

Correlates of Hispanic Female Gang Membership

by

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Abstract

This study was an examination of specific correlates of Hispanic female juvenile gang involvement with regards to five domains: family, peers, community, school and individual characteristics. The data used were from a larger study, the National Evaluation of Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program 1995-1999. Out of this dataset of 5,935 respondents, 114 identified themselves as Hispanic female gang members. These subjects were all 8th graders, from 11 urban environments. They provided responses regarding their beliefs about why Hispanic adolescents join gangs, their opinion of gangs, their personal characteristics and social circumstances. The data were analyzed using measures of central tendency, other descriptive statistics and logistic regression to describe the circumstances of Hispanic female gang membership. The most significant predictors were peer influence, individual deviance and a positive attitude toward gangs.

INTRODUCTION

Recent research indicates that over one-third of juvenile gang members are females (Esbensen & Winfree, 1998). Plus, the literature suggests that some researchers are no longer approaching female gang membership from the old stereotypical perspective of a prima facie male influence, but are more carefully examining the female herself (Campbell, 1991; Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 1992; Fishman, 1995). Significantly, anti-gang officers indicate that female gangsters are now more entrenched and violent than ever, engaging in major gang activities such as homicides (Cornyn, 2001).

This changing trend in female delinquency seems to have increased enough over time to cause concern (Chesney-Lind & Brown, 1999). Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) statistics indicate that the arrest of girls for murder increased by 64%, arrest for robbery 114%, for aggravated assault 137% and for other assaults 126% (Chesney-Lind & Brown, 1999). Gang membership constitutes a further likelihood of victimization and reduction in

life opportunities for these young women and perhaps their offspring (Miller, 2001). Thus, this study asks how various individual traits, family circumstances, peer and community characteristics relate to Hispanic female gang membership?

It is imperative to learn why Hispanic females join gangs to better understand both what fosters the attraction to a gang lifestyle and the circumstances that otherwise make such membership likely. This is important to reduce the victimization and exploitation that is often a part of being a Hispanic female gang member or the child of one.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The United States Department of Justice Assistance (1997) defined “gang” as a group of persons who form an association for the purpose of committing illegal activities.

For Hispanics gang involvement has been increasing. In 1996 Curry approximated Hispanic gangsters at 43% of the total gang population. By 1999 respondents of the National Youth Gang Center survey indicated that 47% of all gangsters were Hispanics, 31% were African Americans, 13% were whites and 7% were Asians (Egley, 2002). Bursick and Grasmick (1993) stated that gang membership is not innate for African-Americans and Hispanics despite their high numbers as gangsters. Nevertheless, the reasons for membership may vary since African-American gangs are usually involved in drug trafficking, Hispanics in turf-related (Allen, 1999), and Asians and Caucasian gangs in property offenses (Block, Christakos, Jacob & Przybylski 1996; & Spengel, 1990).

Risk Factors for Joining a Gang

Numerous researchers have utilized various strategies including observational, longitudinal and cross-sectional methods in an attempt to explain reasons for youth gang membership (Howell, 1998). These reasons may be “individual or environmental hazards that increase an individual’s vulnerability to negative developmental outcomes” (Small & Luster, 1994). However, little research identifies the factors that might explain gang involvement specifically for female Hispanic juveniles (Wang, 2000). Thus, this study examines how individual characteristics, family circumstances, peers and community relate to gang membership.

Research on female gang members indicates a good proportion of gangsters come from homes with a high incidence of sexual abuse (Molidor, 1996; Moore & Hagedorn, 2001). For example, Moore in 1991 found that 29% of Hispanic female gangsters in Los Angeles had been victims of sexual abuse in their homes (Moore, 1991). Several other studies have identified liberation from cultural and class constraints, protection from an abusive family, safety and a sense of belonging as making gang life attractive to young females (Moore & Hagedorn 2001; Molidor, 1996; Campbell, 1990; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995; Chesney-Lind, Sheldon & Joe, 1996). According to Bjerregaard and Smith (1993) young female juveniles who see a bleak future ahead of them are more likely to become gang members. This can be attributed to the insecurity of being raised in an impoverished neighborhood

and been marginalized because of ethnicity and socio-economic status (Bjerregaard & Smith, 1993).

