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The Strength Of Family Bonds: A Look Into The Lives Of A Family That Has Overcome Adversity And Marginality

Angelique Nevarez Maes

University of Texas at El Paso, anevarez2@miners.utep.edu

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THE STRENGTH OF FAMILY BONDS: A LOOK INTO THE LIVES OF A FAMILY THAT HAS OVERCOME ADVERSITY AND MARGINALITY

ANGELIQUE NEVAREZ MAES
Department of Sociology and Anthropology

APPROVED:

Theodore R Curry, Ph.D., Chair

Howard Campbell, Ph.D.

Mark Lusk, Ph.D.

Benjamin C. Flores, Ph.D.
Dean of the Graduate School
THE STRENGTH OF FAMILY BONDS: A LOOK INTO THE LIVES OF A FAMILY THAT HAS OVERCOME ADVERSITY AND MARGINALITY

by

ANGELIQUE NEVAREZ MAES, BA, AA.

THESIS

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Chapter 1: A Day to Celebrate…

It’s an extremely hot and sweaty day in Phoenix Arizona; walking through the vast parking lot toward Cardinals stadium seems to take hours rather than just a few minutes. The stadium itself looms before patrons; to say that its giant is an understatement. The large red numbers that can be seen from the main road loom in front of the main entrances, signaling that this entrance is indeed the third entrance with a giant red 3 in bold. As supporters enter the stadium, they are greeted with bursts of cold air; the stadium inside is surprisingly cold despite its vast atmosphere. Families can be heard cheering for their graduating seniors already from seats located closer to the stage; balloons and graduation teddy bears are prevalent and colorful. This is a high school graduation; this is a graduation that the Martinez family is attending. One of their own is graduating from high school on this day.

As spectators enter the seating areas, the immense, magnificent views of Cardinal stadium become apparent and difficult to ignore. The atmosphere of the stadium is clearly visible but seems a bit muggy: surprisingly, it does not smell the way a vast muggy place would. The stage, located on the field, comes into view as families and onlookers take their seats. As I sit to take in the spectacle, I am flabbergasted; I have never before been in a stadium so big. It is just an awesome sight to marvel at this kind of panorama. The stage seems so small from this vantage point, even though I’m pretty sure that it’s quite large up close.

The graduates sit in front of the stage, facing away from the crowd. They are dressed in metallic blue gowns. The high school’s principal begins the ceremony by addressing the families that have come to see their children graduate; he begins by saying that he is so proud of the graduates and he thanks their families for their years of support. The Martinez family is sitting next to me, above me, and down the row from me; we as a group take up only about two rows, a
rather small section when compared to the other families that have come. They are all overwhelmed with joy to see their young blood down there with all the other graduates. Dee, the newest graduate of the family, is amidst the mess of students with all her classmates. Her mother, Joan, sits near the middle of the row; she is on the edge of her seat, waiting for her daughter’s name to be called so that she can take a picture with her camera. Dee’s father Otis, Joan’s husband, is all smiles as well. Joan’s sister Cecy sits at the other end of the row with her two small children; she also sits anxiously while she waits for her niece’s name to be called. As Dee’s name is finally called, the family screams and hoots with joy: they call her name and wave frantically, a true understanding of how proud they are of her.

The small family is excited to be here; members include Mr. Martinez (the family patriarch) and his wife Lupe, Mr. Martinez’s son from his first marriage Jay and his wife Encarnacion, Joan and Cecy with their spouses and a few small children, Carlos and his wife with their three small children and a baby that they were watching for a friend. Some of Otis’s very close friends came to support Dee as well. However, Mr. Martinez’s sisters (Joan, Cecy, and Carlos’s mothers) are not here today. They passed away many years ago for reasons that will come to light. Their children have become successful despite their absence because of Mr. Martinez’s efforts in raising them as his own. This family is strong, and even though they are small, they make more noise than most typical Mexican American families that may consist of more than 20 members. The majority of the Martinez family has overcome the large and numerous obstacles that have come their way, whether it is death, drug abuse, crime, marginality, or separation. Because they are strong together, they are able to watch Dee walk across the stage today.
Dee was supposed to not live past the age of five. Long ago, a majority of the family was involved in a fatal car accident when she was a baby and she suffered significant brain damage. Doctors told her mother Joan that Dee would not survive past the age of five. But here she is, 18 years old, walking across the stage with her fellow classmates, graduating from high school, her whole life ahead of her, waiting for her.

I believe that it is because of this family’s ability to overcome adverse events that they are all here today. I believe that it is because of their bonds to each other that they were able to overcome the challenges life threw at them. And sometimes life just did not play fair. If anything, life cheated a couple of times to try to get ahead, which resulted in the deaths of Mr. Martinez’s three sisters, two of whom were mothers.

The story of the Martinez family (a pseudonym created to protect the identity of the family) is filled with astonishingly adverse and tragic events, but also with many great triumphs. The first generation of this family consists of three sisters and a brother. The three sisters (Deanndra, Diana and Danielle) all became heavily involved in delinquency and gangs as adolescents and, as adults, became heavy drug abusers that were in and out of prison and drug dependency programs. Two of the three sisters had children at a young age, some with multiple partners. Most of the siblings do not have the same father. Tragically, all three of these sisters became IV drug abusers and eventually died of drug overdoses due to complications in different parts of the body. These overdose deaths happened separately over a span of several years and all before they reached the age of 44. The eldest sister, who died possibly in her late 30’s, left behind no children. The middle sister died at age 23 and left behind 2 children; a set of sisters who were 5 and 7 years old at the time (Joan and Cecy). The last sister died in her late 30’s as well, leaving behind 4 children who ranged in age from 17 to 36. Even though she died while her
children were older and able to fend for themselves, her children have reported that she was never really there for them emotionally or physically. Carlos didn’t call her “mom”; he called her by her first name. Eli, Carlos’ brother, reported that he probably only spent a day or two in his entire life with her total: even though he remembers being excited being with her, he knew that she was going to leave once again. The brothers and their two other sisters were raised by other family members.

The last sibling, a brother, who has been given the pseudonym “Mr. Martinez”, was the eldest of his siblings and was involved somewhat in delinquency, gang activity and adult criminality before he joined the United States Air Force at a young age. As an adult he led a successful military career and has continued to earn the highest military position for a civilian without a college education. A few years ago, he retired from the Air Force and now lives with his second wife and her children in Texas. However, the focus of this research is on the second generation, specifically the children of the two sisters who, at different ages, were left motherless and impoverished.

The Martinez family is my case study. I will attempt to re-tell their stories in order to provide insight into immediate and kin family bonds and how these bonds affect individuals in the many facets of their lives. I will be focusing on questions such as “how do family bonds help individual overcome adverse events in life? How do family bonds help deter individuals from crime and drugs? How do family bonds affect individuals in life decisions? Ultimately, I would like to explore the possibility of kin relationships between family members supplementing the parent/child relationship, especially when the parent/child relationship does not exist. What follows is an introduction to the literature that inspired this work, as well as the founding theories that help explain such behaviors.
Chapter 2: Statement of the Problem/Theory and Literature

2.1 Introduction

This project examines the role of the family unit as a whole and how the strength of interpersonal family bonds affects children's participation in criminal and delinquent activities, including gang membership and drug use. This project also explores how family bonds influence decisions to stop or avoid such activities. This project ultimately seeks to explore the role of Kin in aiding individuals throughout the lifecycle in terms of criminality and triumphant events that may or may not result from such individual interactions.

Familial trajectories and multiple marginalities as defined by James Diego Vigil are employed to explain why certain environments produce certain types of children. Adverse family circumstances and sources of marginalization are associated with a variety of negative outcomes for children, including delinquency and gang membership. However, some children who experience these situations nonetheless have positive outcomes, as will be exemplified in exploring the Martinez family life histories. Studying these individuals and understanding why they decided not to follow the past predicted by their original toxic environment is the focus of this research. This project wishes to ask an optimistic “why” instead of a pessimistic “why” in order to examine individuals who should have followed negative trajectories but instead followed progressive ones. This project will attempt to explain why certain individuals don’t follow their predicted familial trajectory despite their multiple marginalizations in an attempt to provide positive insight for public health policy makers to keep in mind while creating prevention programs aimed at positive family development.

In recent literature published about delinquency and family connections, which largely focuses on the effectiveness of parent/child bonds in deterring children from delinquency, the
effectiveness of *kin* relationships is largely ignored. Recent literature also fails to mention how, if at all, the relationships that are between kin family members can supplement the parent/child relationship when parents are dead or absent. A Risk and Resilience framework as written by Jenson and Fraser as well as Walsh serves to outline how an adolescent individual is able to overcome adversities by way of *resilience*. Social and ecological contexts affect an individual’s *protective* factors that can buffer *risk* factors and the outcome of resilience in these individuals in general.

The concept of *family resilience* through *relational resilience* as defined by Walsh compliments the resilience work done by Jenson and Fraser: these two concepts serve to provide an analytical framework for this project in examining the data collected from the Martinez family. Through this resilience framework, their bonds are examined and conclusions are made in later sections of this writing. A family that suffers together and that can overcome together through family resilience produces healthier individuals. The role of relational resilience learned via extended family members (kin) is important to consider in the formation of public health policies concerning the development of a healthier family versus nursing a damaged one. Thus, this project will explicitly consider *kin* as well as *immediate* family members and the roles that they play in an individuals’ thought processes while considering a life of delinquent activities that may have been environmental in nature. The *immediate* family group is compared throughout this study with *kin* family groups; their relationships are compared in order to create an understanding of each and how they may affect the individual.

### 2.2 Vigil’s Multiple Marginalization defined: *how does his work relate to this project?*

Vigil (2002) provides a cross cultural comparison between Mexican American, Vietnamese, Salvadoran, and African American youths in the “mega city” of Los Angeles in
order to explore the types of marginalizations that each group experienced historically. Vigil (2002) found that each groups’ experiences with marginalizations often led to high levels of participation in street socialization and gang activity; “what is remarkable is the similarities that underscore how multiple marginality acts and reacts within populations to drive children into the streets and how immigration or migration adaptation is a central part of this process” (16). The environment in which a child is reared is extremely important; “the gang experience is shaped by the way in which the particular history and culture of each ethnic group and family interact with the overriding economic and psychological forces in the larger society” (Vigil, 2002, p. 6). This is important to keep in mind when examining the Martinez family: the way that the second generation was socialized into the greater society, according to Vigil, should have dictated what kind of adults they were going to become. Instead of becoming like their mothers or aunts, they veered away from a lifestyle of drugs, prostitution, and gang activity. This project wishes to examine why this happened with detailed ethnographic interviews.

Vigil’s (2002) conceptualization of the term *multiple marginality* is defined as the “relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness” (7). Vigil argues that “basically the street gang is an outcome of marginalization”, and that this marginalization “occurs on multiple levels as a product of pressures and forces in play over a long period of time”, hence the term “multiple marginality” experienced by minority groups (7). These groups experience these different types of marginalizations, which originate in macro level forces, in everyday experiences for long periods of time. These macro level forces “lead to economic insecurity and lack of opportunity, fragmented institutions of social control, poverty, and psychological and emotional barriers among large segments of the ethnic minority communities in Los Angeles” (Vigil, 2002, p. 7).
One important and unfortunate result of multiple marginalities is “the emergence of street gangs and the generation of gang members” that will subsequently follow those who came before them (Vigil, 2002, p. 7).

This general statement about the procession from macro familial marginalizations to street gangs is one of the main inspirations for the current project. The argument that low income minority neighborhoods often times, sadly, turn out gangs and gang members is not new, but Vigil's argues that ultimately this process creates deep cultural frameworks that are perpetuated throughout future generations of gang members. It is important to consider the multiple marginalities framework in this project because all of the members of the Martinez family (1st and 2nd generation) experienced poverty, racism, homelessness, criminality and peer pressure at some point in their lives. For them to have experienced such marginalities and still become relatively successful later in life is something that statistically should not have occurred. Again, Vigil would predict that the members of the second generation would have committed to a life of delinquency and street life since their parents before them did so and because of other adverse family circumstances and sources of marginalization. The second generation of the Martinez family should have followed their parent’s footsteps and should have become parents at an early age, used hard drugs such as heroin, and should have joined gangs and participated and other forms of delinquency. But they did not participate in these sorts of activities to this extreme extent. Their participation in such activities is considered moderate when compared to the 1st generation of the Martinez family members, as will be uncovered in subsequent sections of this writing. This project wishes to explore the possible reasons why they didn’t follow such heavily delinquent activities and how those reasons relate to their family bonds, more specifically their kin family bonds.
The environment that one grows up around or is constantly exposed to seems to be a serious, inevitable factor for youths in deciding for or against a life of gang participation. Vigil (2002) explains further that “family, schools, and law enforcement merit special scrutiny…(since) they are the primary agents of social control in society (and) since they are uniquely adaptive and responsive to the concerns of society” (8). The family unit, however fragmented, introduces a child into the world “from the cradle to the bedroom to the home to the neighborhood” (Vigil, 2002, p. 8). The family is the initial social control group that plays a crucial role in the socialization of a child (Vigil, 2002, p. 8). Schools play the secondary role of the socialization of a child; “as a child grows up, schools eventually assume the responsibly of the family for the bulk of each child’s daytime activities” (Vigil, 2002, p. 9). The types of environments that each of these forms of social control provides plays an extremely important, if the maybe the most important, role for a child when developing into a functioning member of society.

This project uses Vigil’s multiple marginality framework as well as the ecological environment that the family and the school provides in order to explore and compare how each influence members of the Martinez’s family experiences as children and adolescents and their outcomes as young adults.

The Martinez family fits into the descriptions that Vigil provides; the family derives from a community where 17.1% of families with children related under the age of 5 years old report that their annual income is below the poverty line (Census, 2006-2010). As mentioned before, this family experienced multiple types of marginalities, and suffered from the additional angst of growing up without parents due to their parents’ gang membership, rampant drug use, and early deaths due to drug overdoses. The Martinez family experienced all that Vigil describes; poverty,
marginalities experienced at the school and family level, and so on. They experienced the specific conditions in which Vigil predicts an adolescent, impressionable individual generally leans toward gangs and gang membership for the support that they feel a void for; “the persistent pattern of inferior living situations and substandard working conditions that…results in major family stresses and strains, deep-rooted schooling barriers and difficulties…from this context the street culture and sub-society (has) emerged” (Vigil, 2002, p. 13). And, in some of the family members’ cases, these predictions were statistically accurate and were carried out for the most part during the adolescent years. Yet, as adults, most members of the Martinez family are quite successful and conventional in nature. Cecy, whose story will further be explored and described in rich detail later, holds a PhD in Education. For a woman of Mexican American decent to hold such a degree is in itself a major accomplishment; for someone that grew up without a mother or father to draw any sort of guidance from, whether it be positive or negative, seems nearly impossible. Other members of the Martinez family also live in relative success, holding managerial positions while some pursue college degrees.

2.3 The Definition of Success in this Project

Success in this project refers to individuals who, first and foremost, avoid participation in crime. Success also refers to the ability to gain and hold jobs, who are able to maintain positive relationships with spouses, children, relatives and others and who are able to make positive contributions to society in general. Success in this project is when someone has not died from a drug overdose as did three of the sisters, has been able to participate in societal levies such as paying taxes and paying tickets, and generally is considered a contributing member of society. The participants of this study are unaware that they have been deemed successful by the principal investigator. They are considered successful from afar by researchers in this project; it
has not been presented to them in any way. However, they will be asked whether they think they 
are successful in their lives. Whatever definition and explanation they give is going to be strictly 
self-exclaimed and examined critically.

*Success* doesn’t necessarily mean that the individual has obtained a college education: it 
is well understood by the principal investigator that college isn’t for everyone and that the 
success of an individual does not equate to whether or not that person went to college and 
became a degree. College education is seen in this study as a plus more than a pre-requisite for 
success. Relatively, success in this project refers mainly to the individual that has survived life’s 
ordeals, including coming to terms with everything that comes with those ordeals, and is still 
able to have a functional life where they are able to get married and have children, if they wish. 
Marriage is also not considered a pre-requisite to being successful either: with the divorce rate 
being so high, seeking healthy relationships will suffice as successful.

