

Relationship of Latino Gang Membership to Anger Expression, Bullying, Ethnic Identity, and Self-Esteem

by

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Abstract

This study compared Latino gang members to nongang members on psychological constructs of anger, bullying, self-esteem and ethnic identity. Gang members were hypothesized to have outwardly expressed anger, higher levels of ethnic identity, higher levels of bullying behavior and lower self-esteem, when compared with their nongang member counterparts. Youth Participation Questionnaires (YPQ) were administered to 90 male Latino youth volunteers between 14 and 18 years of age enrolled in after-school programs at three community centers within the Washington metropolitan area. Using a series of chi-square tests, t tests, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), after controlling for church attendance as a covariate, only anger expressed (in/ out) remained significant, with gang members having higher expression of anger. Given these findings, future studies should investigate whether similar anger expression patterns are present in the members of other ethnic gangs (i.e., African American, Asian, female, etc.).

In recent years, a number of violent gangs have infiltrated communities in America, recruiting youth to instill violence in neighborhoods. This permeation has come at a time when youth violence rates have surged in the nation, shocking many Americans, and renewing concerns over youth violence rates. In fact, the rate of homicides among youths between 15 and 19 years of age attained record-high levels in the latter half of the 1980s, and has continued to be among the highest ever recorded in the United States for this age group (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 1994, 2004). In 2002, over 877,700 young people between 10 and 24 years of age were injured from violent acts with roughly one out of 13 requiring hospitalization (CDC, 2004). These dreadful statistics are reminiscent of reports that continuously cite homicide as the leading

cause of death among youths between 15 to 24 years of age (Anderson et al., 2001). A wide array of risk factors have contributed to the growing rates of youth violence -- economics (Crouch, Hanson, Saunders, Kilpatrick, & Resnick, 2000), gender (Farrington, 1998; Hawkings, Laub, & Lauritsen, 1998), the media (Dorfman, Woodruff, Chavez, & Wallack, 1997), drugs and weapons (Cohen, Gorr, & Singh, 1999; Seitz & Santos, 1996); school and community violence (Curry & Decker, 1998); and gang violence (Hunt & Laidler, 2001; Knox, 2000; Vigil, 2003).

Examining the proliferation of gang violence and the increases in youths' criminal activities, a link between these factors becomes obvious. Since 1975, the number of jurisdictions reporting gang problems in national surveys has risen significantly (Miller, 2001). Results from the 2002 National Youth Gang Survey (NYGS), administered annually by the National Youth Gang Center (NYGC) to a national sample of law enforcement officers, revealed that all cities with a population of 250,000 or more reported youth gang problems in 2002; as did 87 percent of cities with a population between 100,000 and 249,999. Thirty-eight percent of the responding suburban county agencies, 27 percent of responding city agencies, and 12 percent of responding rural counties also reported youth gang problems in 2002 (Egley & Major, 2004). Egley & Major (2004) estimated that approximately 731,500 gang members and 21,500 gangs were active in the United States during 2002. Furthermore, according to the FBI's Uniform Reporting Program, which tracks national juvenile gang killings, the number of juvenile gang killings increased by 29% between 1999 and 2003 (US Department of Justice [DOJ], 2003).

Gang violence accounts for a large portion of youth violence by co-existing among and amplifying the effects of crimes concerning drugs, weapons, and homicides in local communities (Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Huff, 1998; Thornberry & Burch, 1997). In fact, Howell (1997, p. 3) posits that "regardless of historical period, methodology, and sample, the relationship between gang membership and crime has been reported in virtually all studies of gang behavior in the United States." Research in both public health and criminal justice has clearly demonstrated that adolescents involved in gangs, in comparison to their nongang counterparts, are more likely to engage in health risk behaviors and violent acts (Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Huff, 1998; Knox, & Tromanhauser, 1999; Spergle, 1990; Thornberry & Burch, 1997).

The demographics of typical gang members tend to echo those found in youth violence related statistics, with a disproportionate number of gang members being males (Howell, 1998; Miller, 1992), aged between 12 and 24 years old (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen, 2000; Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Howell, 1998; Huff, 1998) and ethnic minorities (Thornberry & Burch, 1997; Huff, 1998; Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Curry, 1996). As it pertains to ethnic minorities, a large portion of gang members in the US tends to be African American or Hispanic/ Latino (Asbury, 1928; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Moore, 1985; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco,

1995; Thrasher 1927; Vigil, 1988).

