. On the other hand, a gang member may seek peer support from a non-familial resource such as the gang when he or she experiences low satisfaction with family life such as minimal to no family cohesion, or increased family conflict, etc. (Cox, 1996).

I propose using Chicano familism to investigate specific psychosocial activities among adult Chicano gang members. In addressing these behaviors, Ruble and Turner (2000) reported fluidity in Chicano gang membership across immediate family and extended family lines within the constraints of the *barrio* for what the researchers identified as “suprasystematic protection,” or a protection network which includes the gang member’s nuclear and extended families living closely together in the same *barrio*. When Spooks was asked about his family in the *barrio*, he responded,

My grandma lives over on the next block, she is one of the original *barrio* families, she’s been there a long time...the whole next block is my family, it’s like a family street...one thing about being in gangs, you don’t disrespect your moms, and you keep the whole family safe.

Thus, it is important to further explore the Chicano family network from this standpoint to appraise its environmental influence on gang members’ conviction to both extended and immediate families’ protection and valuation.

In an effort to combine gang and family life, Ruble and Turner (2000) introduced a more profound and basically comprehensive method for examining gangs, citing the interplay between the fundamental gang structure and its comparable family system. The pair of researchers suggested that the gang itself serves as a family, or more specifically, a surrogate family. Ruble and Turner (2000) warned of the danger in actively participating in violent gang interludes; however, the gang can buffer emotional distress, provide cohesiveness, closeness and acceptance that

they may be deprived of elsewhere such as their biological family, or its equivalent. The authors also put forth that gangs function successfully on an “inter-relatedness” that coalesces every feature of family and gang life together in an intricate web of interactions.

This study seeks to test the validity of the Multiple Marginality and the Surrogate Family views of Chicano gangs by assessing sources of social support for older Chicano gang members. In particular, the study examines whether or not adult Chicano gang members were more likely to draw social support primarily from their immediate and extended family members rather than from their peers.

## **METHODS**

### *Participants: Social and Demographic Characteristics*

Descriptive statistics for the fifty-two adult Chicano male gang members from the greater Los Angeles area who served as participants for this study are portrayed in Table 1. The age of participants ranged from 18 to 53 years old, while the mean age was 29.6 (SD = 10.4). The mean age of gang enjoyment was 12.6 years (SD = 2.2). The average income among these participants fell between 20,000 and 30,000 dollars. Further, the gang affiliates had a mean of 10.6 (SD = 1.9) years of school completed, 10 (19.2%) reported reaching their senior year, and only 3 (5.8%) said they had graduated with a diploma or GED, or had attended some college. Most of the participants stated that they were employed. Those who were not were actively seeking regular employment. The majority 53.8% reported being single, unmarried, or living at home, while 17.3% reported being married and 15.4% were living with someone. Only 13.7% were divorced or separated. The participants reported having an average of 2 children (M = 1.9, SD = 1.9), the range of the number of children the participants fathered were from none to eight, 28.8% had no children, 25% had only one, 17.3% had two children, and the remainder fathered between 3 and 8 children.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Characteristics	N	Mean (or %)	SD
<b>Age (in years)</b>	52	29.61	10.41
<b>Years of school</b>	52	10.55	1.89
<b>Number of children</b>	52	1.86	1.91
<b>Age of gang enjoiment (in years)</b>	52	12.59	2.19
<b>Total family income</b>	52	\$20,000-30,000	--
<b>What is your marital status</b>			
<b>Single (living at home-never been married)</b>	28	53.8%	--
<b>Married</b>	9	17.3%	--
<b>Living With Someone</b>	8	15.4%	--
<b>Divorced (or Separated)</b>	7	13.5%	--
<b>Social Support</b>	52	4.5	1.23

### *The Chicano Gang Social Support Scale (CGSSS)*

The Chicano Gang Social Support Scale (CGSSS)<sup>6</sup> was used to examine the relationship between gang membership and social support among the participants. The CGSSS was created from ten 6-point Likertscale questions in English, which were then administered to the 52 participants (see Appendix 1). To prompt forced-choice replies, participants were asked to circle numbers 1, 2, or 3 if they drew more social support mainly from friends, or 4, 5, or 6 if they drew more social support mainly from their family. The degree of social support was based on the number circled, 1 being the highest for friends and 6 being the highest degree for family. As seen in Table 1, the reported mean social support was 4.5 (SD = 1.23), scoring more favorably for the family. Inter-item correlations for the scales are presented in Table 2. Item analyses on the CGSSS rendered a reliability alpha level of .89.