Given the circumstances that are provided by Vigil’s multiple marginality framework, 
this family and its members should have failed in all measures of life. They should have 
followed the negative trajectories that had been paved by the fallen family members before them. 
According to Vigil, this family should have pursued the route that their parents did - participate 
in gang life, use hard drugs, commit crimes (e.g. prostitution, theft), have children early in life, 
go to jail and prison for extended periods of time, and possibly die early deaths due to drug 
overdoses, as their parents did. But they did not. This project seeks to illustrate how the children 
of the Martinez family typically did not follow their parents in their own life choices. Those who 
did confirm criminal activity during adolescence seemed to have phased out of the lifestyle by 
early to middle adulthood, or when they had children, whichever came first. With such a 
negative and surely damaging environment that these kids grew up in, why didn’t they end up
like their parents? What are, if at all, the bonding factors that helped them push past delinquent examples and run toward not only conventional lifestyles but in some cases exceptional ones? Does the relationship that they have with their kin family members have anything to do with their success in life, if at all? This project explores how this family was able to succeed in life even though their environment, as well as Vigil, would have predicted otherwise.

2.4 The Family Unit according to James Diego Vigil: a closer examination

Family environments are considered the first and most important factors to a child’s overall development psychologically as well as socially. As mentioned before, Vigil stated that the family unit comes first in this process, then school, then society members such as police officers (Vigil, 2007). However, in addition to having major positive effects, families and their environments may also adversely impact children in a variety of ways. In 1987, Vigil and Moore authored Chicano Gangs: Group Norms and Individual factors related to Adult Criminality; this article articulated a typology of four family types and explained how each type shaped a child’s involvement in a gang (Vigil, 2007, p. 6). The “underclass” family type, or what Vigil (2007) has dubbed the “cholo family”, is characterized by “family members that have taken the unconventional turn and become as influential, if not more so, than gang peers in shaping barrio youngsters” (6). The “conventional/controlled” family type usually contained two parents, or at times a single parent, provided a stable home, and was of the working class (Vigil, 2007, p. 6). The “unconventional/controlled” family type, according to Vigil (2007), included “adult members who may be involved in the gang and some deviant activities, such as drug sales, but maintain a conventional façade and conceal their deviance from their family” (6). Vigil (2007) states that the final type of family is the “unconventional/ uncontrolled”, which “simply comes up short, and there are many different variants to this category” (8). This project is more
concerned with the first three types of family groupings. Vigil’s ability to identify family types is useful in understanding the Martinez family and their background. Identifying the type of family that best characterizes the Martinez’s is important in light of Vigil’s work with family types which argues that a child's future success is heavily influenced by the family type that they experienced. As mentioned before, the family environment is heavily taxed for being the first to socialize a child.

Parenting styles also differ among the different types of families. Families that fall under the “conventional/controlled” category practiced a nurturing style while those families that fell into the “cholo family” category practiced a more authoritarian style of parenting, which could be more harmful than helpful (Vigil, 2007, p. 16). Vigil (2007) also argues that the “cholo family” often resulted from marginalization, which is as mentioned before “the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness” (8). Vigil (2007) further argued that this marginalization often occurs “on multiple levels as a product of pressures and forces (that have been) in play over a long period of time”, thus leading Vigil to refer to this phenomenon as “multiple marginalities” (8). These terms and ideas about the family (parenting styles, the climates that each erupt from) will provide this project with a comparison in regards to the ecological area and the environment that the Martinez family found themselves in and how they dealt with these sources individually and collectively as a family.

Voids that are left in a child’s life by family disruption, a lack of quality schooling, and a lack of religious participation often “turn out gang members” (Vigil, 2007, p. 9). As mentioned before, the environment that a child is reared in is vital to overall life chances. A toxic environment is one where children lack parental supervision, lack positive role models, and lack
overall life goals. Vigil’s work is important to consider when studying the family unit and it is his work that ultimately influenced this project. But, what happens when families that do provide such a toxic environment “turn out” positive children and sufficiently adequate members of society that function rather well, if not better than those who were supposed to fair better because they had a positive “conventional/controlled” family environment? How do the “voids” that are painfully left by the absence of parents motivate a child to do better with their own lives? This will be discussed and explored more in subsequent chapters.

Adverse events such as poverty, drug abuse, early death of a family member, and gang activity can plague a family and threaten its unity, especially when parental bonds are absent or inconsistent in a youth’s early life stages. Adverse events in this project refers to events experienced by individuals that create deep feelings of emotional distress as well as feelings of discomfort, sadness, anger, anxiety, and uneasiness. Adversity “represent(s) an unpleasant, unexpected event that generates a crisis of meaning and potential disruption of personal integration” (Walsh, 1996).

The current project will add the term adversity to the multiple marginality framework that James Diego Vigil champions; the “voids” that he discusses in his works serve to be forms of adversity in individual participants’ lives. One of the major voids that some of the Martinez family members experienced were a lack of a mother figure to provide guidance, positive or negative in nature. This project wishes to examine the concepts of adversity and multiple marginality together in order to explore the impacts of such special circumstances within the Martinez family unit and how they affected involvement in delinquency, gangs, and adult criminality.

The key questions driving this research are:
• How did adverse events and the marginalities that the Martinez family suffered from “turn out” positive, successful individuals?

• How did they overcome these obstacles? Was it because of the bonds that they had with their kin or their immediate family?

• Were family members helpful or useful at all?

• Did they overcome these obstacles *because* they had help from their kin as well as their immediate family? Did their family help them overcome at all?

• Can the family unit as a whole create positive bonding experiences for individuals so that they can overcome the damaging trifles in life?
Chapter 3: Risk factors, Protective Factors, Resilience and Family Resilience-

*the analytical framework for this project*

The Risk and Resilience framework used in Social Policy for Children and Families best describes the foundational analytical framework that will be used to analyze the risk, protective and resilience factors that surface during data collection and analysis. According to Jenson and Fraser (2011), *risk factors* are identified as “any event, condition, or experience that increases the probability that a problem will be formed, maintained, or exacerbated” (11). Risk factors that are common for children and adolescents occur at three levels of influence: environmental, interpersonal and social, and individual. An environmental risk factor associated with this project would be the poverty and economic deprivation that the Martinez family participants experienced at some point of their lives while growing up. Family communication and conflict would arise as an interpersonal and social factor that would greatly affect a majority of the Martinez family members: not having or knowing their parents affects them greatly and is considered a heavy risk in this project. Other factors that may be present in this project goes as follows: poor child-parent bonding, poor family management practices, family drug abuse, and rejection by conforming peer groups. It doesn’t seem that any individual risk factors are present in this project’s participants, but are these factors are still considered important to examine in the risk, resilience and protective model.

*Protective factors* are defined by Jenson and Fraser (2011) as “influences, characteristics, and conditions that buffer or mitigate a person’s exposure to risk” (11). These factors seem to help children prevail over adversities. The types of protective factors are also categorized in the same fashion as that of the risk factors: environmental, interpersonal and social, and individual. It is important to note that there seems to be some debate when protective factors and risk factors
are seen as polar opposites on a single “continuum” (Jenson & Fraser, 2011). In this project though, risk factors and preventive factors are seen as independent of one another: risk factors such as poverty and family disruption occur despite the presence of preventive factors. Risk factors mentioned before can continue without any intervention, which can lead to Vigil’s street socialization, gang membership and delinquency. Preventive measures are independent of risk factors since they may or may not be present in the context in which risk factors are present. It seems that it is only when these two are actually present at the same time in the same milieu does preventive measures become effective: only in this instance can the two react and counter one another. The preventive measure that most concerns this project is the environmental type known as the “caring relationships with adults or extended family members” (Jenson & Fraser, 2011, p. 14). Other protective factors that can be examined in this project include: the opportunities for education, employment, and other pro-social activities, social support from non-family members, caring relationships with siblings, high levels of commitment to school, involvement in conventional activities, social and problem solving skills, positive attitude, and high intelligence.

Resilience is characterized by “successful adaptation in the presence of risk or adversity” (Jenson & Fraser, 2011, p. 13). It is considered the outcome of a process that takes into account both the level of risk exposure and the presence of protective factors (Jenson & Fraser, 2011). It seems that the Martinez family members have been able to overcome adversity and marginality and are seen in this project as strongly resilient. This family was chosen to be examined because of their apparent ability to overcome such atrocities in life. What most concerns this project though is the role of extended family members in their path to resiliency: did kin provide the necessary social bonds that helped these individuals successfully overcome their hardships?
The participants are not aware that I have deemed them resilient due to the methods of research employed in this project. The methods of research will be further explained in subsequent pages.

In an inspiring article by Walsh, the concept of family resilience is introduced to those practitioners and therapists who wish to help an ailing family unit become stronger individually by treating the group altogether through seeking a collective empowering objective. The family that suffers together can overcome together, so to speak. By working together and through shared efforts resources and abilities, the family unit can become successful in overcoming adversities and conflicts (Walsh, The Concept of Family Resilience: Crisis and Challenge, 1996). Like Jenson and Fraser, Walsh also entertains that resilience is a multi-level concept that operates from the individual, the family, and the larger social context arenas. But unlike Jenson and Fraser, Walsh states that “there are many pathways in resilience”, and that one size most certainly will not fit all (Walsh, The Concept of Family Resilience: Crisis and Challenge, 1996). It is important to acknowledge that there are many pathways toward resiliency because not all family units are alike and will not encounter the same types of scenarios.

Ecological settings are also seen here as an important entity to consider: Jenson and Fraser consider the ecological aspects as well. Most importantly, Walsh considers the conventional “damaged” family more of a family unit that has been challenged by the violent episodes of life, which in itself is a positive statement to begin with and echoes one of the larger goals of this project.

In this article, the family unit is not seen as “noxious” environment for a troubled individual, rather the family unit (including extended family members) is seen here as “a potential source of resilience” that has been largely ignored and remains largely untapped (Walsh, The Concept of Family Resilience: Crisis and Challenge, 1996). Family resilience
“involves the processes that foster relational resilience as a functional unit” (Walsh, 1996). The resilience framework is extended from the individual standpoint to that of a group dynamic. “In building family resilience, we strengthen the family as a functioning unit and enable the family to foster resilience in all its members” (Walsh, 1996). Walsh (1996) mentions that “how a family deals with such challenges is crucial for individual and family recovery”. Focusing on family strengths instead of family deficits creates an encouraging learning environment versus an environment that mourns what was instead of exploring what could be. This piece of literature is extremely important to this project since it examines the family unit (including extended family members) as being a source of positive social support rather than a negative influence on criminality and delinquency. The family unit is essential to the individuals’ ability to overcome adversity and marginality. Resilience is forged through adversity, not despite it (Walsh, 1996).

In another article by Walsh, the family resilience framework is put to the test in a variety of environments that would foster many types of strains that span from family loss (death in the family) to war-related trauma and loss. The family resilience framework is tested in a number of other types of adverse ordeals as well and is described in order to further exemplify the applicability of the theory in clinical settings. A table is provided in order to list the “key processes in family resilience” (Walsh, 2002, p. 132). The table is divided into three categories: belief systems, organizational patterns, and communication patterns. Each category provides a variety of bullet points that clarify each level so that practitioners are able to identify positive characteristics to foster and apply the framework effectively. This table is important to mention because it mentions a few components that may be examined in this project; transcendence and spirituality, capacity to change, positive outlook, making meaning of adversity, flexibility,
connectedness, social and economic resources, clarity (in communication), open emotional sharing, and collaborative problem solving (Walsh, 2002).

An excellent example of how this framework is being used is provided in Greeff and Holtzkamp’s *The Prevalence of Resilience in Migrant Families*: the theory and components developed by Walsh (1996, 2002) are implemented in the examination of migrant families and how they cope with the stresses and hardships that come with the ordeal of migration. The study found that “interfamilial assistance, such as emotional and practical support, was the primary resource that helped families cope with relocation” (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007, p. 194). The study found that “extended family and friends was reported as the primary coping resource outside the family (immediate) followed closely by religious and spiritual beliefs and activities” (Greeff & Holtzkamp, 2007). The religious and extended family aspects found in this study is anticipated in the current study. Religion is an interesting branch of resilience that isn’t examined enough in other works. Religion will be more closely looked at in this study: its role may or may not be significant but none the less is important to consider.

These components that help foster collective resilience in families who actively seek it will be sought in the Martinez family in order to indeed identify if this family can be considered resilient through their collaborative efforts to overcome the obstacles that have occurred in their lives. Their resiliency will be examined, more so than all components, through their interconnectedness of kin relationships.
Chapter 4: Research Setting

4.1 San Fernando, Texas: *Demographics in the 1990s*

Having lived in San Fernando for a few years, I can provide an accurate portrayal of the area between the years of 2007-2011. As you drive into the town from the west one of the main roads, the mortuary and the post office can be seen to the right and to the left. The sidewalks are dusty and cracked in some places. There are a few mobile homes lined on the side of the road next to the post office; one of them is a known *tiendita*, the Spanish word for a place (usually a home or a small place of business) that sells drugs (Comar, 2011). *Tiendita’s* are staples in this town. With such close proximity to the Mexican border, they are seen as more normative than troublesome. It is completely common to see people visit these known places: they drive and walk in at all hours of the day and of the night. Semi-truck drivers are among the frequent visitors. I knew about the *tiendita’s* because I used to live right in front of one.

The buildings in the town are dusty: dirt seems to be everywhere you look. As one turns to the left on the next main road, one of the town’s three gas stations becomes visible on the corner. There are only a few restaurants open to the public here: Subway, a Kentucky Fried Chicken, and McDonald’s serve commercially while a burger stand and a Mexican restaurant serves local cuisine. There are as many as five different types of churches lined along one of the main roads, all of different denominations. There’s a local junk yard located on the main road as well: it is tiny in comparison to the ones located in El Paso. It often sells arm chairs, old cars, brooms, and other types of home things that people bring in to their store to pawn.

Visually, the town is small, wholesome, and alive with children and dogs wondering the streets at all times of the day. Old men are frequently seen walking about the sidewalks with other groups of old men: they frequent an abandoned mobile home located just off the side of the
road on the right to hang out during the day and drink beer, especially when it’s hot out. If the driver continues on this second main road, the driver arrives at the interstate, and can either turn left or right to drive out of the town toward El Paso or San Antonio. The ice cream store located on the second main road opens only when the owner has the time and the money to operate it; it also serves as a place for women to work out. Men in trucks from Ciudad Juarez and the neighboring valley towns circle the neighborhoods looking into yards that seem to be in disarray and full of old things; they wish to find scrap metal amongst the heaps so that they can sell it in Mexico for good money. Mothers chase their young children while they run across the parking lot from their cars to the McDonalds or the local grocery store. Hoards of dogs roam the streets late at night: since most of them have visible collars and tags, they seem to know that their masters are asleep, and they gathered in large numbers (sometimes a pack of dogs as large as 6-7 dogs was seen from time to time) to roam the empty parking lots of the Subway and the Kentucky Fried Chicken looking for scraps that some careless patron left behind. They also frequented the dumpsters to try and find parcels of food that was dropped from overstuffed trash bins that tired workers dragged to dumpsters on the cold dark pavement upon closing time. Beyond the Subway is a vast abyss of darkness that is the desert. Lights are seen in the near distance; there are neighborhoods to the right where people have privacy and amenities. Most homes are made with brick, adobe, and wood.

People that crossed my path at the local grocery store would smile and nod my way, sometimes saying “Hello” at the same time. Even though I was an outsider I was still treated like a local after I learned how to live there. While I would pick up some groceries at the local grocery store, I noticed more “Lone Star” cards paying for food items than regular cash or debit cards. Lone Star cards were tell-tale signs that that person was paying with assistance from the
Texas and Federal governments. Many people in the area flashed these red and white cards; I knew what they were about because I was one of the ones using them.

My experience with San Fernando and its people changed my life. I grew up in the city of El Paso, which is considered a medium-large city of about 800,000 people: the experience of moving from a city to a small town is like comparing night to day. In San Fernando, I learned that sometimes late at night, faint pops of gunfire can be heard, but I was told that I didn’t need to be afraid of these happenings because I wasn’t “involved” with anyone that had links to the “violence” that was occurring at the time across the Mexico/United States border. Sometimes those faint pops were much too close for comfort, but with time I found that these pops became a part of all the other taken-for-granted sounds that can be heard late at night, like how hearing police and ambulance sirens become common for city folks to hear.