There are many commonalities among ethnic minority gangs in terms of reasons for joining, levels of violence, and problem behaviors committed. However, Hispanic/Latino gangs are more susceptible because of their size, their risk, and their prevalence for being involved with gangs. For example, the Hispanic/Latino population, when compared its African American counterpart, has increased exponentially and at a much higher rate than that of African Americans (US Census Bureau, 2001). In fact the Hispanic/Latino population in the United States has grown to an estimated 39.9 million as of July 1, 2003, making people of Hispanic/Latino origins the nation's largest ethnic minority group (US Census Bureau, 2004). Incidentally, the Current Population Survey (1999), conducted by the US Census Bureau illuminates variables that place Hispanic/Latinos at risk for joining a gang. For instance, one third of the Hispanic/Latino population is under 18 years of age, are growing at faster rates, have higher poverty rates than their non-Hispanic counterparts, and more than half live in US cities with large metropolitan areas. In the gang literature, is also well known that Latino gangs tend to be more organized and structured presumably making them more dangerous than other ethnic minority gangs (Knox, 2000). More importantly, as far as the prevalence of gang involvement among all ethnicities, Hispanic/Latinos represent the highest proportion at 47% when compared to the 31% of African Americans, 13% of Whites, and 7% of Asians (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 2001).

Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory

Jessor's Problem Behavior theory provides a guiding structure for this study. Problem behavior has been defined by Jessor and Jessor as "behavior that is socially defined as a problem, a source of concern, or undesirable by the norms of conventional society...and its occurrences usually elicits some kind of social control response" (Jessor & Jessor, 1977, p. 33). In the present study, gang membership was considered a problem behavior because of its relation to socially unacceptable behaviors (i.e., delinquency, substance abuse, homicides). Several studies involving alcohol use, cigarette smoking, use of marijuana and other illicit drugs, precocious sexual intercourse (Hundleby, 1979; Jessor & Jessor, 1977), and delinquent behaviors (Donovan & Jessor, 1978; Jessor, Donovan, & Widmer, 1980; Jessor & Jessor, 1977) have shown that these behaviors are correlated with adolescence (Donovan, Jessor, & Costa, 1999; Istvan & Matarazzo, 1984; Jessor, 1987; Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Turbin, Jessor, & Costa, 2000). In Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory, the adolescent stage is deemed important because it has inevitable implications for later life behaviors (Jessor & Jessor, 1977). As a result, an emphasis is placed on the psychosocial interactions deriving from three systems of Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory: (a) *personality system*, (b) *perceived-environmental system*, and (c) the *behavioral system*. All of these systems interact to increase or lessen the chances of adolescents engaging in problem-behavior.

Personality System

According to Jessor and Jessor (1977), the personality system is cognitive and reflects social meaning and social experience rather than deep-lying physiological or genetic dispositions. The *personality system* is comprised of several variables including alienation, self-esteem, social criticism, attitudinal tolerance of deviance, and religiosity. All these variables have positive and negative functions (reasons for and against engaging in behaviors such as drugs use, premarital sexual intercourse or drinking).

Perceived-Environmental System

The *perceived-environmental system* refers to the consistent relationship that the surrounding conditions have on behavior. These *perceived-environmental system* conditions can be described in terms of both proximal and distal factors. Proximal variables (e.g., peer groups) directly implicate a particular problem behavior, whereas distal variables (e.g., parental guidance) are more remote in the causal chain and therefore require theoretical linkage to behavior. In other words, proximal variables will have much more of an impact on individual behaviors than distal variables. For example, an individual who is friends with several gang members is more likely to join a gang than those that do not have gang member friends. At the same time, according to the theory, an individual will more likely listen to a peer (proximal) than a parent (distal). According to Jessor (1977), the interaction between the environment and behavior is almost synchronized in a social-psychological construct.

Behavioral System

Jessor (1977, p. 28) states, "behavior as is for the *personality system* and the *perceived-environmental system* requires a social-psychological interpretation in order for it to be understood." For instance, an adolescent's under age alcohol drinking is viewed differently when it is consumed casually during meals at dinnertime, than when it is consumed clandestinely at parties (Jessor & Jessor, 1977; Jessor, 1987).

While Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory is effective at illustrating the etiology of problem behavior, it does not provide definitive modes to decrease or modify such behaviors. Furthermore, the fact that Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory was developed using a primarily Caucasian sample of adolescents limit the theory's generalizations. As a result, several variables with theoretical relevance to Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory were explored and tested to provide further support for the theory while using a Latino sample of youth as the basis for the study.

Ethnic Identity

Over the years, gangs have existed among the various racial and ethnic communities in the United States, including Latino, African American, Asian, and White (non-Latino) communities (Asbury, 1928; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Moore, 1985; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Thrasher 1927; Vigil, 1988). Therefore, it is imperative that ethnic

identity be investigated in the same context as gangs, since it may illuminate an otherwise unnoticed relationship. Rotheram and Phinney (1987, p. 13) defined ethnic identity as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of one’s thinking, perception, feelings and behavior that is due to ethnic group membership”. In terms of the psychological benefits to ethnic identity, the literature states that a solid sense of general identity may be important for maintaining a sense of well-being (Lewin, 1948). More specifically, ethnic identity is believed to be an important facet of psychological functioning among ethnic minorities (Phinney, 1990). Furthermore, according to some researchers, there is a strong relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem (Cross, 1991; Helm, 1990). Given these findings, the present study expected to find higher levels of ethnic identity among gang members than nongang members.

Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is defined as the degree to which one values oneself. According to Jessor’s Problem Behavior Theory (1977), self-esteem is a part of the personal belief structures in the personality systems that are considered a part of the series of cognitive controls that exert against problem-behavior. A high level of self-esteem reflects a high sense of social regard, positive self confidence, and a nonconfrontational style of behavior (Jessor & Jessor, 1977). High levels of self-esteem are also associated with resilience, optimal functioning, higher life satisfaction, positive effect, and lower anxiety and depression (Baumeister et al., 2003; Kernis, 2003). On the contrary, having a low self-esteem signifies that one has very little to lose, and therefore is more likely to engage in problem behaviors (Jessor & Jessor, 1977).

Anger Expression

Spielberger and colleagues (1985, p. 25), define the concept of anger as “an emotion that consists of feelings that vary in intensity, from mild irritation or annoyance to fury and rage”. The scientific literature on anger confirms the notion that it is a powerful and destructive emotion that can lead to catastrophic health problems, disrupted human relations, and chronic clinical depression (Sapolsky, 1998). While a vast amount of research on anger has been performed on adults (Deffenbacher, 1995; Deffenbacher, et al., 1996; Spielberger, 1988; Spielberger, Reheiser, & Sydeman, 1995), only a fraction has focused on adolescents (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Deffenbacher, & Swain, 1999). The expression of anger varies from person to person. A study by Jacobs and colleagues (1989) has identified four forms of anger expression: (1) in, --or suppressing angry feelings and harboring grudges; (2) out, --or the expression of anger away from the individual, often negatively; (3) control, efforts to calm down and control angry feelings and (4) reflection, or trying to talk to someone until one feels better and calm enough to solve problems. However, of the four forms of anger expressions identified by Jacobs and colleagues (1989), anger expression inwardly and outwardly have been robustly linked to a host mental of health, psychopathology, and health problems. For instance, a recent study discovered that adolescents who expressed their anger inwardly made more

serious suicide attempts, and had higher systolic (SBP) and diastolic (DBP) blood pressure than those that expressed it outwardly (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Harburg, 1973, 1979; Gentry et al., 1981, 1982). In contrast, the latter were more likely to have alcohol related problems (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Eftekhari, Turner, & Larimer, 2004), assaultive behavior (Maiuro, O'sullivan, Micheal, & Vitaliano, 1989), and depression (Block, Gjerde, Block, 1991).

Bullying

Bullying has been defined as a set of behaviors that are "intentional and cause physical and psychological harm to the recipient" (Smith & Thompson, 1991, p.1). It has clearly been documented that children who are bullies tend to be bullies as adults and have children who are also bullies. Conversely, children who are victimized tend to have children who are also victimized (Farrington, 1993). More specifically, Holmes and Brandenburg-Ayres (1998) found that early experiences with bullying (as a predator) in school were significant predictors of later gang membership.