**Table 2. Chicano Gang Social Support Scale Correlation Matrix**

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
<b>SocSup1</b>	--									
<b>SocSup2</b>	.569**	--								
<b>SocSup3</b>	.619**	.688**	--							
<b>SocSup4</b>	.604**	.622**	.692**	--						
<b>SocSup5</b>	.385**	.701**	.434**	.601**	--					
<b>SocSup6</b>	.228	.266	.380**	.284*	.087	--				
<b>SocSup7</b>	.569**	.654**	.644**	.659**	.576**	.205	--			
<b>SocSup8</b>	.412**	.218	.543**	.352*	-.020	.308*	.376**	--		
<b>SocSup9</b>	.457**	.529**	.491**	.487**	.568**	.212	.381**	.366**	--	
<b>SocSup10</b>	.659**	.579**	.504**	.460**	.502**	.214	.549**	.398**	.415**	--

N = 52 Alpha = .8932 Standardized Alpha = .8926

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Data Collection

Some of the participants in this study were contacted in person or by phone; most were approached in the field during the day walking around in various Southern California *barrios*. In East Los Angeles some potential participants working or seeking work at “*Jobs for the Future*” were contacted by phone, then interviewed in person. Others were approached in front of the Department of Corrections Parole Office in Pomona, others in front of the unemployment office in East Los Angeles. However, the majority of the participants, as mentioned above, were approached “on the streets.”

The participants were identified as possible gang members based on their dress, which included mostly baggy pants or shorts, dress shirts, t-shirts, sports jerseys, and other attire. Other identifiers were those with bald-heads or short hair, tattoos, and the use of some gang terminology while

in conversation. It is also important to note that I am consistently identified as a current or former gang affiliate due to my appearance, subsequently giving me “insider” access to an otherwise difficult population to pervade. For this reason, it is advised that not everyone should approach suspected gang members in search of potential respondents in the field. Nevertheless, it is imperative that more researchers embark on similar investigations under similar conditions.

When approached, the participants were asked if they had “about ten minutes.” Then they were asked if they were Chicano, over eighteen-years old, and if they were gang members. If a potential participant answered no to any of the inquiries, he was thanked for his time before I dismissed myself. When the gang associate would answer yes to all three of the questions, he was informed that if he filled out the questionnaire to the best of his ability, he would be compensated with a \$5 gift certificate to a fast food eatery of his choice including Carl’s Jr., McDonalds, Subway, Burger King, or In-N-Out. Most of the participants filled out the questionnaire in less than twenty minutes. Upon completion of the questionnaire, it was reviewed to find any answers that were overlooked and went unanswered by the participant; if there were any found, the participants were asked to make the appropriate corrections. The questionnaire was offered to the participants in both English and Spanish; none of them chose to respond in Spanish. And, all participants read proficiently enough to complete the questionnaire on their own.

One of the aims of this study was to interview gang members in their natural milieu. In general, incarcerated participants may tend to report lower rates of social support from family members and higher rates from their fellow inmates. This research seeks to overcome this limitation by targeting non-incarcerated adult gang members in their living-environment (i.e., neighborhood hang outs, stores, resource centers, etc.), thereby garnering more valid and unbiased responses from individuals who are in contact with both family and friends. One researcher (Warr, 1993) argued the importance of involving family members in delinquency investigations; therefore, future studies on the intersection of social support, gang membership, and familism, should essentially include family members.