I learned sadly that most of the census data mentioned in the Census tract is correct; most of the families that I came into contact with were poor. But they sure didn’t seem to act like it: their houses may sport the look of despair, but residents’ cars were new and up to date. I later figured out that this was so because mostly everyone in San Fernando worked in El Paso or in areas near El Paso, which is a long drive from San Fernando. Up-keeping vehicles took priority to those who worked in El Paso: the parking lot in front of the local auto shop was always full of customers looking for ways to keep their cars running as smoothly and as cheaply as possible. My experiences in San Fernando have taught me a lot about who I am and what kind of person I would like to be in the future. It’s important to note though that my experiences in San Fernando began with interactions from the Martinez family.
4.2 Census Data 1990

The second generation of the Martinez family, the focus of this research, lived and received schooling during the early 1990’s. Census data from 1990 is needed in order to give an accurate portrayal of the climate in which the sibling/cousin group grew up. According to the 1990 Census, the total population of San Fernando was about 5600 people. Of this number, 94% of residents identified as Hispanic with nearly all of this number being of Mexican origin (based on 2010 data). There were a total of 1,471 households at this time in San Fernando’s history and the median family income was $15,378; 576 family households reported living below the poverty line. 487 of those families reported living with children under the age of 18 years old. Of the 280 households that reported the female as the head of household, 139 reported living below the poverty line. 48.6% of all persons in San Fernando reported living below the poverty line in 1990, with 48.5% of these people reporting that they lived with children under the age of 18 years old (Census, 2006-2010). Of the 3,606 persons 16 years of age and older who are able to work, 1,903 of them reported working in labor force type occupations. The average driving time to work was 22 minutes, which suggests that these people may have worked in El Paso. It may not have been uncommon for multiple generations of a family to work in El Paso. Of the 2,740 persons over the age of 25, 1,406 reported completing less than a 9th grade education. 575 of these were high school graduates, and only 7 people in this age bracket reported a graduate degree. Of the persons 5 years and older (5,022) 4,453 reported speaking a language other than English at home. At this time, Mexico was not listed as a country of ancestry in the Census survey, which may have created misrepresentation in San Fernando and in El Paso.

This background information is important to consider because “poverty is related to many social and health problems” (Jenson & Fraser, 2011). Poverty has “negative effects on several
key outcomes during childhood and adolescence, including school achievement and
delinquency” (Jenson & Fraser, 2011, p. 7). Given that the Martinez family participants spent a
majority of their adolescent time in San Fernando warrants the recognition of the ecological
factor of poverty that Vigil’s Multiple Marginality framework discusses. It is important to
include ecological factors such as poverty in this framework given that this context has such
detrimental effects on children and the family unit. Ecological theory would dictate that
“development is deeply affected by interactions between the biological and psychological
characteristics of the individual child and conditions in his or her environment” (Jenson &
Fraser, 2011, p. 17).
Chapter 5: An Introduction to the Martinez Family: what does the term “kin” mean in this project?

What happens when there are no parents available to provide the basis for family stability and unity? Can other family members provide the needed family bonds to help at-risk youths avoid delinquency, gang involvement and other problems and go on to lead a successful life in adulthood? Can family bonds assist individuals at all during these trying times? The current research project seeks to partially replicate and extend Vigil’s account of the strength of parent/child bonds and the ability of those connections to deter an individual from gangs/criminal activity to extended family members. According to Vigil’s family categories, the Martinez family can be classified as a “cholo” family, meaning that the Martinez family structure and parenting style resulted from marginalization, which is as mentioned before “the relegation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness” (Vigil, 2007, p. 8). Kin is described in this project as the extended family which includes a grandparent, cousin, uncle, or aunt of an individual.

Several members of the Martinez family were generous enough to provide their oral histories in an effort to share their story in an ethnographic way. As mentioned before, their names and location names have been changed at their request in order to provide anonymity to these individuals and their families. I feel that the Martinez family provides an excellent case study to address questions regarding the effect of kin relationships on individual decision making abilities. As mentioned before, the first generation of this family consists of a brother and three sisters: Mr. Martinez, Danielle, Diana, and Deandra. Also as mentioned before, all three sisters died from overdoses of heroin or methadone. Mr. Martinez, their older brother, is the only surviving member of this generation. He has buried his three younger sisters as well as his
parents. Mr. Martinez’s three sisters are survived by their children; a set of sisters (Danielle’s kids), and a sibling group made up of four individuals from different fathers (Diana’s kids). Mr. Martinez has two children of his own from a previous marriage. The brother and sister pair provides the project with a slightly different aspect to the types of marginalities and adversities that their cousins experienced. Mr. Martinez’s parents have passed away due to cirrhosis of the throat and lungs (father) and a fatal car accident (mother). But it is hinted to me through interviews that they had troubles with poverty and criminal activities as well. A family tree is provided for the reader in order to create a visual of what was just described.

![Family Tree](image)

**Figure A - The Martinez Family Tree**

The Martinez family has endured many adverse events in their gripping history as a family or *founding myth* (Campbell 2005). Campbell’s founding myth concept is used here to describe the oral history of the Martinez family as a whole that has been pieced together by the principal investigator through data collection. The early deaths of three out of four siblings, the
trauma and suffering that comes with the burying of younger siblings and parents, the extensive
drug abuse among family members that led to the sisters’ early demises, as well as financial
hardships, crime and violence among themselves seems to have contributed to the Martinez
family’s plight to survive in life. Yet, as mentioned before, the majority of the eight
cousin/sibling group has managed to become successful despite such harsh environments that
occurred during their childhoods after apparent stints with criminalities during adolescence.

As noted, one cousin (Cecy) is now a successful PhD graduate and works as a principal at
an elementary school while her sibling and the others have been able to gain managerial
positions, earning above average annual incomes than others in their positions. Further, others
(Jay and Sophia) in the Martinez family have been able to obtain or are in pursuit of college
degrees, despite having to undergo a hostile divorce that their parents went through. Cecy, Joan,
Carlos, Eli, “Z”, and “D” did not have their fathers present to provide such important bonds.
Each member of this cousin/sibling group has led different types of lives. This will be further
examined.

5.1 How did I come to know this family?

I came to know the Martinez family during the year 2007. I met my then boyfriend now
husband during that year. He grew up in San Fernando: at the time he was still living there. I
would go to town to visit with him on the weekends while I was completing my BA course work
in Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP). It was during this time that I
met the Martinez’s. They would often times visit my husband while I was there since they were
all very close. I met them through him. At first, I wasn’t sure how to gauge them. Physically, the
group generally is a tall, broad bunch that looks like they can stand their ground. I knew only
what my husband had told me about them. I knew that they had lived harsh lives but that they
were “cool”. I honestly don’t remember the first instance I met them. I’m not sure if I met them all at once or a few at a time. I do remember that I was invited to spend Christmas 2007 with them and my husband. I remember that this was the first time that I had seen them all in one room together. There’s a picture that I have of them at my husband’s previous house: they all lined up to take their picture with each other. All eight of them were there, which was from what I was told, was a rare occasion. Of course, there was family drama and a few of them got mad with one another as any other family might do when Christmas time comes, but for the most part, they were harmoniously happy together. They all sat around the living room recollecting their childhoods and laughing enormously and hardly the way that they do. They were happy because they had not seen each other all in the same room together since they were children. It was a sort of small family reunion.

Mr. Martinez was there as well with his then girlfriend now wife and her children. His second wife has four children from her previous marriage. She had invited them to the party as well. Altogether, there were about 15 people inside this small house that only had room for a family of four. It seemed that the space didn’t matter to them though; what mattered to them was that they were all together spending time. It one of the last times I would see Eli and Carlos’ sisters “Z” and “D”: I haven’t seen “Z” since that night and I haven’t seen “D” since her Quincenera (a rite of passage for Mexican American girls, the “sweet 15 party”). I later found out that “Z” went to jail later on that week, and then she moved to Las Vegas later, which is where I believe she still lives as of this writing. I don’t know where “D” is, the last know whereabouts of “D” was that she had been living with her grandparents in the outskirts of El Paso. I also know that she has already had a child, and that she recently turned 19 years old. Their interviews are not included in this project mainly because I’m not sure of their
whereabouts. I couldn’t find them so that I could interview them. There’s considerable evidence that these two sisters did not wish to be found. Information about them is mainly learned through their kin during the interviews. But this does not mean that they are not mentioned in interviews, this does not mean that they are not included in this sample. From what I understand, they have seemingly followed in their mother’s footsteps in becoming gang affiliated and criminally active. Eli, the brother of “Z” and “D”, did not have nice things to say about his younger sister “Z”. There seems to be a rift in that relationship. From what I understand, they still struggle with family life, bonds that have or have not been created with kin and raising young children.

5.2 Potential Bias

I realize that I am close to this family for a number of reasons that will be withheld due to the secretive nature of this information. But I will say that I am so close to them that I now consider them a part of my own family. I also realize that my closeness to this family might be considered a staunch bias toward information collected from them. I understand this concern and have taken serious measures to counteract this bias: when interviews were conducted, I made sure to ask my questions and just let them respond in their own words. I made sure to not react to what they were talking about in any emotional manner in order to keep their responses fueled by their own train of thought rather than my reaction to them. I did little talking during the interviews. This was actually hard to do: I’ve known this family for so long now that hearing them speak of their past was emotionally difficult at times. I wanted to provide comfort, but I knew that this would alter their future responses. This is the first serious attempt on my part of actually getting to know their past. I’ve always heard stories here and there from different people but I’ve never heard the real tales of hurt first hand from each individual who agreed to speak with me. This experience, if anything, has brought me closer to them on a different level, a more
intimate level. The interviews were developed and conducted with the end goal of extracting ethnographic data with the least amount of negative emotions conjured at the same time.

In this project, I advocate that there must be a better understanding of kin relationships in order to provide help, understanding and much needed inspiration to others that face similar situations as the Martinez family members. People that find themselves in these types of marginalized situations need to know that just because their parents are not present or that they are poor does not mean that they will become like the generation before them. Clinicians and policy makers need to know that children in these dire situations do not have to be a part of the growing number of statistics that dictate that they will turn to a life of crime since their earlier family members did. Sharing the Martinez’s stories will provide hope and inspiration to those who desperately need to understand and overcome their situations as well as provide clinicians and public policy makers with the vital information needed to create a more positive treatment process for “challenged” families that should probably begin much earlier than what current programs dictate now. Sharing the Martinez story will also provide social science with positive literature about the “troubled” family, even though the personal unit undergoes great hardship. Public Health policy can be influenced by evidence that the extended family network is more valuable than most would consider and is an extremely underutilized source of love.

As much as Vigil’s work is important and vital to understanding the family and its interactions with the larger society, and as much as his work on marginalization provides in-depth understanding of how that larger society impacts the micro family unit, his work still adds to the large amount of what I like to call “downer” literature on the family unit and its circumstances. I have much respect for James Diego Vigil; I wouldn’t be citing him so much if I
didn’t. But his work adds to the “downer” literature that dictates that if a family environment is bad, then the kids will likely have similar adverse outcomes in their own futures. I wish to consider the family group that experiences marginality and adversity and survives it. Like Walsh, I want to see the supposed “troubled” family unit not as troubled, but as challenged. Redefining what a “troubled” family means is the first step in unitizing a resilient framework and mindset when creating social health policies that have the potential to curve criminality in adolescent youths who find themselves in similar situations as that of the Martinez family members. I do not want to pile more dirt on the grave that will bury a child and doom him/her to a life of crime. By exposing the positive power of family resilience through kinship, I plan to provide such positive literature to those who need to know that just because they do not have parents or just because their other family members were involved in gangs or crimes does not mean that they will become involved too.
Chapter 6: Methods of Research

This project uses a qualitative methods approach. Ethnographic data was collected with academic direction for about a period of six months; but I have known this family for the better part of 5 ½ years. I have watched them with astonishment and with amazement. Some information presented is information that I know about them from previous years; but the data collected and reported is of the most recent six month collection period. As the years have passed, I have come to gain respect for this family for who they are and have attempted to understand why they are the way they are. I use a qualitative approach similar to Sudhir Venkatesh’s; *Gang Leader for a Day*. Venkatesh (2008) did research with an African American gang in the Lake Park Housing Project, located in Chicago. He tested his preselected questions about what it was like for poor kids living in “the projects” versus poor kids who do not live in “the projects” (4).

The objective was to test the outcomes of the children in question. Did they fair better living in “the projects” or did they fair worse? (Venkatesh, 2008, p. 5). Upon his arrival, Venkatesh (2008) finds that his intentions were found to be a bit naïve in nature; J.T., the gang leader that eventually takes him under his wing and tells him that he wasn’t going to learn much about poor African American people “with silly ass questions like that” (21). J.T. then suggested that Venkatesh do some “hanging out” with them in order to really get to know what it’s like to be “black and poor” (Venkatesh, 2008, p. 21). J.T. is referring to a technique that Madison (2012) would refer to as “deep hanging out”; in her *Critical Ethnography*, Madison states that “starting where you are”, which refers to the experiences that one encounters while living daily life, is not a bad place to begin developing interests that drive research (Madison, 2012, p. 21). Essentially, my work and interest in the Martinez family began as “deep hanging out.” When I
moved to San Fernando, the Martinez family was very kind to me as I developed a different lifestyle than the one that I was used to living in the city. For example, while living in San Fernando, I found that the was most effective way to ration gas was to run all my errands in El Paso in one day since my car used so much gas and money to commute to the city. I found that I could not go to Wal-Mart in the middle of the night like before since driving so late for a long period of time made me sleepy, which was dangerous. The Martinez family helped me develop these sorts of new habits that helped me survive such an incredible change.

Over the years that I have known the Martinez family, I have “deeply hung out” with them; before my scholarly interest, my relationship with them wasn’t about getting to know them in a sociological, somewhat objective and academic way. It was about enjoying their presence as human beings that had taken me in as someone who did not know the area very well. They wanted to make sure that I would be ok living in the type of environment that San Fernando offered. I only recently began to listen to their stories in an ethnographic, exploratory sociological way.

My ethnographic data collection took place between Summer 2012 and Spring 2013. A nine page questionnaire with 39 questions asks subjects about their past experiences; oral histories of each member of the Martinez family is recorded with a voice recorder, and then stored via a password protected laptop. Interviews conducted do have notes written down; those interviews with notes on them are kept in a home office, and never shared with anyone in order to protect the anonymity of the family.

A copy of the Questionnaire used to direct the ethnographic interviews has been provided as Appendix A: Questions 1-5 inquire about the general adverse events that each member of the family experienced between the ages of 0 to 18 years old. There was information that was
gathered about current adverse events that affect them to this day, but these adversities are mentioned in order to create an understanding of the long time struggles that this family went through at the time and still goes through to this day. Certain adverse events span from adolescence to present day. Questions 6-11 inquire about the possible types of marginalization’s that family members may have experienced between the ages of 0 through 18 years old. Marginalization is defined according to Diego Vigil’s frame work of Multiple Marginality, and further broken down orally in the off chance that subjects interviewed did not fully understand its meaning. Family members were given the choice to name the types of marginalizations that they felt they experienced living in such a small town while growing up. A time line is also gathered during this section in order to create a general map of each family member’s past moving experiences; how many times did they move? Where did they move to? Why did they move there? These sorts of questions are asked in order to create a trajectory for each family member. Questions 12-23 solicit information about the perceived strength of family bonds and how each family member has been helped (or not helped) by their kin during the adverse crisis that they experienced during adolescence and childhood.

There are also questions in this section that probe how fellow family members helped (or did not help) during times of marginalization as well. Questions 24-32 examine possible criminal involvement that family members may or may not have committed. Criminal activity is considered in this project as any delinquent activity that breaks any sort of law, whether it is shoplifting from a local drug store, using illicit drugs, or selling drugs/transporting drugs across state lines. Gang involvement is also considered a type of criminal activity. There is a broad definition of criminal activity so that any type of delinquent behavior can be considered when resulted from adversity or marginality. Gang involvement is very important to examine, like
Vigil suggests, but other types of delinquent behavior are not fully written about in other works. Providing a range of types of criminal behavior insures that the resulting behavior from adversity or marginality (or both) is examined fully. Questions 33 and 34 requests information as to why family members were able to desist delinquent activities; these two questions ask specifically “did your family and the bonds that are held help you overcome a delinquent life style?” Being able to ask such questions measures how family bonds (more specifically kinship bonds) helped the individual overcome a life of crime and proceed to living a legitimate lifestyle, thus becoming a functioning member of society. Questions 35 through 39 pertain to those respondents that did not indulge in a life of criminal activity. These questions are aimed to gather information on how the family unit and the bonds that come with it helped individuals stay away from delinquent life styles in general. A question from this section goes as follows: “Did your kin help influence you to stay away from a life of crime? If so, how did they help you do so?” Each subsequent section of the questionnaire also contains Likert scale type questions in order to gauge each family member’s level of severity or level of “good feeling” in relation to each event. This scale goes from level 1 to level 6, and varies due to the nature of the previous questions. Level 1 could be considered “not that bad at all” when referencing the worst event in someone’s life, while Level 6 could be considered “the best event in my life” when referencing a good event in someone’s life. Providing such Likert type questions helps readers and interviewer understand the level of uncomfortable feelings or the feelings of happiness that one felt during this time period.

Asking these types of questions will probe into the lives of each of the Martinez family members that agreed to participate in order to create a broader picture of their oral history.
Creating such a verbal-scape provides readers with a deeper understanding of how this family has overcome adversity and marginality on almost every type of social level.