The present study sought to contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying psychological variables such as anger (in/ out), bullying, ethnic identity, and self-esteem that differentiate Latino gang members from nongang members. Consequently, the variables identified in Latino gang members may serve as indicators of gang membership for therapists, researchers, teachers, and law enforcement. In addition, the constructs identified in the present study will help to expand the body of knowledge on health risk behaviors associated with gang members, spawn the awareness of health risks involved with membership, and provide additional variables to ameliorate both current and prospective gang prevention/ intervention programs. At the same time, by enhancing the prevention/ intervention programs, this study will be assisting the research efforts to reduce youth violence rates through the use of culturally-specific research as continuously endorsed by both international (World Health Report [WHR], 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004; United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2005) and national government directives (National Advisory Mental Health Council, 2001; President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health, 2003; US Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, 1999, 2001, 2004). The current study set out to answer the following research question: Are there any differences between Latino gang members and nongang members on psychological constructs of anger, bullying, self-esteem and ethnic identity? The following hypotheses were tested:

- (H1) *Nongang members will report higher levels of anger expression inwardly than gang members*
- (H2) *Gang members will report higher levels of anger expressed outwardly than nongang members*
- (H3) *Higher levels of bullying behaviors will be reported by more gang members than nongang members*
- (H4) *Higher levels of ethnic identity will be reported by gang members than nongang members*
- (H5) *Nongang members will report higher levels of self-esteem than gang members*

Methodology

Participants

Ninety youth participated in the study. Of these, 46 were nongang members and 44 were gang members. The two groups (gang and nongang members) were identified based on their answers to item number 6 of the Gang Involvement Scale (Houston Community Demonstration Project, 1993), which asked participants "Are you a gang member?" The youth comprised a purposeful sample of 14 to 18 year old, males of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, recruited from three community centers in the Washington metropolitan area. Participant's mean age was 16.0 years ($SD = 1.39$), and their mean educational level was 9.70 years ($SD = 2.03$), as shown in Table 1.

Instruments

The Youth Participation Questionnaire (YPQ) was comprised of two sections that measured the population's demographics and five psychological constructs. The demographic section was design by the researcher eliciting questions about the participants' age, grade level, church attendance, and school and sports participation. On the other hand, the five psychological constructs (gang involvement, ethnic identity, self-esteem, anger expression, and bullying behavior), that made up the YPQ, were measured using standardized scales. The Gang Involvement Scale (Houston Community Demonstration Project, 1993) is composed of 6 items that ask participants to respond in a dichotomous manner (yes or no) as to their level of involvement and their membership in youth gangs. The internal consistency of the scale is .52 among middle school students of grades 6-8.

The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts, Phinney, Mase, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999) consists of 12 items that measure a person's ethnic identity. The scale is arranged on a four-point scale from strongly agree (1), to strongly disagree (4). The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure has been used in dozens of studies and has consistently shown good reliability, typically with alphas above .80 across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages. A factor analysis revealed a moderate correlation of .52 for the ethnic identity achievement section (7 items) and a .47 correlation for the positive ethnic identity attitudes and sense of belonging sections (5 items).

The Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) is made up of 10 items that measure self-esteem. The scale has 10 items that are arranged on a four-point scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). This scale has been extensively employed in self-esteem research because of its exceptional psychometric properties. The internal consistency of the scale or Cronbach's alpha for the present sample is .72.

The Anger Expression Scale (Spielberger, et al., 1995) measures anger as expressed inwardly or outwardly. It is a 32-item scale that is arranged on a four-point scale: (1) almost never, (2) sometimes, (3) often, and (4) almost always. Cronbach's coefficient alphas for both the anger in/ out scale range from .73 to .74. The factor loadings for anger expressed inwardly ranged from .58 to .72. The item-remainder correlations for anger expressed inwardly for males and females are between .81 and .84. The anger expressed outward for male are between .73 and .75.

The Bullying Behavior Scale (Espelage, & Holt, 2001) assesses bullying behaviors that are related to teasing, name-calling, social exclusion, and rumor spreading. The scale consists of nine items that asks students to indicate the extent to which they did each behavior in the last 30 days. The Bullying Behavior Scale (Espelage & Holt, 2001) has a Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .87. The Bullying Behavior Scale has factor loadings ranging from .52 to .75. In total, excluding the demographic questions, the YPQ had a total of 69 items. The questionnaire was appropriate for youths at a 6th grade reading level.