From longitudinal research conducted on a large population of youngsters living in the urban environments of Rochester, New York (Thornberry, 1998) and Seattle, Washington (Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Pearson, 1999) predictive factors of gang membership were identified on five domains: community, family, school, peer and individual risk factors (Howell, 1998). The Rochester's self-report study measured gang membership by observing 1,000 youths from middle school through their early 20s (Howell, 1998). Thornberry (1998) found that the most predictive factor for females among the five domains was the community. According to the study, females who grew up in disfranchised neighborhoods, with high levels of social integration, were more at risk for gang involvement. Family circumstances were another significant indicator of gang involvement for female juveniles. The most prominent of the family issues was lack of attachment to parents. Other family variables like family composition, socio-economic status, parental involvement, quality of parenting, family conflict and type of supervision, were found not be significant indicators of gang involvement for female juveniles. A negative perception of school, low aspirations and low parental expectations of academic achievement were other important predictive factors for gang involvement among young girls. Regarding individual attributes, the availability of drugs was found to play a significant role as a predictor of later gang membership. "Prosocial activities, depressive symptoms, negative life events, and low self-esteem" were not found to be indicators of putting young girls at risk of gang membership (Miller, Maxson & Klein, 2001).

Like the Rochester study, in the Seattle study, self-reports were used to measure gang involvement (Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Pearson, 1999). The subjects were 800 juveniles from elementary school through their early 20's. Similar to the Rochester study, the community factor was found to be significant in the Seattle study, particularly the availability of drugs.

Also, in the Seattle study several family variables were identified as being important: family disorganization, extreme economic deprivation, poor parenting, domestic violence and sibling misconduct. School factors that were found to predict gang involvement for females were: poor perception of the relevance of school, presence of gang in the school, academic frustration, low grades and negative labeling by teachers. Interaction with delinquent peers was found to be the most significant factor for female gang membership. Individual risk factors on the other hand included exposure to drug use, behavior problems, early sexual activity and the inability to say "no" to offers from delinquent peers. The level of exposure to these risk factors substantially predicts the likelihood of gang membership among female juveniles. Thus, the earlier the exposure and the more frequent the exposure, the more likely is gang membership (Hill, Howell, Hawkins & Pearson, 1999).

Family

Several studies, have found family characteristics related to gang membership. Walkers-Barnes and Mason (2001) examined some adolescents from an urban environment in regard to perception of reasons why girls were attracted to gangs. They found peer pressure and low parental involvement to be perceived as having a significant influence on a girl's decision to become a gang member. Further, others turned to gangs for protection from abusive families. This suggests that lack of parental attachment, educational frustration, socio-economic constraints, poor quality parental monitoring, low self-esteem, early sexual activity and interaction with delinquent peers puts female juveniles at risk for gang membership (Walker-Barnes & Mason, 2001). Indeed, for many gang members the gang is perceived to serve as a substitute for family, providing its members with love, security, respect, sense of self, understanding, recognition, loyalty, and support (Morales, 1992). As such it fills a vacuum in the female's life (Hardy, 1996).

According to Vigil (1988), the gang problem among Hispanics is a result of the migration of Hispanics to urban environments in the United States. Various difficulties faced by immigrant parents particularly having to work long hours for low wages, deprives their children of the privilege of consistent parental guidance (Vigil, 1988). These plus, economic constraints and family conflict render Hispanic female juveniles at-risk for gang membership.

School

School factors though less examined, have been found to be strong predictors of gang membership (Bjerregaard & Smith 1993). Some researchers (Bjerregaard & Smith 1993; Esbensen & Deschenes 1998; Maxson, Whitlock & Klein (1998) found gang juveniles to be less fond of school than non-gang juveniles. Esbensen and Deschenes (1998) also found that non-gang girls perceived school to be more important than gang girls.

Research by Bowker and Klein (1983) found that students who have low self-concept regarding academic achievement are at increased risk for gang membership; a finding consistent with the observations of females by Bjerregaard and Smith (1993).

In a Houston study (Mayor's Anti-Gang Task Force Office, 2002) parents ranked school problems as the third most likely cause of gangs existing in the community. Teachers identified academic failure as a predictive factor for gang involvement. Overall, there were three significant predicators for gang membership among female juveniles in the school domain: poor academic performance, low self-confidence and a perceived irrelevance of school activities (Mayor's Anti-Gang Task Force Office, 2002). Also, challenging for Hispanic juveniles is attending a school that insists on a monoculture instead of fostering biculturality. In this Hispanic youngsters are faced with the demand of giving up a part of themselves (Gutierrez, 1995).

Peers

The literature is consistent that juvenile behavior is overwhelming influenced by interaction with peers (Battin-Pearson, Guo, Hill, Abbott, Catalano & Hawkins, 1997; Menard & Elliott, 1994; Warr & Stafford, 1991). Battin-Pearson and colleagues (1997) found strong attachment to delinquent peers as opposed to prosocial peers to be a significant indicator of gang involvement among female juveniles. Other researchers, (Campbell, 1991; Chesney-Lind, Shelden, & Joe 1996; Fleisher, 1998; Harris, 1988) explain motives for female gang involvement as a search for a “familial group” (Harris 1988; Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995). Fleisher (1998) posits that the motive behind gang involvement for females is different from that of males. While female juveniles join gangs in search of emotionally fulfilling relationships, the attraction for their male counterparts is the activities associated with the gang lifestyle.