6.1 Limitations of Study

A major limitation of this study is an obvious one: I am only gathering data on one Southwestern family that has gone through hell and back. I realize that not providing ethnographic data on other families of similar circumstances as well as of different ethnic backgrounds does not provide a fuller story of the phenomenon of how families with similar backgrounds fared later in adult life. I am aware that I cannot give a generalizable statement about kinship at the end of this research. Given that this is a work intended for a Master of Art’s thesis work and about 6 months of data collection, I felt that taking on more families would not have allowed for adequate data collection and would have not enable the principal investigator to fully examine the effects of marginalization, risk and resiliency in this one Southwestern family. This project is the first step toward further research on different families of different ethnic backgrounds that endured similar adversities and marginalities as that of the Martinez family. More research will be conducted at a later date in order to discover if these families fared better or worse than the Martinez family as well as to find if kin was their ultimate source for supplementing the parent/child relationship when it did not exist. Finding this would enable the possible generalization that kin and immediate family types are equally important in rearing a child.
Chapter 7: The Martinez Family Timelines - Major Events

7.1 Cecy Martinez

Cecy Martinez collects herself while she prepares to speak with me about her life: she is sitting at her desk inside her office in Arizona. I can see her clearly through my laptop screen; I am talking to her via Skype. The school year hasn’t started yet for Cecy, so she wasn’t in dress attire at the moment. She was a little sick: one of her small children has been sick, as of course as luck would have it a few days later she got sick as well. Her hair is tied back, and her smile is beautiful as always. She doesn’t look her age at all, and it’s one of the physical attributes that has always surprised me about her. Her face is all smiles most of the times that I have seen her: after I got to know her and after I learned about her life and what she has really gone through her demeanor struck a baffling cord after that. For someone who has gone through so much and to still be successful and smiling is a true miracle and deserves attention and exploration. She always has everything together: her cousins and her sister have always told me that she is the star of their family. I think she has definitely earned that title to the fullest extent.

Cecy does not remember her mother Danielle: she died when she was about four years old. Joan, her older sister, was about seven years old at the time of her mother’s death. It has been shared with me that the girls were present in the room when their mother died, and that Joan may remember the event, but Cecy does not. Since everyone else was “strung out” on drugs during the time, an ambulance was not called in order to save their mother’s life. Joan has often shared with her sister the faint details of their mother’s life, from what she remembers at least. According to the information that Cecy has received from her sister, Cecy and Joan moved in with their paternal grandfather after their mother’s death since their fathers were also drug addicts and nowhere to be found or unable/unwilling to take the children. Cecy describes that her
memories of life begin around the time that they both moved in with their paternal grandfather. Cecy does not remember what her mother’s voice sounded like, or how her mother may have smelled. She likes to wonder about how she may have sounded when she was alive.

Their grandfather worked a lot “out of town”, which Cecy thinks could have attributed to her attachment issues, "it affected me because I was afraid that since I had lost my mother, my grandfather would not return as well.” This affected her so much so that Cecy kept close a picture of the two of them, “so that I wouldn’t forget what he looked like.” Their paternal grandfather had a girlfriend at the time named Bonnie. Cecy considered Bonnie to be a good thing for her grandfather, “she took very good care of us while he was away.” However, Grandpa Martinez and Bonnie soon broke up and soon after Grandpa Martinez felt that he could no longer care for the girls by himself since he worked away from home so much and no one was home for them, so he sent Cecy and Joan away to live with his son, their mother’s older brother, Mr. Martinez, and his then wife and two small children, Sophia and Jay. Cecy feels that she may have initially began foster care with Mr. Martinez and his ex-wife since there are existing pictures of her in “Head start” (which is a level of education that a child can receive before Pre School in the state of Texas) in San Fernando (where Mr. Martinez and his ex-wife lived until they divorced in the early 2000’s), and may have initially moved later to Texas during later years of life. Cecy describes this part of her life as “fuzzy.” Cecy knows though that she had spent 5th, 6th, and 7th grade with Mr. Martinez and her cousins.

Cecy’s timeline goes as follows: when she was in kindergarten she spent time in San Fernando. When she was five years old she was lived with her grandfather in California and would spend the next three years there. When she was 8 years old she lived with her uncle in Texas, back in San Fernando. She would stay in Texas for another year, and then in the fourth
grade she would return to California and her grandfather. Cecy felt that Mr. Martinez and his wife at the time were having a hard time because of them (Cecy and Joan) living there, so they moved back in with their grandfather in California. Cecy and her sister would stay in California until the sixth grade. A harsh memory surfaces when this time period is mentioned. Cecy and her grandfather’s then girlfriend Daisy had a disagreement, “she hit me with a hanger, and then she threw away the picture frame that had a picture of my mother and (within it) hidden away the letters that I had written to my mother.” She describes that while attending therapy for nightmares as a child, it was suggested to her that she write to her deceased mother in order to feel better. “Those were tough years with Daisy”, Cecy fervently describes, she becomes emotional and she takes a few minutes to collect herself once again. “Daisy was mean… she was a little jealous of us. She would yell at us ‘before you girls moved in, your grandpa would make love to me all over this house and on this pool table.” Cecy was about 9 or 10 years old at this time.

Cecy would return to live with her uncle in Texas after this violent episode with Daisy. The violent relationship that her grandfather was in would eventually become the deal breaker for Cecy and her sister, and they would later decide to return to Texas to live with Mr. Martinez. Cecy rates that this was one of the worst times in her life on the Likert scale provided to participants (as mentioned in the Methods of Research chapter) “just because of the age, having to deal with that type of violence.” She would begin her adolescent life in Texas. She recollects that the loss of her mother did not really affect her until her adolescence.

When she was 14 years old, she ran away from her uncle’s house. Cecy remembers that her uncle was “just so worried that we would fall into drugs” like their mother and aunts. Cecy thinks that he was so strict with them because of that. Cecy states that her uncle was so overprotective during the time that they were living with him. She mentions that she “felt so
trapped” because of it. It was during this time that she “ran away” from home and would begin to stay with friends and their families until she graduated high school. Cecy worked and went to high school; after she ran away from Mr. Martinez’s foster care, she lived with two different friends while she finished high school. This entire event occurred during her sophomore year of high school. Cecy realized that she just needed to get out of school so she graduated a year earlier than her peers. She graduated and earned a scholarship to attend Arizona State University. This is the time in Cecy’s life where she remembers being just angry and retaliating deeply because of that anger, “I think (that) after experiencing these types of things (it) left me feeling so unwanted at that point.” Cecy remembers reacting to these adverse events with anger and “attitude, I had built up a lot of anger…. because of going back and forth (between California and Texas).” She remembers feeling that if she had only had her parents, or even her mom, that her life would be just so much better. Cecy still had yet to meet her father.

The worst event of Cecy’s life would be the car crash where her grandmother died and her niece’s life became forever changed. She believes that she was about 19 or 20 years of age when this event occurred, she had just moved to Arizona for college and had returned to San Fernando to see her cousin Sophia graduate from high school. The family of kin had driven from Arizona to El Paso in a sort of caravan of two cars. Cecy was driving, following her older sister in the other car. “I was trying to keep up”, states Cecy. As Cecy passed a set of semi-trailer trucks, and one of them didn’t see her passing along since the view was obstructed by the first trailer. The truck “pushed Cecy off the road” and her grandmother was ejected from the vehicle, “watching (my) grandma die… I blamed myself since I was the one driving.” Joan’s daughter Dee would also become dramatically different after this accident. Cecy’s niece would encounter significant brain damage because of her being ejected 85 feet from the car. Cecy’s boyfriend
(now husband) was “all beat up” as well, “I looked in the back seat to check if everyone was OK, and it was empty… I can’t even tell you how traumatic that was to know that (my) grandma and (my) niece was there and now where are they?” The car doors were unable to open, so Cecy had to break the window in order to exit the vehicle to attempt first aid with her grandmother and her baby niece. “That was tough”, states Cecy in a serious and low tone. She looks down for a while during this time of the interview, she thinks to herself for a little while before we move on to another part of the questionnaire.

Cecy considers her grandfather to be one of the most influential family member while growing up; “I knew he believed in me.” When Cecy had run away from her uncle’s home, her grandfather supported her; “I didn’t even have to explain myself… he had such confidence in me. He was so certain that I would be successful and that belief in me inspired me to not want to let him down. It meant everything to me to not let him down.”

7.2 Sophia Martinez

Sophia works as a Spanish teacher in New York City. At the beginning of the interview, she talks excitedly about her job and the other teachers that work with her in her department. She proceeds to let me know that she’s not about “the gossip”, so to speak, that seems to encompass some of her co-workers. Sophia readily and excitedly prepares to speak with me about her life experiences with her family. Sophia has a unique character that isn’t found much elsewhere in San Fernando or anywhere else. Her years in New York have only channeled her personality and her taste in clothing more than stifle them, like most people would assume from living in such a large metropolitan environment. Even though she was born in Texas, her mind, her personality, and her style is the true embodiment of what a person would think of as native New Yorker. It’s as if she has always lived in New York City. Sophia is 31 years old, and considers herself a
Chicana, but in New York she considers herself Mexican American. Her location seems to modify how she self identifies ethnically.

Sophia and her family lived in a mobile home, or what Sophia recollects as “the trailer”, that occupied her grandmother’s yard until she was in the 7th grade. After this she lived in a house that the family bought located down the street from her grandmother’s house. When asked about her earliest memory of an adverse event, Sophia remembers one of her aunts shooting up heroin intravenously through one of her legs. She then told her father about it.

Sophia also remembers the following: during the sixth grade (like her cousin Cecy, Sophia recollects events in her life using the years that she was in schooling as a time marker), family issues seemed to be happening “on both sides”, indicating that her maternal kin as well as her paternal kin were going through emotionally demanding life events. Sophia’s maternal grandfather tried to commit suicide after being ill for quite some time. When her grandmother tried to stop him “he turned the knife onto her.” After the scuffle, Grandpa Ortiz moved in with Sophia and her family in the trailer home across the driveway. Shortly after moving in with them, Grandpa Ortiz passed away. At the same time that this was happening on Sophia’s maternal kin side, Sophia’s paternal kin were also having a few arduous issues. Cecy and her sister Joan decided to run away after their Grandmother decided that she was going to take them to North Carolina with their cousin Carlos. Joan had become pregnant, and their grandmother wanted to remove the girls from “that place” that got Joan pregnant. Cecy and Sophia were (and still are) extremely close, so losing her one of her best friends during the beginning of adolescence was hard for Sophia to handle at the time.

It was during this time that Cecy moved in with sophia and her family; Sophia remembers light heartedly that she would help her cousin sneak out of her parents’ house so that
she could see her then boyfriend now husband, “this happened for like a year, we would say that we were hanging out with our friends.” Sophia even remembers “sneaking the phone” for Cecy so that she could call her boyfriend, “I even remembered where the trailer would creak, (so I avoided) those parts of the house to sneak the phone to Cecy.” Laughing and reminiscent, Sophia admits that it seemed likely that she was Cecy’s “partner in crime”, so to speak.

While growing up, Sophia considered “our family unit” as one of the most positive things in her life. “Every holiday we were together, that was the best part of my childhood up until the age of about 12-13 years old.” Sophia recollects that her family was “really grounded in the church…the church became our family.” Sophia remembers that her family was “really grounded” in the church and the bible classes that were offered: “we did projects, it was really positive for me.”

When Sophia was about 19 years old her parents separated and later divorced. When she graduated high school, Sophia began to attend college in Phoenix. She would later move to New York with an old boyfriend, where she still resides today. She holds a Master of Art’s degree in Education and Leadership.

7.3 Jay Martinez

Jay is 26 years old, he considers himself a Chicano. He grew up in San Fernando Texas with his sister Sophia, who is 5 years older than her. While interviewing Jay, I noticed that he is probably the quietest of the Martinez bunch so far. He’s quiet, but not shy though. He is also one of the youngest of this cousin/sibling group, along with his cousin Eli. He’s a reserved, patient, and observant person who doesn’t say much while sitting in a crowded room full of loud boisterous people, but his eyes wander from face to face, as if memorizing each one. It’s as if he’s watching, waiting for someone to make a move toward him. He may not have much to say
at times, but when he does mention something, it’s as if he chooses his words wisely from the beginning. It’s as if he had been thinking about what to say for a few minutes before he said anything at all. His nonchalant demeanor about life and its situations seems to suggest that he takes things as they are, a face value approach. But in reality, the multiple deaths that occurred in the family could be trying times for many people within the family unit. Jay seems to take these events in a taken for granted manner: “it’s what happens in life”, a sort of desensitized attitude. Like the famous transformers toys, there’s more that meets the eye with Jay.

Jay responded that his parents’ divorce was the first adverse event that he remembers, “it was difficult.” Jay was about 14 years old when this occurred. Remember that Sophia had just left to Arizona to attend college, so Jay was basically the only child left in the house under the age of 18 years old to care for. He dealt with the divorce from a first person point of view, while his sister dealt with it from afar. When asked how he was affected by the divorce, he replied “it was rough, I mean, you get a new perspective on life, what you think life’s going to be like and what life really is….it just flips you world, you know what I mean, you think it’s going to happen one way and it happens a different way, taking it in as whole is rough.” Jay felt that because of the divorce he began to “sink more into friends, dip(ing) into negative things” and he further mentions that “that’s how I coped with that I guess when I was young.” Jay reported that his parents’ divorce was “really bad” (level 4) on the Likert scale provided in order to gauge the event and that he doesn’t know if he’s ever really experienced a level 6 before in his life (which is the highest level, “the worst thing that ever happened to you”).

Jay’s paternal grandmother died in the fatal car crash when he was 13 years old, a year before his parents separated. This year period seems to be traumatic. But Jay still reports that this
event was a “really bad thing” in his life, not the worst experience ever though. His grandmother dying and his parents’ divorce are seen as equally traumatic.

Jay’s first home was “the trailer down off of Pinkerton and 3rd, we lived there up until I was eight, we lived in the lot right across from my abuelito and abuelita’s (words that translate to “grandfather” and “grandmother” in Spanish) property, their house was right in front of ours. When I was like 8 or 9 we moved down the street, maybe like 6 or 7 houses (down), we got a house there and then I lived there up until the divorce, or probably a couple of years after the divorce, that was like when I was in high school then. I lived in the house on Pinkerton up until I was 14 or 15, then we moved back in with my grandma’s property, but this time inside her house.” Jay stayed there until he graduated high school, then his “mom coped (bought) a house out in San Gerardo a year after I graduated and I moved in with her for a little bit and then a year later I moved back into the house on Pinkerton, and now I’m back with my mom.” Jay lived in the house on Pinkerton while he was a bachelor: he lived there for about 6 years by himself.

Jay graduated May 2013 with his Bachelor of Art’s degree in Chicano Studies with a minor in Commercial Music and Recording. He wishes to someday open his own business in the music industry and provide for his family in that way. As of this writing, he manages a Subway down in the valley of El Paso.

7.4 Eli Martinez

Eli is Carlos’ brother, he is 25 years old. Their mother died a few years ago from a methadone/heroin overdose and the complications that come with the body shutting down during the process. Before this research commenced, I was able to meet their mother a few times before she passed. I remember when she died. His two younger sisters have little contact with him or with his family, which consists of his ex-wife and their three adorable blond, blue eyed children.
He is maybe the shortest of the cousin/sibling bunch, but he packs just as much of a punch as they all do, in his own sort of way. He is indeed a Martinez even though he didn’t have much contact with the Martinez’s when he was growing up. He’s loud, kind, and apparently a hit with the ladies, as he boasts throughout the interview. He has pale skin, which isn’t a staple in this family group, since most of them are tall, dark skinned, and have dark hair. His eyes are green, which is another uncommon trait in this family. Behind these seemingly kind eyes are stories of tremendous hurt and pain. As much as he’s been through, he still has a big heart. He cares about others and wishes to seek a mate that has similar interests with him. He seems to want to find a deeper understanding of life, and is incredibly sharp witted.

Except for the one year that he lived with his father in Florida as a child, Eli lived with his grandmother until he was in the 6th grade. When she died, he went to live with one of his paternal uncles. But living with his uncle would become “a hostile environment” when he hit his “rocker stage” during high school, so he would make the decision to leave and choose to live with the aunt that he currently resides with. He would drop out of school though soon after and move out later to live with his “baby mama.” Eli and his “baby mama” would start having kids at this time. Eli worked two jobs to support his small family. After a few years of “mundane” existence though, Eli made a difficult decision to move out of the home that he had made with his ex-wife and their children to “give them a decent chance.” Now that they are separated, he has returned to live with his aunt so that he could better himself for his kids.