Procedures

To recruit participants to the study, a flyer announcing a raffle for ten \$20 gift cards to popular music stores (Tower Records®, and Border's®) was distributed to at-risk youth to community and after school centers in the Washington metropolitan area. Youth interested in participating in the study were asked to complete the YPQ. Beginning in April 2005 to August 2005, the principal investigator --in several sessions -- administered the YPQ to individual and groups of participants at the various community centers. After the completion of the questionnaire, participants were given a debriefing form that further described the purpose of the study and provided contact information as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). In addition to the debriefing form, anti-gang support pamphlets (from CDC and NIH) were made available to all the participants.

The University of the District of Columbia's Institutional Review Board approved the study's protocol, including a waiver of informed consent. The waiver of informed consent was requested by the principal investigator because of the impracticality of obtaining parental assent while ensuring the anonymity of the participants. A pilot test of the YPQ resulted in minor word modifications to ensure accurate interpretation. Two alternate forms of the YPQ (Form A/ Form B) were used to deter dishonesty in reporting.

Statistical Analyses

To explore the initial differences between gang and nongang members, a series of independent samples *t* tests and X^2 chi-square tests were performed on the background (church attendance, and sports and school participation), demographic (age), and psychological characteristics (anger [in/ out], bullying, ethnic identity, and self-esteem). Consequently, group (gang and nongang) comparisons were performed using a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) model. The MANCOVA model was comprised of the significant variables ($p < .05$) identified by the initial comparison of independent samples *t* tests and X^2 (chi-square) tests. Reliabilities (i.e., internal consistency) of the cognitive measures were calculated by coefficient alpha.

RESULTS

Description of Sample

The background, demographic, and psychological characteristics of the Latino youth sample appear in both Tables 1 and 2. Table 1 shows the numbers and percentages of participants who selected “Yes” on the questionnaire items that asked them about their school attendance, sports participation, and church attendance. Chi-square (X^2) tests on the participants who were attending school, participating in sports, and attending church during the administration revealed no significant differences for sports and school attendance. There were significant differences for church attendance between the groups, with a higher percentage of the nongang member group attending church versus the gang member group (see Table 1).

Table 1. Background: School attendance, Sports participation, and Church attendance

Variable	Total Sample (<i>N</i> = 90)	Gang (<i>n</i> = 44)	Nongang (<i>n</i> = 46)	Statistic
School attendance,				
yes	<i>n</i> 76	35	41	$X^2(1) = 2.3, p = .13$
	% 84%	80%	89%	
Sports Participation,				
yes	<i>n</i> 77	35	42	$X(1)=2.5, p = .11$
	% 86%	80%	91%	
Church Attendance,				
yes	<i>n</i> 25	6	19	$X(1) = 8.6, p = .00^*$
	% 28%	14%	41%	

Note: * $p < .05$

Initial Comparisons

The *t* tests performed on the demographic and psychological characteristics, as shown in Table 2, yielded no significant differences between the two groups (gang and nongang) for age, school, sport attendance, and self-esteem. Significant differences were found between the two groups (gang and nongang) for anger and bullying. Gang members had higher levels of anger and bullying than nongang members (i.e., less anger, less bullying). Consequently, and given the fact that church attendance also was found to be significant (as shown by Table 1) in this sample, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was performed to determine the extent of these differences, while accounting for church attendance as a covariate.

Reliability of Measures

The reliability (internal consistency) of the cognitive measures for the study’s sample is shown in Table 2. The coefficient alphas for the scales were comparable to those reported by the original scale authors. The alphas ranged from .70 to .86. Based on the reliability coefficient, the measures are an accurate indication of the constructs.