In 2000 Wang studied at-risk middle school students in an attempt to describe perceptions of risk factors for gang involvement among their peers. Findings from a sample of 40% African Americans, 38% Hispanics, 13% Whites and 9% Asians indicate that the majority of students (71%) perceived peer pressure to be the most significant predictor of gang involvement. Protection of status was the second significant predictor rated 70%. The need for acceptance was next with 68% and problems at home 66%. Wang (2000) included that when female juveniles do not find love and protection at home chances are high that they will seek it elsewhere (Wang 2000). Wang (2000) found that the peer group has tremendous influence on female middle school students from dysfunctional families, especially if the female was unsure about who she was.

Individual Factors

Many juveniles who become gang members do so in search of love and acceptance that has been missing in their lives (Ruble & William, 2000). Gangs serve the function of delivering esteem and a sense of self to enable its members to more effectively navigate their world (Ruble & William, 2000).

Additionally, in the Seattle study, Hill and colleagues (1999) found that gang juveniles held more delinquent beliefs, while Maxson, Whitlock, and Klein (1998), found that gangsters were more prone to resolve conflict by threat, had experienced hard times and had more delinquent self-concepts. In general, the Seattle and San Diego studies found significant differences in different contexts (neighborhood, education and family) between gang and non-gang juveniles (Miller, Maxson & Klein, 2001).

Deschenes and Esbensen (1997) found gang members not to be fond of school, thrill seekers, with a high level of impulsivity and low attachment level to parents. Non-gang juveniles were also found to interact more with prosocial peers than with delinquent peers (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1997).

Community Risk Factors

The literature suggests that whether Hispanic female juveniles become gang members is dependent on a number of factors such as “an array of economic, educational, familial and social conditions that exist in their

families and neighborhood” (Chesney-Lind, 1997). According to Curry and Spergel (1992) and Moore (1978; 1991) such micro forces are more likely in a macro structure that fosters them. Molidor (1996) conducted a study of female gang members, ages 13-17 in different gangs across Texas and New Mexico. He found that the girls had been victims of generational poverty and of an overburdened low quality education system that had failed to address their special needs.

According to Campbell’s (1984, 1990) research on Hispanic girl gangsters in New York, some Hispanic girls became gang members for reasons that were largely explained by their subordinate role in society as women and as minorities. Further, the obvious reality of their inability to secure a decent career outside of menial jobs with low wages was apparent. Many of the females came from single parent impoverished homes and possessed little education and few skills. With the given circumstances, Hispanic female juveniles’ aspirations for the future were bleak, “sex-typed or unrealistic”. All of this, plus being a young mother further restricted the Hispanic females’ life options. This study consider whether these findings are also true for the Hispanic females who participated in the GREAT evaluation survey.

A number of researchers suggest that the low socio-economic status of a community predicts gang affiliation for female juveniles (Goldstein, 1997; Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1964). The continued marginalization of minority juveniles, inaccessible opportunities, and poor community economics encourage many juveniles who perceive unfairness in legitimate social institutions to resort to illegitimate means to meet their needs (Goldstein, 1997; Jankowski, 1991; Spergel, 1964). Apparently, gangs provide access to alternative means of acquiring material wealth not available through conventional social institutions (Jankowski, 1991; Yablonsky, 1997; Klein, 1995).

In 2001 Walker-Barnes and Mason examined the perception of factors associated with gang membership among African-American and Hispanic alternative school female students. They found peer influence and the need for safety to be the most significant factors associated with gang involvement. Socio-economic factors were not found to be significantly influential in the decision to become a gang member. The presence of gang activities in the neighborhood put these minority girls at risk for gang association. These findings support the general observation that gangsters tend to cluster in high crime and socially disfranchised neighborhoods (Fagan, 1996; Vilgil 1988, Short & Strodbeck, 1965). These finding further support the literature that the presence of gangs and accessibility of drugs and firearms are related to gang involvement for female minority juveniles (Curry & Spergel 1992; Hill, Hawkins, Catalano, Maguin, & Kosterman, 1995).

Identifying the multiple marginalities of Hispanic females requires an understanding of community and family life in urban areas (Reiboldt, 2001). A number of community variables are capable of making a juvenile at-risk of gang involvement, and subject the juvenile to a state of confusion (Reiboldt, 2001). In 2001 Reiboldt attempted to understand the influence of gang friends, family and neighborhoods on juveniles. He studied two Mexican-

American families. The findings revealed that the community itself where the juveniles grew up contributed to gang membership. That is, when the community was poor and violent, with gangs present, the adolescent was likely to become interested in the gang lifestyle. This suggests that gangs may come into existence and are nurtured by distressed neighborhoods and families. Gangs fill the needs neglected by traditional institutions (Joe & Chesney-Lind, 1995). The break down of social institutions in such neighborhoods compels juveniles to become gang members in order to acquire possessions through illegitimate alternative means (Stone, 1999). Gangs also emerge for protection when there is some perceived external threat (Shelden, Tracy & Brown, 2001). The present study examines the points mentioned above as they relate to Hispanic female juveniles.