Eli recollects the worst experience of his life, “it was the last time I saw my dad: he told me ‘go take a bath you stink’, he insulted me, then I went to the rest room, I came back to get a change of clothes and he said ‘I thought you were taking a bath why are you lying to me?’, he hits me, throws me in the restroom and shuts off the light. I had a bloody nose, I washed up, I
took a bath, and when I came out, I heard my sister (“Z”) yelling in the living room and he was kicking her. He’s kicking her while she was on the floor. I went back, I got him by his pony tail, brought him down, and we ran into my room and locked the door, my grandma called the cops, and then he had to leave, it was the last time I saw him.” Eli was in the 5th grade when this happened, he about ten or 11 years old. Eli continues to tell me about his time with his father; “One of the worst memories I have was coming into the house really, really hungry and seeing rice on the floor, and I tell him ‘hey dad where’s the food? Where’s the rice?’ and he said ‘there’s no rice I need to go to the store.’ Then I asked, ‘then why’s there rice all over the floor?’ (It turns out that) maggots were coming out of the carpet. It was around that time that he (his dad) knew he couldn’t really take care of us so he stuck us in a charter home.”

Eli remembers that his childhood was really bad, but that there were a few things that he considered good while growing up. Eli remembers that he was good at hockey, and beating people up, “that was my niche, cause I wouldn’t fight kids my age, I’d be in the third grade fighting kids in the sixth grade, so I would be able to fight bigger kids. I remember that they would do this thing (in school) where an older kid could report you, I remember getting into a fight with a big kid, like (he was in) the last grade in school, and I remember beating him up and feeling so awesome about it, I took pride in being able to take down guys bigger than me.” Eli knows that he was violent while growing up: to him, it was his release from having such an awful childhood. Eli recalls one instance where a kid was picking on his sister (“Z”), “she was crying….the serious cry, the same cry that she was doing when my dad was kicking her, and I wailed on him. I think I dislocated his shoulder, and he needed stitches, and he changed schools, and seriously I really, really wailed on him. I was still in grade school.”
He plans to attend college now that he finally has his GED. “It’s a complete 180, or 360, one of those.” “I went from suicidal depressed and almost morbidly obese to fit, trim and lean.” It seems that Eli just wasn’t happy with himself before, and he now glows with confidence about himself and where his life is going. There’s so much potential here in Eli’s eyes, and I know that with the help from his family, he can find what he desires for his future.

7.5 Carlos Martinez

The first time I met Carlos was at a family gathering: I don’t remember which one it was, or what was its significance, but I do know that this was the first time I saw his tattoo. He had just gotten the tattoo done maybe a few days before. It was still red and raw, with shiny Vaseline all over it. It’s a big tattoo, and it’s on one of his calve muscles on one of his legs. Its image is of a large syringe placed at the bottom of a formed the biblical cross: on the left, top and right sides of the cross are the names of his aunts as well as his mother’s name. At the bottom of the giant syringe cross are the letters R.I.P (rest in peace). This tattoo is meant to honor and signify his mother’s death as well as his aunts’ deaths. They died because of their use of heroin. This image has stayed in my mind for so long because of what Carlos told me it signified. It seems that his own understanding of his family and of his mother surpasses any that other human beings have of their own families. Carlos understands life and death. Carlos has a brother and two sisters that he knows little about due to the fact that his mother chose a life of crime and addiction instead of her children, thus distributing them to other members of the family to raise. Yet, despite the purely negative example that his mother portrayed, he is one of the most loving parents I’ve seen. His girls adore him, and the large tattooed man melts in their tiny hands. His story can help clarify how he was able to adapt his situations to help him become a better parent and a better person.
Carlos was born in San Diego CA. “But I left when I was young, like 5 months (old) we left. We ended up in Beeville Texas….my grandma at the time was working for the Naval Exchange, so she got a job in Puerto Rico, so we moved to Puerto Rico when I was probably like, 2 or 3 years old. Then my grandma got struck down with rheumatoid arthritis, she woke up one day and she couldn’t move. She told me ‘hey go next door, and get the lady’; her name was Jane or something…so I ran next door to get some help. Cause she gotten struck down, she wanted to be near her son (Mr. Martinez), and (Mr. Martinez) at the time was living in San Fernando. So we ended up moving out there, and I stayed in San Fernando till I was….from 5 years old to…I don’t know what’s 7th grade? 13 or 14 years old? We moved to North Carolina, I was in North Carolina till I was about 17, so 13 to about 17. And then 17 to…we moved out here cause Cecy got a scholarship to ASU (Arizona State University), and everybody (his cousins) kind of followed. I stayed in North Carolina for like a year, or like 8 months, almost a year, cause everybody moved out here, and I already moved 4 times during my sophomore year, cause my mom had just gotten out of prison and she was staying in Midland TX. He then explicates to me how his mother called him to aid her after she had gotten out of prison, and that the situation didn’t end well. His uncle (Mr. Martinez) would come to get him so that he wouldn’t be alone for Christmas.

After the Midland TX incident with his mother, Carlos just wanted to finish high school, so he ended up staying with a friend and her family while he tried to graduate. He finished his sophomore year in North Carolina; afterwards he joined his family in Arizona. It is unclear whether or not he finished high school there though. Carlos also mentions that after his grandmother died, he lived in Florida a few times sporadically. Carlos’ living situation didn’t “calm down” until he had his first child at the age of 22: he stayed in Phoenix after that.
Carlos’ grandmother was the only good thing in his life while growing up. When his kids were born, they shared the spot with his grandmother. To Carlos, his grandmother was his immediate family, and everyone else, including his siblings, was considered kin to him. Carlos credits his grandmother for “giving me the Lord” while growing up. He knows that because of his grandmother, he has faith in God.

Carlos recollects one of the first adverse events that he remembers from his childhood: “my grandma pretty much raised me, my mom was always in and out, she would stay with us sometimes…one time her and my Tia and my uncle were all staying with us and we’re supposed to be watching scared straight… I was a little kid, I don’t know what age I was, probably 9 or 8, maybe third grade, I see my mom shoot dope, like her and my aunt. I was looking under the door cause my mom was supposed to come watch this movie with me, and she wasn’t coming….so I kept knocking at the door and they would turn off the lights when they would open the door, so when they closed the door and turned the light back on I would look underneath the door and I can see, I can recognize her tattoos they all got tattoos on the ankles, you know….my mom has my name, Little Carlos, on her ankle, well I see the arm go out, I seen it tie up, I see the needle hit the arm and that wasn’t what fucked me up, what fucked me up was the next day…” Carlos explains that he had let his grandmother know about his mother and his aunts shooting up in the room the night before. When his grandmother confronted her daughter about the ordeal, she denied the allegations, which made Carlos question himself, “I was like ‘whoa did I dream that?’ and if I dreamed that, it’s fucked up if I get my mom, who I do love, kicked out of the crib you know what I’m saying? Maybe I didn’t see that maybe I was trippin, I doubted myself for a long time, and she later told me later that yeah she was (shooting up Heroin).”
Carlos holds a managerial position at a call center in Phoenix AZ. He has three beautiful girls. As of this writing, he and his wife are separated. Carlos is an intelligent individual that seems to carry a self-reflexive point of view about his own life story that few people are willing to even acknowledge about themselves. He knows that he and his family have risen together out from the seemingly dark depths of life and its hellish voids. He knows that they will keep doing so as long as they stick together.
Chapter 8: Gender and Crime among Family Members- the differences and the similarities between subjects via delinquency and gender

Criminal offences noticeably differed among males and females. Eli and Jay report crack, cocaine and marijuana use while Carlos and Jay reported drug distribution across state and national lines, a major federal offence that would have surely granted them both considerable jail time if they were to get caught. It seems that the only thing the females in this study were really guilty of was stealing and fighting in school; misdemeanors at most, and even then this could be debated. Sophia and Cecy stole things that were reportedly worth less than a few dollars while growing up in San Fernando, which could dramatically change the outcome of punishment greatly from jail time of less than one year to a fine. Why did the boys of this cousin/sibling group indulge more in hard drugs and more serious criminal activities and the girls not so much? Why is it that the boys got really “down and dirty” so to speak when compared to the girls? Why are these crimes so different if the same type of environment was present?

The following sections will present each subject’s criminality and how their criminal activities were influenced by past adverse and marginalized experiences, if at all.

8.1 Cecy’s Criminality- “I flipped out and punched her in the face”

Cecy stated that she got into fights at school because she was “angry”, not because she needed to in order to survive. She states that she lost her best friend because of her anger, “she called me the ‘B’ word and I flipped out and punched her in the face.” Cecy had known this friend since early childhood. This friend was possibly one of the first friends that she made when she had first moved to Texas, and sadly has not spoken to this friend since their altercation so many years ago. Cecy agrees that the events in her early life (moving around, not feeling wanted, not having a mother to draw guidance from) caused her to become angry later in adolescence,
thus triggering her violent altercations in school. Cecy felt that her financial situation while
growing up did not contribute to her anger filled years, “it was more of because of the ‘not being
wanted’ feeling.” When asked if she still fought with others, Cecy laughingly states “No thank
the Lord….I’ve matured, I see things a lot differently now.” She credits her belief in God for
healing her of her anger issues, but that “Joan (her sister) still hurts a lot from some of the
experiences (that occurred) from living with (my uncle) and his ex-wife, but I don’t remember a
lot of them (the experiences that were mentioned previously).” Cecy states that she “prefers to let
it go.”

Cecy reports never skipping school while growing up, “I knew that school was my way
out, it was my way out…school was going to change my life.” Cecy observed her family “doing
so many bad things”, referring to the drug use, and that she remembers “(just) wanting out of all
that.” Cecy does not recall being involved in any sort of gang activities but she does report that
she used to steal. It seems that although everyone in her high school basketball team was
apparently stealing something from a store during one instance, they still all got caught. She
reports that this was a humiliating experience for her. Cecy has also been tied to stealing with her
cousin Sophia when they were children.

Cecy tells me more about her violent experiences in school, “I was very angry, I had a
hard time controlling myself.” Cecy then begins to tell me about the infamous fight where she
defeated four other girls, “I was in a fight about a boy with four other girls in middle school after
hours one day, so I let them have it.” Over the years that I have come to know this family, Joan
and the other members recall this story and laugh hearty and blissfully when this event is
mentioned. This is Cecy’s “tough girl” story for them. Since Cecy has been able to overcome her
adversities and marginalities while growing up, and since Cecy has obtained such prestigious
success in her line of work, it is hard to imagine her as a kid fighting off a bunch of *cholas,* which is a reference to girls that are affiliated with the local gangs. Cecy is now an affluent member of society: for such an affluent person to have been violent as a child seems to be a sort of irony.

Cecy recalls that this fight was over a boy that she really had no interest in, but these other girls apparently felt that she was indeed interested even though she stated otherwise. It’s a story of epic proportions to the Martinez’s. Every time I hear this story I laugh so much and at the same time this story makes me just a little scared of her; she took on four girls and won. These girls were supposed to have been the toughest ones out there in San Fernando at the time, and Cecy took them down. Cecy articulates that she had a bad attitude, and that her bad attitude paired well with her anger. She was angry that she had no parents to look to for guidance and support like her friends did. She knew that her life experiences only exacerbated her anger, which made her lash out at others.

8.2 Sophia’s Criminality- “I knew that it was just easier to take it”

Sophia proclaims that she was a “kleptomaniac” while growing up. While shopping with her mother for sewing materials at a local store (which most notably resembles a dollar store), “I stole a receipt note pad once.” She states that it reminded her of how a waitress would use the little notebook, “I thought it was so cool since we use to play restaurant…I don’t think I (ever) got caught for that.” Sophia also used to steal “little knick knacks”, as her mother would call them, when she was about 7 years old. She describes them as “little models of stuff” (little cupcakes, little menus) that came in a package. It seems that these “knick knacks” were supposed to be used for scrap booking, or at least that’s what her mother told her that that’s what they were for. Sophia stole the “knick knacks” for her Barbie doll, since they were “her size.” Sophia
claims that it probably would have taken her getting caught in order for her to stop stealing these things. If a public spectacle was made, the point was made clear that stealing was not to be tolerated.

Sophia remembers that she started to steal things when she was a kid because “I could never… we could never get what we wanted. Even for Christmas, I remember they (her parents) would ask us what we wanted, and we would only get one thing. There were times where we did get what we wanted, but I always wanted a Barbie house but I never got a Barbie house, I used to build my Barbie house with pencils and pens.” She then describes the creativity that seems to come with not having much to play with when she describes how she built and modeled her Barbie’s home (built with pencils and pens). Sophia is none the less appreciative of her parents’ supposed frugal gifts since it “made me have an imagination.” But she also thinks that “that’s what really triggered this stuff (stealing) because I knew that it was just easier to take it, because I knew that I was never going to get it.”

Stealing was a lesson for Sophia in life because she later realized that if she wanted these nice things, she was going to have to work hard to get them legitimately. “No one was ever going to buy me these things. I’m going to have to work hard for whatever I had.” When asked if her family members both immediate and kin bonds had any effect on her decision to stop stealing, she replied “no, they didn’t really know (that I was stealing).”

Once in 7th grade, with Cecy her “partner in crime”, Sophia “stole some earrings.” Sophia recollects that “she took the whole blame” for her and her cousins’ five finger discount shopping spree, “they (her parents) literally made me take them back to Wal-Mart, and I had to apologize!”
Sophia recollects that the last time she stole something she was about 19 years old, “it had kind of started to become easy (at that point).” When she lived in Phoenix, she used to steal clothing and CD’s with her college roommate from the local shopping center. Her father had just left her mother, and she was living out on her own for the very first time in her life. She had just met Anthony, her seemingly first serious boyfriend. After she made the decision to move in with Anthony, during Christmas time, she went to a Macy’s close by where she stole a few items, “I had done it a couple of times (already).” She was caught when the security officers saw her on camera taking items of clothing, “I had to pay a fine….I paid a lawyer… (so) that I could get an ACD or an ACL or something like that so that it won’t be on my record. As long as I didn’t do it for a certain amount of time afterwards, it wouldn’t show up on my record….I think that’s when I got really scared, I don’t’ think I ever did that again after that, it was embarrassing for me. Plus Anthony got really mad at me saying that ‘you have money, why are you being a thief? I don’t like thieves’, and I said ‘I’m sorry’, but I wasn’t really sorry, I was just sorry that I got caught.” Apparently the public spectacle that was mentioned earlier was finally made, and Sophia stopped stealing after this.

Sophia remembers that Anthony made her call her mother to tell her what she had done. She states that her mother was disappointed with her, but that her mother never turned her back on her during this time. It was at this time that she realized that she could talk to her mother about things such as this, “after my father left my mother, I started to open up to my mother about things that I never would have told her about before.” Adversity seems to have brought Sophia and her mother closer, “after the separation, she stopped judging period.” Sophia feels that because of the divorce, her mother began to realize that she wanted to just be close with her daughter.
8.3 Jay’s Criminality- “it’s part of the society out there, and I just gave into that”

Jay has been involved in criminal/delinquent activity during his adolescent years and continues to span into his adulthood. When he was 14 years old, he began to smoke cigarettes and drink beer. Jay states that he was more of a drinker than a smoker though, and that he wasn’t like his “kleptomaniac” sister, he never stole anything. These activities are criminal in nature since he was well under the legal age to do either activity legally. He didn’t get into fights at school either, expect for the one occasion where he spit in a girls’ face for “talking too much” when he was a child in grade school. Later in his high school years he got into heavier drugs. He then began to use and distribute marijuana and other types of drugs. Jay used marijuana, cocaine and crack during high school. Jay still smokes marijuana, but he does not “deal it anymore”, it’s more for his consumption. Jay reports that he started smoking cigarettes because of his parents’ divorce. He wanted to “be cool”, he was impressionable at this time, and he also hung out with a bunch of older people. Ironically, Jay still attended church at the same time that he was consuming and selling drugs. He found himself “partying” the night before with friends then going to church the day after, “I got all fucked up the night before, now I’m over here trying to repent for my sins and asking for forgiveness, and like man this is bullshit.”