Table 2 Demographic and Psychological Characteristics

Variable	Total Sample n=90		Gang n=44		Nongang n=46		Statistic
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Age (in years)	16.0	1.4	16.2	1.3	15.9	1.5	$t(88)=-1.3$ $p = .20$
School grade	9.7	1.3	9.9	1.0	9.5	1.6	$t(74) = -1.1$ $p = .26$
Anger (in)	17.3	4.3	18.6	4.7	16.0	3.4	$t(88) = 3.0$ $p = .00^*$
Anger (out)	17.3	4.3	18.6	4.8	16.0	3.4	$t(88) = 3.0$ $p = .00^*$
Bullying	7.1	5.4	8.4	6.5	5.9	3.7	$t(88) = 2.3$ $p = .03^*$
Ethnic identity	37.8	5.7	37.1	6.4	38.5	4.9	$t(88) = -1.1$ $p = .27$
Self-esteem	30.9	4.6	30.0	4.0	31.8	5.0	$t(88) = -1.8$ $p = .07$

Note. Anger (in) determined by the Anger Expression Scale (Spielberger, et al., 1995); Cronbach’s coefficient alpha = .86; Anger (out) determined by the Anger Expression Scale (Spielberger, et al., 1995); Cronbach’s coefficient alpha = .86; Bullying determined by the Bullying Behavior Scale (Espelage, & Holt, 2001); Cronbach’s coefficient alpha = .81; Ethnic identity determined by The Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Roberts, Phinney, Masse, Chen, Roberts, & Romero, 1999); Cronbach’s coefficient alpha = .82; Self-esteem determined by the Rosenberg’s Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965); Cronbach’s coefficient alpha = .70. * $p < .05$

Comparative Analysis

The MANCOVA model was constructed using only the significant variables ($p < .05$) identified by the initial comparison of independent samples t tests and X^2 (chi-square) tests. As shown in Table 3, the MANCOVA on the groups (gang and nongang) for Hotelling’s Trace yielded a statistically significant value for the model. This suggests that

Anger Expression Inward (AXI), Anger Expression Outward (AXO), and Bullying Behavior (BULL) had an effect on the overall differences between the two groups (gang and nongang).

Table 3. MANCOVA

<i>Effect</i>	<i>Multivariate Test</i>	<i>Value</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>p</i>
Gang Preferences	Hotelling's Trace	.19	5.50	.16	*.00

Note. AXI: Anger Expression (in), AXO: Anger Expression (out), BULL: Bullying Behavior; * $p < .05$

Furthermore, after controlling for church attendance as a covariate, it was found that only AXI, $F(2, 89) = 4.41, p < .02$, and AXO, $F(2, 89) = 4.94, p < .01$ remained significant. Conversely, BULL, $F(2, 89) = 2.53, p < .09$, was found to be insignificant when controlling for church attendance as a covariate. Based on the significant values, it can be concluded that the group mean vectors are not equal (gang membership preference has an effect on the dependent variable).

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to develop a better understanding of the different beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of Latino gang members by comparing them to nongang members on psychological constructs of anger, bullying, self-esteem and ethnic identity. Thus, based on previous research (Asbury, 1928; Decker, 1996; Decker, & Van Winkler, 1994, 1996; Hill, Lui, & Hawkins, 2001; Klein, & Maxson, 1994; Klein, Maxson, & Cunninham, 1991; Moore, 1985; Sanchez-Jankowski, 1991; Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 1995; Thrasher, 1927; Vigil, 1988), in juxtaposition with Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor & Jessor, 1977), gang members were hypothesized to have higher levels of ethnic identity, outwardly expressed anger, and bullying behavior. On the other hand, nongang members were hypothesized to have higher levels of self-esteem, and anger expressed inwardly.

Paradoxically, the present study failed to reveal significant differences as proposed by previous research (Baumeister et al., 2003; Cross, 1991; Helm, 1990; Kernis, 2003) and Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory (1977) on bullying, self-esteem and ethnic identity. Although the initial comparison of bullying behavior exposed significant differences between gang and nongang members, this discrepancy did not remain significant after controlling for church attendance as a covariate. Consequently, this finding revealed an evident inconsistency with the vast amount of research on bullying (O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Rigby & Slee 1991; Seals & Young, 2003). While it is not certain what may have caused this anomaly in the research, it is plausible that church attendance mitigated the inter-group differences. That factor, compounded by the small sample size of the study, may have contributed to the contradictory findings.

It is surmised that this incongruity between the literature and the present study on self-esteem may have been the result of profound overgeneralization of the construct. Furthermore, it is believed that the varying acculturation levels among this Latino sample may have had an affect on ethnic identity measures to a level where they may be identifying with other ethnicities, rather than Latinos.