Theoretical Approach to Female Gang Membership

In order to address gang related delinquency and the need to dissuade juveniles from gang involvement, it is necessary to understand the circumstances that relate to gang formation and the underlying attractiveness of gangs. Herein, Hirschi's social control theory and Maslow's needs hierarchy are considered as possible explanations for Hispanic female gang membership.

Several anthropologists including Ember and Ember, (1990); and Haviland, (1988) have identified social control as an imperative feature of cultures. Social control refers to the informal efforts to encourage individuals to conform with societal norms and the penalties for non-compliance (Haviland, 1988). Anthropologists suggest that the family possesses the primary responsibility of enforcing social control within this context (Ember & Ember, 1990; Haviland, 1988).

Moreover, Hirschi's social control theory has significant empirical support in explaining juvenile delinquency (Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999). According to Hirschi's theory, "delinquency occurs because of weak social bonds, which exist when attachment, commitment, involvement and belief are weak" (Hirschi, 1969). Attachment refers to the affectional bond that an individual shares with significant others (for example: parents). Commitment refers to the efforts and time an individual has put into conventional society. This may include goals like (academic achievement, aspirations and work). Involvement refers to the degree of time invested participating in activities that foster society's interests. Belief is the last element of the bond, and it refers to a person's acceptance of society's value system (Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999). According to Hirschi (1969) when there is a strain in these elements, the social forces that help inhibit delinquency are weakened.

Hirschi (1969) posits that the stronger the relationship between adolescents and "conventional others", particularly parents, the less the likelihood of delinquency. This is because parents are usually responsible for early socialization of their children. Thus, it is the family's responsibility to instill conventional moral values. A strong attachment to parents is therefore significant in preventing delinquency, without which an individual would lack a moral guide for behavior (Hirschi, 1969). Additionally, Hirschi claims

that when juveniles are attached to their parents, it deters delinquency in the sense that these juveniles weigh the repercussions of their actions on the relationship with their parents. Indeed, the attachment is not only physical but also psychological (Hirschi, 1969).

Research suggests that bonds to the family have a different impact for male and for females (Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999). In 1999 Anderson, Holmes and Ostresh conducted a study that examined gender differences as relates to attachment to parents, peers, school, and the impact of such attachment on self-reported delinquency. Findings revealed that attachment to school and to peers were significantly related to a decline in delinquency for the girls, while for boys the most significant factor associated with decrease in delinquency appeared to be attachment to parents as well as a stable household. A fondness for school was also perceived to be an important factor to guide juvenile behavior along a conventional pathway (Anderson, Holmes & Ostresh, 1999).

Hirschi (1969) found that juveniles who failed to realize the relevance of school and did not care about their reputation were more likely to indulge in delinquent behavior. Thus, school can be said to be the second socialization ground for juveniles after the family. Robert Agnew's longitudinal study in 1985 supports Hirschi's hypothesis, indicating that there is a connection between feelings toward school and delinquency. In addition, fondness of school has also been shown to be positively associated with good conduct and to good school attendance (Jenkins, 1997).

The second element of the bond is commitment. Commitment suggests investment of time in conventional activities in society. Investing time in social activities keeps an individual guided by the moral and ethical code of the community. Hirschi, (1969) posits that individuals who have invested much time and devoted a lot of energy into conventionality are less likely to put it at stake by indulging in delinquent behavior.

Hirschi's (1969) third element of the bond is involvement, and it emphasizes the need to participate actively in activities that advocate the traditional interests of society. Hirschi argues that an individual who is preoccupied with schoolwork, recreation or religious activities will have little time to indulge in delinquent behavior.

The last element of the bond is belief. This deals with acceptance of the society's norms. Hirschi (1969) believes human beings are conformists, as governed by a value consensus. Thus, when individuals believe in the rationality and fairness of society's laws, their bond to society is strong but if otherwise, there is a strain. Then, the likelihood of delinquent behavior increases.