Jay began to use crack and cocaine because “in my community it was so readily available, it was present and it’s in the environment (that I lived in), and that being presented to us, we just took advantage of it.” Jay was 15 or 16 years old when he began using cocaine. Jay continues to elaborate, “I wasn’t thinking of the consequences, it was more so because it was available, because I felt that it wasn’t wrong or anything, and because everyone else was doing it, I figured I would try it out.”
Jay notes that he began to sell weed “again, because of the atmosphere, because of the environment, and the availability of it and the profitability of it. It was also a means to pay for my usage.” Jay doesn’t think that his past adverse experiences weighed too heavily on his decisions to use and sell drugs but “it did maybe have some influence at that point to believe that it was a beneficial factor because you wouldn’t be focused on that (his parents’ divorce).” Jay describes a sort adaptability that his drug use allowed, “it makes reality better, or (at least) try to make it better, to make it seem what it wasn’t, but you’re just lying to yourself. It’s almost like you don’t want to face the facts, not face reality, I don’t want to deal with it, I just want to overlook it, let’s get high and forget it for a couple of hours, deal with it later.” It seems that Jay used drugs not because of his past marginalizations but because of his past adverse events, more specifically the separation of his parents. He wanted to forget about the adverse situation that he was in at that moment so that he would not have to evaluate his life within his family unit, and how it could affect him later in life. This is important to note because his sister Sophia was not physically there with him experiencing their parents’ divorce first hand, which could be a major factor in deciphering why Jay used and sold drugs versus Sophia stealing “knick knacks” and clothing. These siblings criminality may vary because of their location during the time of their parent’s divorce.

Jay felt that his living/financial situation limited his drug distribution sales, as mentioned before he lived with his mother while he was a teenager, “I was hiding my drugs in my shoes and things like that, my mom’s asking ‘how come there’s all these people stopping by the house?’, well they’re coming to get a snack (which is a specified amount of weed that is for sale for a specified amount of money, usually a small amount).” Jay didn’t tell his mother about his drug distribution of course, but while listening to Jay describe his offences and drug operation while
living with his mother, it seems that she may have been a little bit naïve about her sons’ criminal activities. Jay would tell his mother that the people who were stopping by their home so often were doing so because they were interested in Jay’s rock band (which had formed during high school). Jay would explain to his mother that “they’re wondering when we’re going to play.” Maybe his mother was aware of her son’s criminal activities, but did not wish to fully acknowledge the situation that she found her son in, or maybe she really did not know, I did not ask her about this at Jay’s request.

Jay didn’t need to sell drugs to survive, “essentially I sold because I wanted some money; I got some gear (guitar, etc.), a leather jacket, some clothes, shoes, watch, but not anything major like cars. I had some friends that were into that (major activity)….they were moving weight, but I never got involved in that.” Jay may have begun to sell drugs for similar reasons as that of his sister’s stealing: because he may have known that his parents were unable or unwilling to buy him the things that he wanted at the time. Jay did have a somewhat after school job while attending high school, but the little money earned there may not have been enough to support his drug habit.

Jay did move drugs across national check points though, “there are two instances where I crossed United States check points: one was at the United States border with Mexico, I crossed two pounds of marijuana over that time. The second one was a checkpoint in Sierra Blanca/Van Horn where I crossed a little ‘rillo of marijuana (a marijuana cigarette that is created when the innards of a regular tobacco cigarillo is removed and filled with marijuana, then sealed back up once again to comsume). Both times I was suspect, but I was let go, I’m cool, I’m a smooth cat like I told you.” When asked why he did these things, Jay responded (in reference to the 2 pounds of marijuana that he crossed), “it was free of charge, they just needed transportation to
get the marijuana over here to the states, once it’s over here you can do whatever you want with it.” Jay noted that he was able to keep the 2 pounds he crossed, “my friend’s cousin was trying to get rid of the stuff since the federales (a Spanish reference to Mexican Federal police officers) were looking for him, they had already raided his house so he wanted to get all that stuff out of here, so I was like, I can help you out with that.” This person was deceptively trying to get rid of his drug stash, so he gave it to Jay free of charge to avoid getting caught red handed, so to speak. When asked what he did with the two pounds, Jay stated “like I said it’s a community man, you know people.” He went on to explain that there is a sense of community on both sides of the border despite the physical border fences. When the 2 pounds was split up later, Jay states that he “got ripped off, I only got a little piece, out of the two pounds I only got like 40 or 50 dollars out of it, and even then I smoked the rest of it, but it should have been a higher profit for me, I took most of the risk, I got dicked over, that’s fucked up.”

Jay’s adventure of crossing two pounds of marijuana across the international border began by “going to pick up my homeboy whose cousin had the connection and we took a little cruise down to Guadalupe (one of the small towns in Mexico that is located right across the border from San Fernando)…. We went to (the connections) backyard and he was digging, what the fuck was he digging at? (He dug) maybe like 3 or 4 feet, then he took out these two potato sack bags of marijuana and it was all the shake that they used to...(he explains what shake is) after they compressed the pounds of marijuana (into bricks) and they shave it off to a good square, so they were trying to get rid of that…I told him ‘give us some baggies for us’, (so he) put it (the marijuana) in some oil, wrapped it some more, put around some more oil, so that the dogs don’t smell it, (and) then we went inside. He went to his freezer and he took out some colas (the ends of the branches of the marijuana plant, the blooming ends are cut off while the plant is
in full bloom and are preserved as such and smoked, when they are successfully preserved they are called *colas*, he gave us a *cola*. We were about to leave (since) I had to take an online test at the time (he was still in high school at this time) since I was in the dual credit program, and I was like ‘I need to get back cause I have to take a test’ I was like 17 or 18.” Jay used the port of entry to cross the 2 pound load; he was asked to “open up the trunk, the hood, and to get out of the vehicle” for further inspection by border patrol agents. Jay and company were asked to lift up their shirts, but the loads were near their “ball sacks” so it didn’t matter “and then we crossed.” It should be noted that Jay graduated with 18 hours of college credit even though his activities were considered deviant at the time.

Jay’s second time passing with drugs through a border patrol checkpoint was at the Sierra Blanca/Van Horn Border Patrol station, “I put a half cigarillo (filled with marijuana) in my cigarette carton, and I got stopped at the check point, me and my girlfriend at the time, and my kin were in my girlfriend’s car (traveling to San Antonio to visit with his father) and they asked us to get off, the dog sniffed the car and I guess he could smell it, fuckin dog, (he laughs) fuckin bad ass dog, and so after the dog saw us (flagged us down) and we said we were American, we were asked to get out of the car, to pull over to the side to inspect us. The dog hopped in and I guess he didn’t smell it (then), I don’t know maybe he was wrong, they didn’t find anything; they asked me if I smoked and I lied and said ‘cigarettes? nah man’, and then they let me go, for being a cool cat once again.” Jay laughs at his smooth success. Jay was about 23 at years old this time.

When asked if any other sort of past marginalization influenced his criminal activities, Jay replied “I think maybe just playing into the typical guy of our community, of like getting involved with drugs.” When asked to clarify what he meant by “typical guy” Jay replied “yeah
like…these people in my neighborhood, there’s very few that are straight edge. They’re (the others are) either alcoholics, or they’ll dip into some kind of drug, whether it’s weed or cocaine, then there’s some that use heroin, but for the most part they’re straight, it’s part of the society out there, and I just gave into that. Maybe that marginalization of just thinking how…this is the culture of the community, so just go ahead and do it. It’s OK almost, just go ahead and do it even though it’s seen as wrong (by others outside the community), it’s accepted by the community, or even if it’s not accepted by the community they still look the other way.” Jay is outwardly suggesting that his community was marginalized because of the drug culture that it was engulfed in at the time and to this day.

Jay does not currently snort or smoke crack or cocaine anymore. He states that he doesn’t really drink anymore either, “I drink every now and again, but even then I don’t like the feeling of dehydration, so that’s why I mostly smoke marijuana; side effects, hungry happy sleepy.” Jay laughed and stated that he stopped snorting and smoking cocaine because “it’s just bad, I did it for a while, for at least two years off and on and I don’t know, I believe that I have a deviated septum because of it now, and even then it’s just I don’t know, I mean if someone offered it to me now, even with my wife being married and everything I’d probably still try it, I don’t think it’s that bad however it’s not preferred because it’s not the type of high that I look for.” Jay likes to expand his mind, “I like the expansion, you know how I told you that I like the false reality (that comes with) weed and you know, don’t face the facts of reality, and I think with marijuana it just…not only does it induce a broader aspect of it (reality) it actually creates a better…acceptance and understanding of how things work and why things are the way they are, it’s a little bit deeper and more intense. However I do stay sober for important events but using marijuana recreationally….I think it’s like drinking beer, it’s just a different affect.”
Jay stopped selling drugs because “it wasn’t worth it, and then I’ve been pulled over before when I’ve had drugs and it’s not fun (he laughs to himself), you know what I mean? I’m trying to play (the) cool cat and not get busted for having a forty sack (a bigger amount of weed that sells for a larger amount of money) down my fuckin crotch and shit. Just experiences like that, and then I’ve had other friends that have ended up in prison for drugs. I just don’t want to end up there, even if they just bust me for marijuana, yeah they’ll write me a ticket and I got to pay a fine or whatever, but it’s still misdemeanor charges. Once you start slanging that’s like felonies, I’m trying to think a little bigger now, and get out of that community and have a new perspective, and think positively. Selling drugs isn’t positive.” Jay states that selling drugs was one of the most stressful times in his life while growing up.

When asked if he thought if his connection with his immediate family or kin contributed to his ultimate departure from selling drugs, Jay stated that he did think that his family had something to do with it, “they rooted me back to what we were taught to do…it’s just the basis of doing what’s right and not fucking bullshitting and if you’re caught up with negativity shit, it may be profitable and it may have appeal but essentially it’s not useful, it’s not worth it eventually.” Jay feels that his decisions affect the people around him, and that if he had decided to continue to sell drugs it would have affected his family, both kin and immediate, “I had my aunts serve time, and I feel like, do they (his kin and immediate family) want their cousin, their husband, their brother to go to jail? Nah man, I don’t want that either.”

Jay felt that if wasn’t for his connection with his family that he would still be using crack/cocaine and distributing drugs, “probably, I mean there would be no guidance there, no one to say ‘maybe you shouldn’t be doing that’, essentially it’s a common sense rule, don’t be stupid, you know what’s right and what’s wrong, and if you get caught up in the negative shit...
then that’s it.” His families, both immediate and kin, don’t know too much about his past
criminal activity, but he knows that his both types of family weigh heavily on his life decisions.

8.4 Eli’s Criminality- “I romanticized the idea of it”

Eli reports that he was in a gang when he was in middle school. He begins to tell me that
he had been threatened by three other boys one day and that when he took out his knife to defend
himself, he got into trouble and was sent away to another school by officials, which is where he
joined a gang “it was called KOS, Kings of Society, stupid name….” The boys said “hey you
want to join our gang?”, and I said ‘what do you do?’ (And they said) ‘We fight bro’ (and he
said) ‘if I fight, I’ll join’ cause I like fighting. So I was in there for like 2 or 3 months. They let
me in, no jumping.” After a few months of tagging walls and “talking shit”, Eli began to
reconsider his decision to join the gang. When Eli spoke with the gang about this, (they) said
“fine but we got to jump you out…the 12 of us are going to kick your ass, I wonder how that’s
going to work.” Eli then begins to tell me about how he would almost negotiate with his gang on
how to “jump him out”, and he later convinces all of them to “just come at him, without him
putting his hands in his pockets” like they had originally wanted him to do, “I took like 6 of them
down before I went down, but I did get taken down eventually.” Eli admits that he joined the
gang “to fight, the idea of group on group attacks, cause I’m really into Vikings and stuff, like
these group melee battles, it’s so fucking bad ass. I romanticized the idea of it (fighting in
groups).” Eli joined not because he had to, but because he “wanted more violence.” Eli admits
that he hasn’t fought in years, “I got fired from Wal-Mart for fighting”, this was two years ago.

During high school, Eli began to experiment with drugs, “I started to get into cocaine and
drinking, and just (being a) hard core heavy rocker guy. I remember the first time I tried coke
(cocaine). I went to my friend’s house and we were doing shots of Vodka, and he said ‘hey I
have some, do you want to try?’ and…out of (those present) me and the guy who offered tried it. After that, everyone started to get into it, going crazy, drinking, partying.” Eli was in the tenth grade when this started to occur, “this is where shit got real.” Eli remembers that one of his friends over dosed, “he had to get his stomach pumped, he’s fine now, and then shit settled down, I was spending like $800 dollars (on cocaine) a month, I was stealing, doing odd jobs like dressing up as Elmo for a little kid’s birthday party…just to get money for that (his drugs). I settled down when I started having my kids, I was 19 years old.” When Eli was 18 years old, he dropped out of school and moved in with his girlfriend at the time, and then they began to have kids. At this time, he had two jobs. He worked every day with no days off, “I did that for a few months, and then life just became mundane. I spent the next seven years doing that.”

Eli feels that his previous adverse experiences influenced his decision to join a gang and be violent, “I think the violence is one of them...all the violence.” He then explains that when one of his children begins to cry, he makes sure to talk with them about why they are crying “when you have little kid and you see… the parent’s frustrated and you see the kid throwing a fit (in public), the parent is just ignoring them, I don’t do that. They (his kids) don’t throw fits anymore. I get down on their level, and I talk to them, I say ‘what’s wrong?’ (Eli proceeds to make the noises that a crying child would make), and then I say ‘stop it you’re whining, I can’t understand you calm down’ then they calm down and we talk, and we kind of get each other.”

Eli states that his own family never conversed with him in this manner, “and I think if they (his family) would have done that with me I wouldn’t have been so violent. I think I used the violence to lash out.” Eli tells me of the instances when he explained events to his children, and how his conversations with his children resembled those that he had with adults, “the lack of
communication really fueled my violence, and even now my (paternal) family is still trying to get to know me.”

Eli doesn’t really feel that his living situation while growing up influenced his decision to join a gang later on in life. Eli also feels that his past adverse and marginal experiences may or may not have affected his later criminality and/or delinquency, a sort of draw between the two types. Eli feels that he has an “addictive personality”, and that he’s not sure if his past experiences really affected his decisions to use drugs and become violent, “I’ve never really been one for restraint. I’ll do whatever it takes for me to feel good.”

Eli felt that his past marginalizations did not influence his participation in gangs and drug use, “the only thing race has done…. (it has) me feeling like a white boy and acting like a white boy….has (made me) look into the whole Viking thing and the whole religion aspect of myself, and I think that has really helped me grow and stabilize more as an adult.” Eli is no longer involved in gangs, nor is he a big fighter anymore either, “its optional now, if warranted yes, I don’t plan on fighting, if it happens it happens”, but he agrees that his need to be violent isn’t like what it used to be, “I’m not seeking it out.” Eli reports that his drug use went from “addicting to recreational”, which is similar to what Jay stated about his drug abuse.

Eli felt that his family (both types) and the bonds that he has with them did not help him get out of his drug abuse or criminality, “I’m going to be who I’m going to be, since I was a little kid, I just think that the only thing I’ve gotten (from them) was discipline, but I’m still that loud mouth reckless guy… it’s just who I am, and I’ve become more comfortable with that, it’s becoming better.”
8.5 Carlos’ Criminality- “they just wanted to hang out with a real gangster”

When Carlos moved to North Carolina with his grandmother, the stark and unsettling differences between the San Fernando community and the new community that they lived in over in North Carolina became one of the reasons why he began to “slang”, which is a term that commonly refers to drug dealing. Carlos states that he began to “slang” because of the realization that he was poor, “that’s when I found out we were poor, and man, it put pressure on me, that’s when I started to fuck up like with hustling and shit, cause man, I didn’t want to wear Everlast shoes anymore, that’s really what it boiled down to, I didn’t want to wear Everlast shoes, I didn’t necessarily need Jordan’s, I didn’t need a hundred dollar pair of shoes, but I didn’t want to wear Payless shoes, you know what I’m saying, all these rich kids have nice stuff and I was trying to keep up with the Joneses, I had at least some decent types of kicks, easy money, I’ve always had the gift of gab, my mom’s a hustler, that shit’s been bred in me so, it just came easy, make money.”

Carlos speaks about his days of when he used to take drugs to and from Florida, “I used to take off during the summer in Phoenix, cause it gets hot out here…so what I would do it is….pre- 9/11 it was easy to take anything on the plane, drug wise right. So what I used to do was strap an (inaudible word referencing a sack of drugs) to myself, and I would fly off to Jacksonville FL, so I would spend the summer’s out there, and I would take a pound or at the most two, and it would pay for my whole trip because….when I got out there I only knew one person…so we used to lie to everyone and say that I was from Cali, and say that this was Cali bomb (which is a term that refers to a different type of marijuana that is only grown in California. It’s supposed to be of higher grade quality than the marijuana grown in Mexico), and all these rich white kids in Jacksonville…and they just wanted to hang out with a real gangster,
they think they were cool hanging out with some hood, you know what I’m saying? So I would sell them like half ounces, which a half ounce is about $30. I used to sell them half ounces for like $80 bucks…past double the price, almost triple the price and it would pay for my whole trip.”