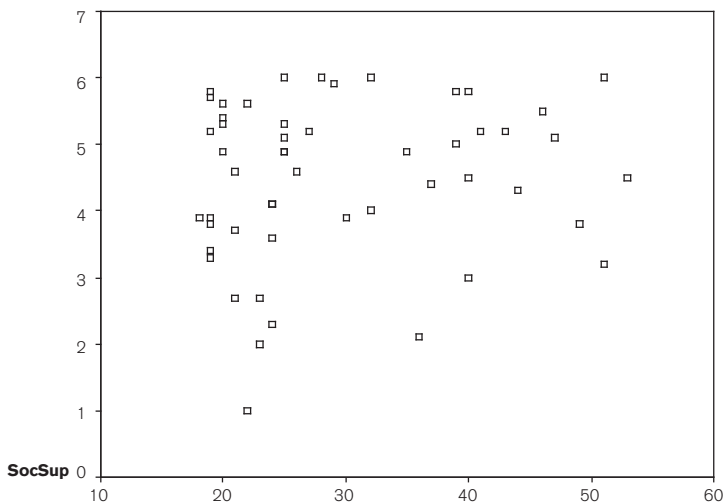
## FINDINGS

A linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the prediction of reported social support from the age of the Chicano gang participants. Data in Scatterplot 1 for the two variables indicated that the two variables are not linearly related such that as overall age increases, the rate of social support remains constant showing no significant correlational changes. The regression equation for predicting the overall social support index was,

$$\text{Predicted Overall Social Support} = 1.50 \text{ Overall Age} + 4.03$$

Contrary to the hypothesis, increased age did not predict increased family social support (values 4 -6 on social support scale) among the sample of Chicano gang members. Accuracy in predicting the overall social support index ( $B = .13$ ) was small. The correlation between the social support index and age was  $1.50$ ,  $t(50) = .93$ ,  $p = .001$ . Approximately 9% of the variance of the social support index was accounted for by its relationship age. Even when controlling for gang enjoyment in the ANOVA linear model, statistical significance failed to materialize between age and social support, suggesting that contrary to Vigil's (2002; 1988) assertion, even

**Scatterplot 1. Age and Social Support**



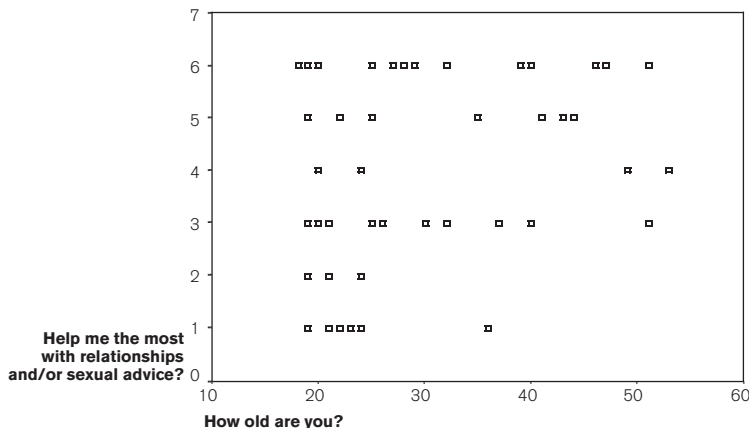
as adolescents these Chicano gang members sought more advice from their families than from their peers.

Although age did not significantly impact overall social support, two scale items were significantly correlated when analyzed separately with age. The first was “Who helps me the most with relationships and/or sexual advice?” As hypothesized, the data in Scatterplot 2 indicated that with increasing age, adult Chicano gang members significantly turn to their families for help with relationships and/or sexual advice. The regression equation for predicting the overall help with relationships and/or sexual advice index was,

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Predicted Help With Relationships and/or Sexual Advice} \\ & = 5.21 \text{ Overall Age} + 2.5 \end{aligned}$$

Accuracy in predicting the overall help with relationships and/or sexual advice index ( $B = .30$ ) was moderate. The correlation between the age index and the help with relationships and/or sexual advice index was  $.30$ ,  $t(50) = 2.2$ ,  $p = .001$ . Approximately 4.8% of the variance of the help with relationships and/or sexual advice index was accounted for by its