Another explanation of Hispanic gang membership may lies in Maslow's (1943) five hierarchical categories of human needs:

- * Physiological or basic needs, refers to the basic necessities of life, and these could include food, shelter and water
- * Safety needs, a desire for security and protection
- * Belongingness and love
- * Esteem needs, including the desire to feel important as might be apparent through compliments, praises and recommendations

*Self-actualization needs, include the desire to explore one's self-concept to derive a sense of achievement

The needs hierarchy is arranged in order of priority from "low-order to the high-order needs." Maslow's needs hierarchy starts with basic needs and ascends to wants. According to Maslow, an individual only yearns for the needs in the "next level when most of the needs at the previous level have been met." Once met such needs cease to motivate, and the desire for a new level sets in. These levels are fluid in that different people will have different intensity of desires for each level. Thus, esteem needs may be more important for a man while belongingness and love may be more important to a woman. In this study the researcher will examine the first four needs from lowest-order to higher-order, as motivation for gang membership among Hispanic females.

Hypotheses

Based on Hirschi's social control theory and Maslow's needs hierarchy, the following are expected:

- * Inconsistent parental supervision and low parental attachment are positively correlated with gang affiliation of Hispanic females.
- * Hispanic females join gangs for a sense of belonging
- * There is a positive relationship between association with delinquent peers and Hispanic female gang membership
- * If the juvenile feels unsafe in the community she is more likely to be a gang member

METHODS

The data presented in this research were from National Evaluation of the Gang Resistance Educational and Training (GREAT) program. The multi-site survey was conducted between 1995-1999 (Esbensen, 2000). The participants were middle school 8th graders from 11 selected schools in 11 cities: Phoenix, Arizona, Torrance, California, Orlando, Florida, Pocatello, Idaho, Will County, Illinois, Kansas City, Missouri, Omaha, Nebraska, Las Cruces, New Mexico, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Providence, Rhode Island and Milwaukee Wisconsin. The total sample consisted of 5,935 participants with 114 students who identified themselves as Hispanic female gang members. The demographic variables for the participants included sex, race, age and educational level. The subjects may be assumed to be from similar socio-economic backgrounds since they are in very similar schools. This population is important, in that it deals with urban middle school Hispanic females, a group not often studied.

The entire dataset consists of responses from 5,935 eighth graders, with approximately 47% males, 51% females and 2% who did not report their sex. The sample was ethnically diverse with White 39%, African American 26%, Hispanic 18%, American Indian 2%, Asian Pacific 5% and others 7%. About 61% of the subjects indicated they lived with both parents. Most of the subjects were within the ages of 13-14 years, with 59% being 14 years of age. Less than 1% were age 12 or younger and about 10% were 15 years or older. Approximately, 79% of the Hispanic females were born in the United States,

and 62% reported to be living with both parents, with 28% indicating they lived with their mothers and 2% indicated they lived with their fathers only. Regarding their mother's educational level, 20% of the Hispanic females indicated that their mother completed high school, 17% indicated their mothers had some high school, 13% indicated some college, 11% indicated grade school or less while 19% said they did not know. Regarding father's educational level, 18% indicated their father completed high school, 14% indicated some high school, 11% indicated grade school or less, while 30% said they did not know their father's level of education. This study focuses on 555 Hispanic female juveniles of which 114 (20%) identified themselves as gang members at some point in time. Among the Hispanic females, 49% reported to have completed the GREAT program, while 80% reported to have completed the DARE program.

Between 1995-1999 middle school students were surveyed to examine the GREAT's short and long terms effects. GREAT is a program designed to reduce or eliminate gang behavior among middle school students. The data were collected from 315 classrooms at 42 schools. The survey was conducted by giving questionnaires to 8th graders as two researchers stood in each classroom. One person read the questions aloud giving the students time to write their responses while the other researcher walked about the room to see if individual students had problems.

Instrument

The instrument consists of 262 questions. Most of the questions are closed-ended with Likert responses. The instrument contains several subscales addressing demographics, opinion of gangs, contextual and individual situations. See Appendix A. Gang membership is measured by the questions:

Have you ever been a gang member? 1. No 2. Yes (for past and/or present gang affiliation)

Are you now in a gang? 1. No 2. Yes (for present affiliation)

In 1991 police officers from Phoenix police department, Mesa, Glendale, Tempe and Arizona and special agents of the bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms developed GREAT. The objective of the program was to reduce gang activity by enlightening youths on the consequences of gang affiliation. The GREAT program was a model of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program and it is a national school-based gang prevention program where law enforcement officers teach an eight-lesson curriculum to middle school students in a one-hour session over a period of nine weeks. During such sessions children were taught: conflict resolutions skills, cultural sensitivity, goal setting and resisting peer pressure. The cooperation of the school administrator and the involvement of teachers were also utilized.

The researcher conducted logistic regression using individual traits, family, peers and community characteristics as predictors of gang membership. The use of logistic regression was contingent upon the way the

dependent variable was measured. Gang membership was measured by a dichotomous variable: “Ever been a gang member?” or “Are you in a gang now?” Descriptive statistics such as frequencies and measures of central tendency were used. Cross tabulations were also done to help in navigating the data. Major findings have been described and presented in tables as relevant.