On the other hand, the present study found support for the hypotheses that gang members would report higher levels of anger expressed outwardly than nongang members. This was consistent with previous research on anger expression (Eftekhari, Turner, & Larimer, 2004; Sapolsky, 1998; and Spielberger, et al., 1995) and Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor & Jessor, 1977) and therefore, this study enhanced the body of literature on youth gangs and their unique anger expression patterns. In addition, these findings proved to be of critical significance in terms of shifting the focus of anger research from one that has been traditionally centered on adults (Deffenbacher, 1995; Deffenbacher, et al., 1996; Spielberger, 1988; Spielberger, Reheiser, & Sydeman, 1995) to one that is more concerned with the often-overlooked youth population (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Deffenbacher, & Swain, 1999).

Similar findings emerged with anger expressed inwardly, with gang members reporting higher levels than nongang members. However, this did not support the hypothesis that higher levels of anger expressed inwardly would be reported by nongang members than by gang members. While this hypothesis was reasonably supported by previous literature on anger expression (Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Eftekhari, Turner, & Larimer, 2004; Maiuro, O'sullivan, Micheal, & Vitaliano, 1989), however, it did not take into account the individual levels of trait anger (T-Anger). Trait anger is the frequency, not the expression, of anger over time and the propensity to perceive a broader range of situations as anger provoking (e.g., dissatisfaction, vexing, impatience) (Spielberger and colleagues, 1999). According to Spielberger (1999), it is possible that youth gang members may have had higher levels of trait anger, leading them to have higher levels of anger expressed inwardly and outwardly in the present study. Based on these results, it is recommended that future studies assess gang members' levels of trait anger levels in the presence of their peer gang members and compare them to levels occurring when they are not in their presence to determine if these differences remain significant.

In addition to the hypotheses proposed in the present study, significant differences were found in church attendance with nongang members having higher rates of attendance than gang members. This finding is in sync with the literature on spirituality, religiosity and Jessor's Problem Behavior Theory (Jessor, & Jessor, 1977), which consistently cites church involvement as a protective factor or a deterrent to youth violence (Jessor, & Jessor, 1977; US Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, 2001; Resnick, Ireland, & Borowsky, 2004).

Overall, the major findings in this study revealed that gang members have higher levels of anger expression (in/ out), than their nongang member counterparts. The implications of these findings are vital and indicative of

combined risks (i.e., health problems, suicide attempts, disrupted human relations, and possible chronic clinical depression) that are associated with having elevated levels of anger expression inwardly and outwardly (Block, Gjerde, Block, 1991; Cautin, Overholser, & Goetz, 2001; Eftekhari, Turner, & Larimer, 2004; Maiuro, O'sullivan, Micheal, & Vitaliano, 1989; Sapolsky, 1998).

At the therapeutic level, these findings reemphasize the need for therapists to adopt appropriate approaches to treating the anger related issues present in Latino gang-involved youth. Although maintaining an eclectic approach in therapy is usually the acceptable method, Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) has had the most success at treating anger issues present in youth (Thomas, 2006). One of the major strengths of the present study was its effectiveness at unearthing the levels of anger expression from a population whose gang-involvement status frequently prevents it from disclosing information.

In terms of limitations, the fact that participants in this study were neither representative of, nor randomly selected from the population is clearly a limitation of the scope to which this research can be generalized on to other Latino populations. Another drawback of the present study was its reliance on self-reported measures, which have the propensity to be misconstrued and distorted by participants, especially youth for whom English is a second language. Given our knowledge of inter-group differences and Latinos in the Metropolitan DC area, it is recommended that follow-up studies attempt to replicate this study in other areas with a large presence of Latinos (i.e., New York, Miami, Los Angeles) to further support the findings. As aforementioned, the present study relied heavily on self-reported measures, and therefore future studies should consider alternative measurement strategies, such as behavioral observations of anger expression and aggression in naturalistic settings. Finally, it is paramount to continue the investigation of these psychological variables (anger, bullying, ethnic identity, and self-esteem) to verify whether these findings are consistent with respect to other ethnic populations (i.e., African Americans, Asians, etc.) of youths in the D.C. Metropolitan area.

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