Carlos credits his first born daughter as the reason why “things calmed down…. the thing that stopped me from doing what I was doing and living how I was living was my first born, once she was born everything stopped. I couldn’t risk getting locked up, and (her) not having a father around, I don’t get how a lot of men out there, cause most of us didn’t have dads…Chicano males, they grow up in poverty, most of us don’t have dad’s, and I never understood how…you didn’t have a dad, you know what you missed out on, why would you do that to your kids? If you have a kid, you better be there, and that’s how it was, everything changed. I stopped everything, I got to get serious, I can’t get locked up, I got somebody that depends on me.”

Carlos knew from personal experience what life was like growing up without a father to look to guidance for. He didn’t want that type of life for his daughter. His daughter may not be defined as kin by this study, but none the less she is important to note because after she was born, Carlos was able to reflect upon his own life, understand what his past experiences brought him overall, and was able to consciously make the important decision to be in his child’s life, something that could not be said for his own parents. The values and the faith that was instilled into him by his grandmother seemed to have helped Carlos reflect, summarize, and change his life to better his children’s futures.
8.6 Discussion for Criminality and Gender Section

8.6.1 Cecy’s violent outburst in school compared to Eli’s violent outbursts while growing up

Cecy and Eli report that they were violent while growing up because of the adverse events that they experienced while growing up. Cecy noted that she was angry because she did not have her mother to guide her, creating an unbalanced life style of constantly moving from family member to family member, while Eli reported that not having a disciplined setting while growing up attributed to his violence as a child. Both cousins have similar reasons for becoming violent while growing up: the absence of stability in their homes during childhood.

Notice that Cecy’s violent outbursts in school did not land her in alternative schooling, or caused serious bodily injury, which could not be said for Eli when asked about his delinquent activities. Cecy’s delinquency seems to have stopped once she graduated high school, and continued to the college level of education. She reports that she “matured” greatly since then, and it did not seem that she got into too much trouble with school officials when she would fight in school. It also doesn’t seem that Cecy was penalized at the judicial level for stealing earrings either. Eli’s reported violent outbursts landed him in situations where his family decided to move him to different schools because of his behavior, and after dislocating another boy’s shoulder during a fight, his family seemed to have moved him to yet another school once again. Eli seemed to have gotten into more trouble for fighting than Cecy while growing up.

Traditionally, men are more likely to offend criminally than women. According to the United States Department of Justice, women account for about 14% of violent offenders with an annual average of about 2.1 million violent female offenders. Males offending equal about 1 violent offender for every 9 males age 10 or older, a per capita rate 6 times that of women
(Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). Males are more likely to murder, be arrested, and are more likely to commit an aggravated assault (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). Women who make up the federal prison system population are more likely to be African American, aged 25-34 years old, have never been married, and have only been able to obtain a high school education or a GED (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999). In The information that Cecy and Eli have given mirror the information that was collected by the United States Department of Justice, especially since this information was collected between 1990 and 2000, the same time period that all Martinez family members interviewed report experiencing their adolescent epoch.

Eli seems to still enjoy a good fight every so often, “if warranted”, but Cecy knows that her fighting days are over. Cecy feels that she has “matured” and has grown out of this phase in her life, while Eli will fight when he feels that he needs to. It is important to compare the two cousins in order to explore the punishments that both received as well as their current feelings on the matter. Their sentiments seem to mirror the national expectations of male and female offender. Cecy did not seem to have fought numerous times the way that Eli reported while growing up, which could have explained why Cecy never had to move from school to school because of her violent outbursts. It seemed that violence was Eli’s main outlet for his frustrations with his family, while Cecy channeled her energy more toward her education since she felt that school was her way out of her situation. The way that each cousin dealt with their family situations is important to note in order to examine and perhaps suggest positive outlets to social health policy makers when legislation is being created to help such populations.
8.6.2 Sophia’s Criminality compared to Jay’s Criminality- Childhood comparison of the two siblings and their resulting criminality

Sophia exclaimed during her thieving days that she “thought deviously”, and that whenever she has kids in the future “it’s going to be trouble.” Sophia also remembers that it was her brother that was the “good hearted kid.” If Jay knew that he had been given something without paying for it, he would have returned it for the sake of karma. Jay is still like this today. As noted before, Jay indulged in drug use as an adolescent while his sister did not. Sophia would steal small items as a child, while Jay did not during the same age. If the two siblings had similar upbringing, why would their criminality be so different from one another?

A major feature that was ascertained was that Jay and Sophia experienced their parent’s divorce in different ways. A major factor during that may have contributed to this would be physical proximity of both siblings at the time of the divorce: Sophia was already in Phoenix when her parents separated, while Jay was still a child living with his mother. Perhaps the proximity to the actual adverse event created more traumatic adverse feelings for Jay than for Sophia because he was constantly reminded at home that his father had left his mother. Jay would soon develop his addictions to smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana, and snorting/smoking crack and cocaine in order to escape from the reality that his parents were no longer together. Sophia began to steal from an early age more because of her family’s financial situation rather than the relationship (or lack of) that her parents had together.

Jay’s mother has no knowledge of his drug use or his criminal past, while Sophia was made to call her mother by her then boyfriend after she had gotten caught the last time that she stole. Sophia’s relationship with her mother seemingly improved after she spoke with her mother about her criminal activities while Jay does not seem to share the same sentiment with his
mother. Jay, if anything, makes it a point to keep this information away from his mother.

Sophia’s brush with serious theft in Phoenix seemed to have brought her and her mother closer together, while Jay seems to be more distant with his mother. Jay does not really seem to have a close relationship with his father either: it is unclear if his father knows about his drug use or criminal activities. Jay seems to have a more distant relationship with both his parents while Sophia seems to have a closer relationship with her parents.

Jay would stop distributing drugs because of the bonds that he has with his family while Sophia’s family did not really know about her stealing till much later in life. Her parents do not know that she used to steal when she was a child, but her mother does know that she stole as an adult. Jay’s reason for stopping his delinquent activities would differ greatly from his sister: she would stop stealing because of the public spectacle that was made when she was caught stealing in Phoenix, not because of the bonds that she has with her family members. Jay took into consideration the thoughts and discernment that his family could have harbored against him had he ever gotten caught and went to jail for. Sophia did not, as mentioned before, she apologized for stealing only because she got caught doing, not because of committing the actual act itself.

It is apparent that the divorce this family underwent and the physical proximity of the two siblings mattered a great deal in how they both coped with the adverse event. Jay noted in his interview that his parent’s divorce was one of the major adverse life events that have happened to him so far, while Sophia listed other adverse events that are more rooted in her adolescent time and center around kin rather than immediate family, which did not include her parent’s divorce. In knowing this information, we can further understand and create better social relationships between siblings who are present when their parents are going through an adverse life changing event such as a divorce versus those children who were not present.
Carlos’ Criminality and the birth of his daughter

Carlos reported that he stopped his criminal activities because of the birth of his first born daughter, not because of kin. He knew that he needed to be there for his child, he did not want to risk getting caught and going to jail. Carlos replied that he started to sell drugs because he “didn’t want to wear Payless shoes anymore”, and that he wanted better looking shoes that would suggest that he is not poor, which furthers the earlier argument that there seems to be a name brand association that connects what poor people may or may not wear. Carlos didn’t want to look like he was poor anymore, so he started to sell drugs in order to buy the necessary material items that would signify that he was not poor.
Chapter 9: Types of Marginalizations that the Martinez family encountered while growing up

All subjects were given the definition of James Diego Vigil’s Marginalization and what kinds of social events may come as a result of being marginalized when an individual or group of people are subjected to certain types of marginalization. Only one or two of the subjects interviewed did not seem to comprehend the definition at first, but when I explained the term more fully and gave examples that roughly relate to Vigil’s definition, they caught on right away and were able to define moments in their lives while growing up that they felt marginalized. I gave subjects the opportunity to self-define the types of marginalizations that they experienced in their lives so that I could gain a deeper understanding of how they have been “pushed to the fringes of society” (Vigil, 2002) from their own unique perspectives.

In an article by Doubt (1992) those afflicted by schizophrenia are given the chance to self-define the affliction from their stand point. Mostly, the disease is a “scientific fact” that is defined by medical professionals from the biological standpoint (Doubt, 1992). But Doubt seeks to help define the social aspect of the disease by letting those who are “diseased” speak in terms of what it means to them to be a schizophrenic in a social world (Doubt, 1992). I dare not call my subjects “diseased”, but I do wish to let them “self-define” how they have been marginalized throughout their lives. Only through self-definition can social scientists truly understand both facets of what it means to be marginalized, both from an academic and personal, open point of view.

I choose not to give subjects certain types of options about the types of marginalizations that others in Vigil’s works have reported to draw data from for the main purpose of drawing out a unique and individualistic perspective because marginalization does not occur in the same
manor all the time. I gave the basic definition in order to record what they would say about their own experiences, none of Vigil’s in depth explanations were explained to them. The outcomes described were vague in order to draw out original open statements. Not every marginalized experience is the same for every individual, nor should it be and was expected not to be similar. Being able to encounter different types of marginality strengthens Vigil’s marginalization concept: its apparent working definition can be expanded to other realms of the social life that may not be included, explored, or mentioned by Vigil through including the Martinez family oral histories of life on the border. Marginalization was felt by each individual differently, but still felt none the less. Each individual’s accounts are transcribed and recorded first, and then at the end of this section possible explanations are examined to help clarify how these experiences came about in this specific context (the El Paso/ San Fernando area).

9.1 Possible Marginalizations that Cecy experienced growing up- “they called me Beano”

Cecy states that she knows what it’s like to be marginalized as according to James Diego Vigil’s (2007) definition of Marginalization, which is “the regulation of certain persons or groups to the fringes of society, where social and economic conditions result in powerlessness” (pg 8). With a few seconds to reflect on the definition, Cecy began to tell me about experiences where she felt that she was “pushed to the margins of society.”

When Cecy lived with her grandfather in California, she knew from even a young age that she lived in a middle class “white” neighborhood when compared to the neighborhood that her uncle had lived in back in San Fernando, Texas. She remembers “being the only Hispanic” household in this area. While attending school in California, Cecy was called “beaner”, which is considered a derogatory term for Mexican Americans or Mexican Nationals. She remembers
feeling embarrassed that she had darker skin than the other kids, “I felt so different than everyone else there.” She recalls that even though she was so young, she remembers “standing out” (being a second grader at the time). She may have been about 8 years old. Cecy also describes that moving constantly between Texas and California was a big obstacle for her to overcome. She felt that moving around constantly between two states was a type of marginalization that she encountered, a factor that Vigil does not fully include in his research. She and her sister Joan for the most part stuck together throughout these times of unstable living situations.

While living in California with their grandfather, Cecy experienced some hard financial time. She states that her grandfather “didn’t care about money”, even though he had money to spend on them. Even though their grandfather had money, the girls had “Wal-Mart brand shoes” which may have been poor in quality since she remembers “her toes hanging out” near the front of the shoes. Cecy remembers that “it would take my grandpa forever to buy me another pair of shoes.” Cecy knew that at the time of his death only a few years ago, there was a substantial amount of money left in his bank accounts (several hundreds of thousands of dollars). “He wasn’t materialistic.” Cecy felt that because of her living situation in California, people treated her differently, “I was made fun of in California” because of the holes in their shoes and the unkempt hair of little girls that were raised by men. It is interesting to note that Wal-Mart brand shoes seem to have a direct correlation with being poor for Cecy, something that her cousins share an affinity for. There seems to be a brand association with being poor, a sort of stigma.

When Cecy lived in Texas, her living situation changed. She remembers that “everyone was poor in San Fernando.” Her maternal grandmother would be the first to buy Cecy “name brand shoes” and name brand pants in San Fernando. No one made fun of her in San Fernando
because everyone else was in the same boat as she was; “everyone was poor.” Cecy remembers the lines of people who gathered outside a particular building or met in a certain area that wished to receive the “free cheeses” offered to the community (it is not known the source of this free-giving entity). Cecy evokes that “everyone was there for the free stuff, all my classmates were there”, which suggests that this town may have had a large amount of poor families living in the area during this time period. The census data mentioned in the San Fernando demographics section of this writing seems to be fortified when considering Cecy’s accounts or the amount of poor people that she remembers encountering on a daily basis. It is not an uncommon thing to witness people young and old buy groceries at the local food mart with Lone Star cards; as mentioned before, the white, credit card like identification cards with giant red star shaped symbols located on the front side would be swiped at the register, and is the tell-tale sign that this person is paying with food stamps, a state run service for families that are considered below the poverty line.

San Fernando is infamous for having interesting class situations within neighborhoods that can often blur the lines of the very poor and the very rich. From personal experience, I recall that on one residential block alone, it was typical to see the following; a medium sized home for a family of 5 with a well-kept yard begins the city block, then next to this house is a trailer home with additions to it so that it would accommodate a larger family (it looks like a house more like a mobile home now), then next to this interesting hybrid home would be an in-comparatively expensive home with a fountain out front. Across the street from these houses would be a worn down looking shack that would begin the opposite side of the city block complete with six foot tall weeds and blue graffiti with illegible penmanship. Next to this shack would be another family dwelling with a speed boat in the driveway and maybe two or three large pedigree dogs.
and a rock wall fence keeping them inside their yard. Next to this would be a similar family dwelling described before, which was a medium sized home for a family of 5 with a well-kept yard. During my time in San Fernando I noticed that there is no real distinctive class difference when it came to living situations. This area is considered low income in general now by the United States Census Bureau, which makes everyone sort of equal in a financial sense, but not entirely though. Living in San Fernando generally left Cecy with the feeling of living with groups of individuals that were ultimately indifferent to their financial backgrounds since most had similar ones. There was no need to make fun of the poor Hispanic kid since most children that attended school in San Fernando were the poor Hispanic kids.

9.2 Possible Marginalizations that Sophia may have experienced- “I didn’t know I was poor…”

Sophia was given the definition of Vigil’s multiple marginality concepts like her cousin Cecy. She recollects an ethnic identity crisis, which is further examined closely in a subsequent portion of this writing, as well as the realization that she was poor while growing up. Many other members of the Martinez family recollect realizing the same notion but only after they left the town of San Fernando for a substantial portion of time and then returned later to visit with family. For some members, it was an immediate comprehension, while for others; the process may have taken years to understand.

Sophia never really thought of her family living in poverty until she moved out at 17 years of age to attend college in Phoenix AZ and then returned to visit a year later, “I lived here?!” she exclaims, her eyes were wide when she told me about this. Coming back to visit her home after being away for more than a few months helped her put into perspective the context that she came from while living in San Fernando, “I grew up in a really poor place.” She had to
leave in order to gain this insight though. Sophia remembers playing near the “welfare” line as a child, “it was near the head start, it’s where my grandmother worked.” She remembers seeing people waiting in line for food, but she never thought of them as poor. She recollects that during this time officials that were distributing the food rations were giving away “shiny metallic jackets”, and that if you didn’t have one, “you weren’t considered cool. I wanted one so bad!” Jay, her brother, also remembers these shiny metallic jackets, “they were cool.” When asked why he thought they were cool, Jay replied “because they were free.”

During the 3rd or 4th grade, Sophia remembers that her father must have lost his job because “we ate beans and rice every day for like a month straight.” Traditionally, the price of beans and rice has always been relatively low and inexpensive to come by. It seems that either 1) her parents didn’t tell her and her brother about their sudden poverty, or 2) it may have been that the poverty levels were so overwhelming in this town during this time period that everyone felt poor, which gives rise to a thought of the occurrence of whole town of marginalized people, which will be examined more closely in the discussion portion of this section.

Sophia recollects that “I didn’t dawn on me that we were eating this (every day) until about a week later.” She asked her mother after this first week, “Mom, how come we’re eating this all the time?” to which her mother replied “well this is all we have for now, we’ll get more eventually.” Later Sophia found out that her father had become a part of the Air Force National Guard, which is a part time job, and with her mother not working at the time, the financial situation of the family became tough for a little while. After this, her father got another job, and the family was able to bounce back. But Sophia remembers that when she was 7 years old, her cousins had already come to live with her, and “with a little brother to deal with”, her parents
faced supporting 4 children under the age of ten at one time with only one income coming in. “I didn’t realize how poor I was until I left for college then returned.”

Sophia evokes a day when her father had brought home two black trash bags that were full of gently used items such as clothes and light sport equipment that had been discarded near a dumpster at his place of work. He told the kids “I have a surprise for you.” Loving how her father used to surprise her, Sophia, her brother, and her cousins Cecy and Joan dove right in and thought nothing of where the clothing came from and that they were struggling financially at the time. Sophia didn’t think of her family being poor then because she felt that she had the love and support of not only her own family but from the families from the church that they had made friends with over the years. It seems that the social relations that were forged with family and close family friends helped alleviate the stress that would traditionally come with being poor, as many scholars would have predicted and suggested.