ANALYSES AND RESULTS

Gang affiliation past and/or present was a dichotomous variable measured by the following question: “Ever been a gang member?” Present gang affiliation was measured by asking: “Are you a gang member now?” All of the subjects would have been clear on what gang affiliation or membership is because they were all participants in the GREAT program. Fifteen variables were used as predictors of gang affiliation. Those variables included low parental attachment, low parental supervision, school disorder, attitude toward school, impulsivity, association with certain peers, delinquent peers, deviant attitude, level of self-worth, peer influence, ethnic feelings, positive thoughts of gang, positive attitude toward gang, deviant attitude and loneliness. In some cases summated scales were created. That is, some of the variables were combined to assess a single variable in an effort to increase the reliability of the measurement. Items from different subscales representing the same construct were summed and it is their average scores that were used in the analysis, forming a new scale of 1 to 7 with 1 indicating low level of criterion and 7 high level of criterion. For example, 1 means low parental attachment and 7 high level of parental attachment.

Table 1: Result of Logistic Regression for Hispanic Female Gang Affiliation (Past and/or Present)

Independent Variable	B	SE	Wald
Parental attachment	.35	0.15	5.78
Parental supervision	-.63	.28	4.89
Self-worth	.58	.25	5.295
Peer influence	.42	.14	9.13
Attitude towards gangs	1.25	.28	19.62
Loneliness	.34	.17	4.04
Individual deviance	4.37	.89	24.01
School disorder	-.13	.10	1.58
Thoughts of gangs	.22	.12	3.26
$\chi^2 (df = 9, N = 438) = 141.88$		Nagelkerke $R^2 = .43$	
p<0.05, p<0.01, p<0.001			

The relationship between the above independent variables and the dependent variable of gang affiliation was investigated through logistic regression analysis using a backward elimination selection method. The backward elimination method eliminates from the model variables that contribute nothing or little to the model in terms of their explanatory power. Table 2 shows the result of logistic regression using gang affiliation past and/or present as the dependent variable. There were seven iterations made before the selection of variables included in the model. All of the variables, except two, remaining in the model were significant at 0.05 or 0.01 levels. All variables but one, parental supervision were found to be positive predictors of gang affiliation. The overall fit of the model was good in that 85.2% of the cases were correctly classified, χ^2 (df=9, N=438)=141.88, $p<.001$). The Nagelkerke $R^2 = .43$, that is, 43% of the variance in gang membership was accounted for by the variables included in the model.

Similar investigation was conducted for present gang affiliation using “Are you in a gang now?” as a measure of a dichotomous dependent variable. After 11 iterations the logistic regression analysis produced the following results (See Table 3). Four variables were found to be positively associated with gang affiliation including: self-worth (B=.97, SE=.36, Wald=7.18, $p<0.05$); peer influence (B=.51, SE=.21, Wald=6.16, $p<0.05$); positive attitude towards gangs (B=1.41, SE=.43, Wald=10.64, $p<0.01$); and, individual deviance (B=6.18, SE=1.24, Wald=24.891, $p<0.001$). On the other hand, attitude toward school appeared to be a negative predictor of gang affiliation (B=-.31, SE=.24, Wald= 1.6, $p>0.05$), but, it was not significant. The overall fit of the model was good in that 94.5% of the cases were correctly classified (df 5, N= 439) 127.010, $p<.001$). The Nagelkerke R^2 was .55, that is, 55% of the variance in gang membership was accounted for by the variables in the model.

Table 2: Logistic Regression for Hispanic Female Gang Affiliation (Present Time)

Independent Variables	B	SE	Wald
Self-worth	.97	.36	7.18
Peer influence	.51	.21	6.16
Attitude to gangs	1.41	.43	10.64
Individual deviance	6.18	1.24	24.89
Attitude towards school	-.31	.24	1.6

χ^2 (df = 5, N 439)= 127.01 Nagelkerke $R^2 = .55$
 $p<0.05$, $p<0.01$, $p<0.001$

Further, the predictors of gang affiliation were investigated, using the entire dataset of 5,935 cases. Table 4 shows the results of logistic regression using past and/or present gang affiliation as the dependent variable with self-worth, peer influence, attitude toward gang, individual deviance and attitude toward school as the independent variables. After eight iterations, the following variables remained in the model: parental attachment (B=-.24, SE=.14, Wald=2.87, p>0.05); parental supervision (B=.71, SE=.28, Wald=6.46, p<0.05); school disorder (B=-.36, SE=.19, Wald=3.56, p<0.05); belongingness (B=.38, SE=.20, Wald=3.57, p<0.05); positive attitude towards school (B=.54, SE=.27, Wald=4.03, p<0.05); positive attitude to gangs (B=.55, SE=.27, Wald=4.03, p<0.05); individual deviance (B=3.14, SE=.87, Wald=13.11, p<0.001); and, perception of safety (B=.11, SE=.06, Wald=3.09, p>0.05). The overall fit of the model was good in that 90.9% of the cases were correctly classified, χ^2 (df = 8, N = 530) = 47.09, p <0.001). Note the N=530 instead of 5,935 because of missing data in some of the variables more particularly, the variable belongingness. The Nagelkerker R² = .19, that is, 19% of the variance in gang membership is accounted for by the variables in the model.