**Scatterplot 2. Age and Help with Relationships**



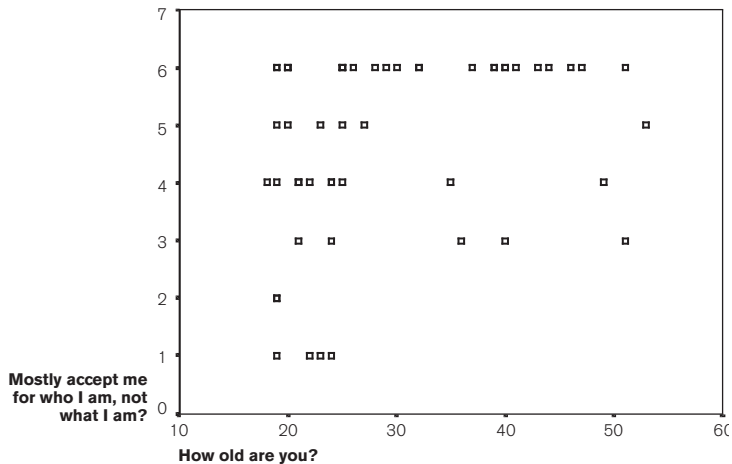
linear relationship with the age. When age alone was related to gang enjoyment, the effect of age was significant ( $b = .052$ ,  $t = 2.195$ ;  $p < .033$ ). The impact of age on the scale item stayed about the same after controlling for the potentially confounding effect of gang enjoyment ( $b = .053$ ,  $t = 2.357$ ;  $p < .022$ ). This indicates that contrary to expected changes from Vigil's Multiple Marginality model; young Chicano gang members seek advice from both peers and from their families.

The second scale item analyzed separately was "Who mostly accepts me for who I am, not what I am?" As expected, the data in Scatterplot 3 for the two variables indicated that as age increased adult Chicano gang members perceived their family more so than their friends to accept them for who they were and not for what they were. The regression equation for predicting the overall, mostly accept me for who I am, not what I am index was,

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{Mostly Accept Me For Who I Am, Not What I Am} \\ & = 4.56 \textit{ Overall Age} + 3.32 \end{aligned}$$

**Scatterplot 3. Age and Accept me for Who I Am**

*Marginality model; young Chicano gang members seek advice from both peers and from their families.*





Accuracy in predicting the acceptance for who I am, not what I am index ( $B = .30$ ) was moderate. The correlation between the age index and being accepted for who they were, not what they were index was  $.30$ ,  $t(50) = 2.2$ ,  $p = .001$ . Approximately 4.8% of the variance of being accepted for who I am, not what I am index was accounted for by its linear relationship with the age index. When age alone was related to gang enjoyment, the effect of age was significant ( $b = 4.56$ ,  $t = 2.19$ ;  $p < .033$ ). Again, when controlling for the mean age of gang enjoyment in the ANOVA linear model, the impact of age on the scale item stayed about the same after controlling for the potentially confounding effect of gang enjoyment ( $b = 4.56$ ,  $t = 2.357$ ;  $p < .022$ ), suggesting that adult Chicano gang members would seek more advice from their peers than from their families.

### *Discussion*

Taken together this study's results suggest that the core value of Mexican culture, familism, is strong for Chicano gang members in adolescence and into adulthood. Age at gang enjoyment appears to have a moderating impact on the relationship between age and social support, although the effect is weak. The findings show that to some degree Chicano gang members seek support from their family as well as their peers during adolescence. The findings call into question earlier claims put forth by proponents of the Multiple Marginality concept (Belitz & Valdez, 1994; Cox, 1996; Dukes et al, 1997; Vigil, 2002; 1988; 1983; Wood et al, 1997) who argue that a dysfunctional "home-life" and the disintegration of the family propels Chicano youth to seek external support from peers.

These findings also support Schumm et al (1988) who compared Anglos and Latinos, and concluded that Latinos reported higher satisfaction with family life, especially among adolescents. Furthermore, Brownfield et al (1997) concluded that Latinos are more likely than Anglos to join gangs, but that gang enjoyment had little to do with family dysfunction, nor poor communication with either parent. These findings are also consistent with those of other researchers (Buriel, Calzada & Vasquez, 1982; Calabrese & Noboa, 1995; Ruble & Turner, 2000) who have examined gang affiliation in the context of "*familia*."

In light of the kin-based and multiplex character of networks within the Chicano community, Keefe (1984) posited that this is why social scientists have reported that this group has stronger extended families anchored on geographic stability, specifically among networks of people living within a limited geographic area in which personal contact is frequent.