Table 3: Logistic Regression for the Entire Sample (Past and/or Present Gang Affiliation)

Independent Variables	B	SE	Wald
Parental attachment	-.24	.14	2.87
Parental supervision	.71	.28	6.46
School disorder	-.36	.19	3.56
Belong	.38	.20	3.57
Attitude to school	.54	.27	4.03
Attitude to gangs	.55	.27	4.03
Individual deviance	3.14	.87	13.11
Perception of safety	.11	.06	3.09

χ^2 (df = 8, N = 530) = 47.09 Nagelkerke R² = .19
p<0.05, p<0.01, p<0.001

Similarly, Table 4 shows results of logistic regression conducted on the entire sample including all Hispanic females (5,415 cases) using present gang affiliation as the dependent variable. Positive attitude toward gang (B=.80, SE=.19, Wald=17.22, p<0.001); loneliness (B=-.25, SE=.11, Wald=5.17, p<0.05); and individual deviance (B=-1.67, SE=.57, Wald=8.70, p<0.01) were significant but not associated with pro-social peers. The overall fit of the model was good in that 78.3% of the cases were correctly classified, χ^2 (df = 5, N = 520) = 125.62, p<0.001). Note the N= 520 instead of 5,935 because of missing data in some of the variables more particularly, the variable belongingness. The Nagelkerke R² =.30, that is 30% of the variance in gang membership was accounted for by the variables.

Table 4: Logistic Regression for the Entire Sample (Present Affiliation)

Independent Variables	B	SE	Wald
Belong	.74	.15	25.52
Association with peers	.29	.16	3.14
Attitude towards gang	.80	.19	17.22
Loneliness	-.25	.11	5.17
Individual deviance	1.67	.57	8.70

² (df = 5, N = 520) = 125.62 Nagelkerke R² = .30

p<0.05, p<0.01, p<0.001

It is worth noting that when using past and/or present gang affiliation as the dependent variable for the entire sample including all Hispanic females, positive attitude toward gangs was the only variable found to be positively related to gang affiliation. Parental attachment was positively related to gang affiliation for Hispanic females, but appeared negatively related to gang affiliation for the entire sample but the latter was not significant. Parental supervision was found negatively related to gang affiliation, but was positively related to gang affiliation for the entire sample. Self-worth, peer influence, loneliness, thoughts of gangs and individual deviance were all found positively and significantly related to gang affiliation for the Hispanic females. Thoughts of gangs appeared to be negatively related to gang affiliation but was not significant. However, for the entire sample the same variables were eliminated from the model. School disorder appeared negatively related to gang affiliation but was not significant for the Hispanic females, while for the entire sample school disorder was found to be negatively related and significant to gang affiliation. The feelings of belongingness and positive attitude to school, on the other hand were both found positively related to gang affiliation and significant for the entire sample but were both eliminated in the model for the Hispanic females.

With present affiliation as the dependent variable, individual deviance and positive attitude toward gangs were found positively related and significant for both the Hispanic females and the entire sample. While self-worth and peer influence were both found positively related to gang affiliation and significant for the Hispanic females, the same variables were eliminated from the model for the entire sample. Positive attitude toward school appeared to be negatively related to gang affiliation but was not significant for Hispanic females, and was eliminated from the model of the entire sample. Feelings of belongingness and association with pro-social peers were both eliminated from the Hispanic female model, but were found positively related and significant to gang affiliation for the entire sample. Loneliness, the last of the variables was also eliminated from the model for the Hispanic females but found to be negatively related and significant for the entire sample.

DISCUSSION

This study has been an effort to identify correlates of Hispanic female gang membership. There were two dependent variables: (1) past and/or present gang affiliation, and (2) present gang affiliation. Several variables were found to be significant predictors of gang affiliation. These variables fell within five domains: family, peer influence, school, individual characteristics and community.

Family domain: The two variables investigated under the family domain were parental supervision and parental attachment. Parental attachment was found to be positively related to gang affiliation for the Hispanic females. This suggests that, the higher the level of parental attachment the more likely the Hispanic female is to be in a gang. This result is counterintuitive and contradictory to Hirschi's 1969 social control theory which proposed that a strong bond to parents is likely to reduce delinquency. However, the literature (Vigil & Long 1990; Moore, 1988) indicates that for some Hispanic gang members there are older relatives who are also gang members. If an older family member endorses gang membership, a child may well follow and join a gang. Nevertheless, this study offers no evidence of the gang membership status of relatives. The unorthodox findings regarding parental attachment might be explained by the operationalization of this variable. On a seven-point scale ranging from positive to negative subjects were asked to respond to the following statements regarding their mother or father figure: Can talk about anything; always trusts me; always understands me; always asks advice; always praises me when I do well; can talk about anything; always trusts me; always understands me; always asks his advice; always praises me when I do well. Parental supervision on the other hand was found negatively related to gang affiliation for the Hispanic females, that is the more intense the parental supervision the less likely the Hispanic female is to be a gang member.

Regarding the entire sample, the stronger the parental attachment the less likely it appeared the juvenile was to be a gang member, but this was not significant. With parental supervision, the more intense the parental supervision the more likely the juveniles were to be gang members. Thus, it appears that juveniles may be attached to their parents, however, this does not necessarily serve as a deterrent of gang membership. For a juvenile may have loving parents but still go astray. The situation might be that although parent and child are close, working class job obligations limit the parents' ability to adequately supervise their children. Therefore, **Hypothesis 1: *Inconsistent parental supervision and low parental attachment is positively correlated with gang affiliation for Hispanic females*** was only partially rejected. Regarding **Hypothesis 2: *The Hispanic females join gangs for a sense of belonging***, the results were not significant.

For peer influence, interaction with deviant peers was found a significant predictor of gang affiliation for the Hispanic female gang members. The greater the interaction with deviant peers the more likely the juvenile was to be in a gang. This finding supports differential association theory that the intensity and extent of involvement with a certain peer group either in delinquent or conventional activities will determine the learning of

definitions for or against the law. Therefore, a Hispanic female's level of interaction with certain peers may result in the adoption of similar sets of peer-based definitions of behavior (Winfrey, 2001). Hispanic females were also asked how many of their current friends (that is, none, few, half or all) during the recent year indulged in sixteen different delinquent activities including: taking illegal drugs, skipping school, purposely destroying property, stealing and assault on person. The higher the index scores, the higher the level of delinquency among current friends. This study supports Wang's (2000) findings that a girl's immediate environment plays an important role in gang affiliation. Lack of love, support and care from the family leaves girls to seek substitutes, this position gives peer groups an "exceedingly powerful and formative influence" over the girls, especially if the girls are in search of their identity (Wang, 2000). Therefore, for **Hypothesis 3:** *There is a positive relationship between association with delinquent peers and Hispanic female gang membership*, the hypothesis is accepted. Regarding community domain or **Hypothesis 4:** *If the juvenile feels unsafe in the community she is more likely to be a gang member*, the result was not significant.

Gang affiliation among Hispanic female juveniles, seems to be attributable to family, peer influence, and individual characteristics such as attitude toward school. The findings here suggest that the process of individualization and separation for juveniles is a transient period where external influence such as peers exercise greater influence over behavior if parental supervision is inconsistent or otherwise inadequate. Therefore, initiating gang prevention intervention efforts before the surge of peer influence during middle school has promise in curbing gang affiliation.

Conclusion

The subjects in this study were not selected randomly but by convenience sampling. Therefore, the findings do not lend themselves to generalization to the broader population. Out of 5,935 subjects in the GREAT dataset only 114 females identified themselves as Hispanic gang members. Thus, the number of subjects of primary interest in this study is relatively small. Another weakness is that the subjects were middle school students and thus, not yet at the age where true gang participation was likely. Additionally, given the instrument and quantitative format of the study the researcher is restricted to description and correlation in the analysis of the data as opposed to identifying risk factors which would have necessitated clarity on whether certain conditions existed before the juvenile became a gang member.

Research Implications

This study involved an examination of specific correlates of Hispanic female gang membership for a sample of middle school students in urban areas. Given the limitations of the study, other researchers may attempt to replicate this work using a larger, randomly selected sample for generalization. Future research might involve a comparison of Hispanic female gang members who are recent United States immigrants with those

who are second-generation gang members. The literature suggests that culturally these groups are significantly different. Such research, especially if qualitatively done could illuminate the findings herein regarding the direct relationship between parental attachment and gang membership. It will be important to understand whether older family gang members contribute to the Hispanic female's decisions to join a gang. It will also be important to qualitatively examine when and how Hispanic females are initially exposed to gangs and the process of internalizing attitudes favorable to the gang lifestyle. The present study does not lend itself to a discussion of risk factors but merely correlates because the questions were not structured to capture elements of causal-time order. Also, the details of psycho-social motivations of Hispanic female gang membership are yet unclear and ready for ethnographic investigation. A comparison across ethnic group especially other recent immigrants would also be interesting.

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