Subsequently, the Chicano family serves as an emotional support system from which members draw more support than from external sources; therefore, the family is the single most important institution for the Chicano (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin & Perez-Stable, 1987). While this study's findings point in this direction they must be interpreted with caution due to the sample's size and non-representativeness.

When discussing adult Chicano gang members, it becomes evident that there is a lack of study dedicated to the "veterano" (older) gang members, specifically those over eighteen years old. Some accounts have focused on older gang members in the context of "prison gangs," but much has yet to be learned about how they navigate on the "outside" (in society). Further investigations should also focus on gang members who are reaching an age of wanting to "settle down" (e.g., divergently mobilizing from criminal activities, living with a partner, getting married, etc.). Reference is often made in the literature to the "vato locos" and the "veteranos" via ethnological (Vigil, 1988), clinical (Belitz & Valdez, 1994), and sociocultural contributions (Mirandé, 1987; 1985), yet there is insufficient exploration into their overall function, aims, and or valuation of the family, or contrariwise, of their valuation of their peers' support.

To reiterate, Ruble and Turner (2000) suggested that future successful research endeavors, and both prevention and intervention programs, should aim at gangs from a holistic and systematic perspective. It is clear that more longitudinal research on gang members, especially adult Chicano gang members, is necessary to untangle the complexities of the union between Chicano gang members, their families, and social support.

## Endnotes

- 1 Thank you all for your time, support, and suggestions: Alfredo Mirandé, Edna Bonacich, Scott Coltrane, Jose Calderón, Agustín Kposowa.
- 2 This study will address Mexican, or Mexican American, gang members by using the term Chicano and Mexican American interchangeably (see: Fairchild & Cozens, 1981). "Chicano" is clearly the preferred term of gang members.
- 3 In his most recent work, *Rainbow of Gangs*, Vigil applies the multiply marginality approach to various racial groups in Los Angeles.
- 4 For a critique of this view, see, Alfredo Mirandé, "The Chicano Family: A Reanalysis of Conflicting Views." *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 39, November 1977, pp. 747-756.
- 5 Spooks is a 21 year-old Chicano active gang member in Ontario CA. The following quote was taken from an interview I had with him in March 2002 while conducting a case study relative to himself and his family-life.
- 6 The ten questions represented a subset of a larger Social Support scale in the "Cultural Adjustment Project- Latino Community Sample," conducted by Pitzer College Professor Norma Rodriguez PhD and supported by the National Institute for Mental Health.
- 7 For further review of the insider/outsider perspective, Alfredo Mirandé (1978), "Chicano Sociology: A New Paradigm for Social Science," *Pacific Sociological Review*, 21, 3, pp. 293-312. Also see, Maxine Baca Zinn (1979), "Field Research in Minority Communities: Ethical, Methodological and Political Observations by an Insider." *Social Problems*, 27, 2, pp. 209-219. Also see Alfredo Mirandé (1982), "Sociology of Chicanos or Chicano Sociology? A Critical Assessment of Emergent Paradigms," *Pacific Sociological Review*, 25, 4, pp. 495-508.

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**Appendix 1: Social Support Scale**

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1. PROVIDE ME WITH MORAL SUPPORT

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2. I ENJOY SHARING MY GENERAL IDEAS MOSTLY WITH...

---

3. PROVIDE ME WITH THE MOST EMOTIONAL SUPPORT...

---

4. I TALK ABOUT MY PERSONAL PROBLEMS MOSTLY WITH...

---

5. I ENJOY SPENDING MY FREE TIME MOSTLY WITH...

---

6. TRY THE MOST TO KEEP ME AWAY FROM DRUGS AND ALCOHOL...

---

7. HELP ME THE MOST WITH RELATIONSHIPS AND/OR SEXUAL ADVICE...

---

8. PUSH ME THE MOST TO SEEK AND KEEP EMPLOYMENT...

---

9. ENJOY HEARING ABOUT MY GENERAL LIFE EXPERIENCES THE MOST...

---

10. MOSTLY ACCEPT ME FOR WHO I AM, NOT WHAT I AM...

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