When asked if she was considered poor or rich by others while growing up, she replied “I thought we were rich. We were always working with the church with poor people, so I thought we were rich. I don’t think I was ever considered poor (by others).” When asked to describe whether or not her living situation affected the way others treated her, Sophia gives an answer that was surprising, “we were judged because we were Christian.” According to Sophia, everyone else in San Fernando was considered Catholic, so Sophia felt that “our lifestyle, not the financial aspect, but the social aspect, we were judged by it. Most people are from there (San Fernando), my father is from California. We were exposed to different things; most people in San Fernando had never even gone to El Paso, since they didn’t have a ride.” Sophia felt that she was more judged by her community for her religious preferences versus her economic status, which is an aspect that Vigil does not go into detail in much of his work. This is important to
note because this aspect of social ties to others should be included in Vigil’s multiple marginality framework. Because of the flexibility and because of the multi-level approach that Vigil embarks on, religious ties to community could easily be included into the framework and examined more closely.

9.3 Possible types of Marginalizations that Jay encountered—“Shut up bitch you don’t got a hard ass life like me”

When given the definition of Vigil’s marginalization, Jay states that being from San Fernando was a type of marginalization that he felt while growing up. His origins in San Fernando at times made him feel like he was an outsider. He describes how even now this seems to exclude him from certain types of conversations with others. A patron from a neighboring town entered his shop “the other day” and the following conversation took place: “so San Mateo (the neighboring town) played San Fernando in the basketball game (the other night), so I asked ‘who won?’, and the guy said ‘San Fernando won but it was a real good game’ (in a somber tone), and I was like ‘yes!’ And he was like ‘what?!’ I was like ‘I’m from San Fernando’. And that guy said ‘aww man you’re in the wrong shop’.”

Like his sister, Jay recognizes that he “had enough” when growing up, “some people didn’t have anything.” He also recognizes that, like his sister, “people pointed that out” to him. Jay seemed to feel that others around him judged him because he “had enough” while growing up, and that people seemed to be telling him “shut up bitch you don’t got a hard ass life like me.” Jay knows that he had others “step” to him in this way, but that he “…can’t recall but I know that there were a couple of instances where I didn’t know the language, or relate, or I didn’t have an economic disadvantage as bad as them”, which made him feel like he was marginalized for having more than the others in the present company, which seems to be a paradox when
compared to Vigil’s frameworks. Jay seems to have been discriminated against *because he wasn’t as poor* as the others in his community. This is still a type of marginalization none the less, as this brought on feelings of being pushed to the fringes of society, but not for the very same reasons as Vigil would have predicted.

When asked about living in a poor community, Jay mentions that, as mentioned before, “he had enough” and that “it wasn’t explained, (or) illustrated to us because everyone was poor so the normalcy is poor then you’re just like well if you got a little bit more than (the) poor than you’re rich, a little more doesn’t mean you’re rich but you have more, but your still poor, you just have a little bit more. I don’t remember us selling our things, we’ve always had things. Maybe my parents had bad credit, but they had bad credit because we had shit.”

9.4 **Possible types of Marginalizations that Eli encountered- “I think poor is a state of mind”**

When asked if he thought he was poor while growing up, Eli reported “no, besides the Florida thing, no I don’t think I was poor while growing up. I think poor is a state of mind.” Eli recollects his visits to the local amusement and water parks while growing up, and how “he always had toys” and “big Christmas’….I had everything I need(ed) and more. I don’t know if my grandma struggled or anything like that, I know me personally I had everything I needed and more.” Eli stated that he doesn’t remember being called poor while growing up: no one really identified him as poor. The only type of giveaway that would have suggested that he may have been poor would maybe be his grandmother’s fashion sense, “I’d wear like these cheap Wal-Mart shoes and like, green sweat pants, and like a blue sweatshirt, but horrible un-matching (of colors) and it was always sweats, I remember in elementary it was always sweats….As a kid I think I was in a poor position, but I never felt it (socially or personally).” Eli remembers going to
this “low income thing” where “you’d go and get like a pair of brand new shoes, like you get…(he motions to me with his left arm to his entire body, that he would get an entire outfit, pants, shoes, shirts) and I think it was my family (thinking) ‘hey, let’s go take advantage’ sort of thing.” This seems to be another indication by a Martinez family member that makes the direct correlation of Wal-Mart brands and being poor. It seems that Cecy and Eli share the idea that there is a social stigma presented when wearing clothing that was of the Wal-Mart variety.

Eli reminisces being discriminated against solely on his physical appearance, which directly attributed to his ethnic identity crisis that will be discussed in the next chapter. His physical ethnic appearance was a huge issue for others around him while growing up. His skin color seems to have been a social target for others to make fun of him: “when I was in middle or high school, there was this cute girl Jessica, this hard core Mexican, knew Spanish and everything, beautiful girl, and we’d always talk. At the time we’d go to church together, we’d stay up late, fall asleep talking on the phone with each other. She had a boyfriend. She’d say ‘you don’t know that much Spanish and I don’t know that much English but we have better communication than me and my boyfriend’. I remember telling her ‘break up with him, I like you, you like me’. She said ‘no, no, no, no’. I told her ‘you break up with him, and I’ll move schools just for you’ cause that was one of her arguments. (It seems that she declined once again) so we stopped talking and severed ties.” At this time Eli lets me know that he had to be removed from his original high school, and was moved to another high school in the area. Ironically, the school that he was moved to was the very same high school that the cute Mexican girl mentioned before was attending. “First day at Austin (high school) I ran into her. I tapped her on the shoulder, and I told her ‘I told you I would move for you, (not mentioning that he had been removed for behavioral issues) do you still want to go out? Do you still want to talk about this?’
and she said ‘no’. She was hanging out with all the *fronchies* (which is a Spanish word that references those who are from the state of Chihuahua, Mexico. License plates on vehicles coming from this region of Mexico have the words *Frontera de Chihuahua* on them, which roughly translates to “the Chihuahuan Frontier”, thus the derogatory term *fronchies*), like all the hardcore *fronchies*. I think she wouldn’t go out with me because I was white.” Eli’s skin color seemed to have been a point of physical negative attraction for the other more Hispanic looking children in his community. It’s interesting to note this because many times in the immigration literature that focuses on Hispanic migrants settling into the United States, it is the Anglo affluent population that “makes fun” of the darker skinned Hispanics, not the other way around (Valdez, 2011; Gutierrez & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). It seems that in the El Paso/San Fernando region, being an Anglo individual would ensure an almost social pariah situation that would initially occur when Hispanic populations settle enclaves in metropolitan mostly Anglo cities.

### 9.5 Possible types of Marginalizations that Carlos encountered- “I didn’t know we were poor!”

“Before we left San Fernando, I didn’t know we were poor! You’ve driven through San Fernando before, there’s people who live in shacks….we had a trailer, we ate almost every night so in my eyes, we’re middle class, there’s people who didn’t eat at night and lived in a fucking shack, so I was like, we’re cool, we’re middle class. We moved to North Carolina and I was like ‘oh damn we’re poor huh?’ I didn’t even know….” Carlos moved to North Carolina in the seventh grade with his grandmother, “I was like 13 (years old), that was traumatic, that was traumatic as shit. I had moved a lot when I was little, we lived in Cali, we lived in Puerto Rico for a while, we lived in Texas, but mostly kindergarten through 6th grade was mostly San
Fernando, so all I knew was (the) Hispanic culture. I didn’t know no different, I thought (at) every school… (at) every lunch they (the schools) served tacos and enchiladas and tostadas for lunch…. that was just regular (to me), I thought that was at every school, I didn’t really realize….when I got to North Carolina and I was the only Mexican in class…and I didn’t even speak Spanish (and) I was in a bilingual class it was such a cultural shock…. All the black and white and I was the only one now, I had never really been a minority till I got there, and that was a cultural shock, I remember I would cry during the first day of school, looking around at all these red necks (they) are talking to me saying ‘you sound funny, say this say that’, I was like whoa, y’all sound funny.” Carlos’ understanding of what it means to be poor echoes what his cousins and brother state in their interviews. They didn’t seem to have had an understanding of their community and the poor context while they were living there as children. It seems that only when they all left San Fernando that they realized that the community they used to live in was (and still is) poor, and that they themselves were in fact poor when they compared themselves to others around them. Gaining a sort of national perspective (since they did not leave the country when they moved) on their community helped them come to terms with their living situations while growing up.

Carlos continues to tell me about when he and his grandmother moved to North Carolina and about early forms of cultural/ethnic marginalization that he encountered, “it’s going from two different worlds, shoot, mostly it was cultural not so much the language it was the dialect, I mean cause we all spoke English I just, I’ve never known Spanish but when we watch home videos of me back in San Fernando I speak with a broken ass accent, I sound like I just crossed the mother fuckin border, it was mostly just culture….it was all white people and black people, you know there’s no black people in San Fernando, there’s none, we only knew one and that was
Danny Dorris, and he was half black and half Mexican, so we really didn’t know any full black people until I moved out to North Carolina.” This truly seemed to affect how Carlos got along with others in his community.

Carlos recollects his living situation in North Carolina and how it compared to his previous situation in San Fernando; “the part of North Carolina we lived (in) was the outer banks, so it’s a very…..it’s a rich area, it’s a tourist area. So I mean there were poor people there where we stayed at the trailer park, but not poor like in San Fernando. It’s like in different countries, our ghettos are way better than the ghettos in India, you know what I’m saying? I was use to…in San Fernando you have ghettos that are just horrible, horrible poor, you know dirt broke; they don’t eat unless they’re going to school getting a free lunch and the free breakfast, and in North Carolina it wasn’t really like that. All of a sudden I was the poor one, (and) you lived in a trailer….I got familiar with TPT, I got familiar with that real quick, that’s trailer park trash. Everybody else I noticed the ‘haves’, I always knew people with the ‘have not’s.” Carlos then describes the neighborhood that he used to live in as a “cookie cutter” type of style, “I had never seen nothing like that (before).” He describes a house of a friend in San Fernando that he thought was nice, “that was the epitome of wealth when I was a kid”, but that it was nothing compared to the houses that he had seen in North Carolina. “…to have acres and acres of huge mansions…it’s just something that I wasn’t used to. All of a sudden we were on the other end of the spectrum; we weren’t in the middle anymore.”

Carlos then tells me that while living in North Carolina, “we were the family that would get turkey’s and presents at Christmas, some white lady would show up to your house from some organization, with your Thanksgiving dinner or Christmas dinner, or groceries or stuff like that. I remember in San Fernando, we were the ones knocking on their door; we were the ones helping
out. It got switched around when we got out there, all of a sudden we were the charity case, which kind of worked out a lot for me because being so poor and being that my teachers knew that I was the son of two heroin addicts, I could half ass try in class and they were like ‘oh, wow, this guy is so smart, he’s so well spoken’…I got off easy in North Carolina, as long as I tried.”

Carlos feels that during his time as an adolescent in North Carolina, he was given many opportunities because he was poor by the school that he had attended. He describes a trip to Florida’s Kennedy center, a trip that he or his family could not have paid for without outside help, but he was sponsored to go “because of his situation.” He continues to elaborate: “A lot of opportunities were given to me because we were that poor family and everyone else was rich…I was a charity case, everyone felt better when they helped me and my family out, made them feel better about being rich.”

Carlos seems to understand his place in the social world as a minority in the East Coast, and his apparent and noticeable poverty once having left San Fernando. But instead of this role weighing down Carlos, as Vigil would have predicted, his ethnic status as well as his socioeconomic status seemed to have helped Carlos and his family survive in North Carolina. He knew that he could take advantage of these labels that were given to him in North Carolina and that these would mean that he would “get off easy” at school and enjoy trips to other states at the expense of others who were willing to give the money. He knew that other people were trying to help, but he didn’t see them as really helping him and his family for the right reasons, whatever those may be. He thought of those who were helping him as trying to help themselves more than his family.

Carlos felt that his outward appearance has been a type of marginalization for him while growing up as well as currently at his place of employment, “I have a hard time interviewing
people because I think people see my tattoos (at his place of work) and they’re not gang related, most of them are religious tattoos, but people will see them and automatically talk to you different, they automatically see…(he pauses a moment and then proceeds) I went to go buy a car (recently), and this dude kept calling me ‘bro’ and stuff, and I was getting mad. I’m here to spend money like everyone else that’s here; you wouldn’t talk to this white dude in a suit that way. I’m here to spend a lot of money talk to me right, don’t talk to me hood.” He continues to explain why he thinks his outward appearance might be a type of marginalization: “People treat me different, that’s just human nature. We’re prejudice people…..we just judge. I do it too, everyone does it, you judge people by their appearance whether you want to or not, whether your liberal as fuck or not, you still….we’re judgmental people. It’s not always bad, you need to judge so that you can keep bad people out of your life. Use your judgment for good.” Carlos goes on to explain that using better judgment to protect one’s self is better than using judgment for discriminative purposes since “90% of the people that you know who talk and dress like that also act like that and they also do this, they also do that, so you just keep yourself safe by assuming ‘oh ok, he’s probably like 90% of those people’, stereotypes exist because that shit’s real, stereotypes aren’t a hundred percent true, but it’s true for a fuckin reason. They didn’t just make that shit up…like enough people did it to where it became a stereotype, it is what it is…I feel people have judged me all my life.”

Carlos continues to tell me about how his appearance has contributed to his type of marginalizations by including that his gender has played a role in his marginalization, “I’ve had to learn to be a clown to make people feel comfortable right away. I’m male, I’m not tall, but I’m not a little guy. I have tattoos and stuff, I know I look scary, I know people follow me around when I walk into a store cause they think I’m going to steal…that stuff you get used to…I’m not
a thief, I’m not good at stealing, I get nervous, I’m waiting for someone to tap me on the shoulder. I’d rather that you be scared, I’d rather run up in your house and you be scared cause I’m going to rob you, I don’t like to do little stealing stuff cause I’ll be scared the whole time thinking ‘oh they know I stole something’. Being a guy, yeah, I know automatically I have to make people feel comfortable…I look mean, people are scared. I tell a joke right quick to ease the tension so they know I’m not a mean guy.”

This is a component that Vigil does not explore too much: he explores how gender is affected by poverty status and how gang involvement affects girls more than how visual appearance of males and females affects how people perceive one another. Girls are subjected to more adverse types of outcomes such as gang involvement and crime when marginalizations are present (Vigil, 2002, p. 7). The coping skills that they seek in joining a gang are often stifled when the gangs (usually run by males) have their own agenda for the girls, which can include “a variety of initiatory and supportive functions (Vigil, 2007, p. 108). These “initiatory” functions can include individual and group rape, or “jump in’s”, which include the violent assault and battery of the girl in order to gain entry into the gang. But the actual appearance of how males or females look and are perceived by others is not a major focus of Vigil’s major works. I include this facet because Carlos made the point very clear that he had been marginalized by those who perceived him to be “affiliated” with a gang. His appearance changed how others perceived him and therefore treated him.
9.6 Discussion for Marginalization section

9.6.1 The “Wal-Mart” brand association and living in a Trailer park as a Social Stigma

Based from the data collected from the Martinez family members, a common theme of brand association and the visual types of representations of “being poor” has surfaced and should be examined further in order to fully understand their standpoints.

In an article by Kusenbach (2009), the negative stigma that can come from living and/or being associated with a mobile home or “trailer” park is explored. How residents of such places cope with the negative stigma is also explored: “contemporary popular culture is rife with negative images of people living in mobile homes and provides derogatory names that are utilized by many without quotations marks” (Kusenbach, 2009, p. 400). Cecy, Eli and Carlos all mentioned a similar negative stigma that comes with 1) wearing the “Wal-Mart” brand clothing and shoes and 2) living in a trailer or trailer park. Kusenbach did not write extensively about the any type of name brand association that may have become associated with being poor or living in a trailer park, but she did write on how residents managed the stigma, “their ways of dealing with stigmatization include acts of ignoring, passing, humoring, normalizing, upstaging, and blaming. However, the most common technique mentioned and displayed by residents was distancing” (Kusenbach, 2009, p. 406).

Carlos seemed to have dealt with being associated with “trailer park trash” by acknowledging the new found identity, which included acknowledging that he was poor, and capitalizing on the opportunities that presented themselves to him during his time in North Carolina. Cecy seemed to deal with her name brand association differently when she moved from California to Texas with her uncle. She didn’t move to Texas because of the other children making fun of her shoes, but she does note that her situation became better when she moved to a
community with more poor people in it. The community was filled with people like her it seems, thus it is possible that more kids in her neighborhood were wearing the “Wal-Mart” brand shoes that she had associated with individuals who were poor. Eli seemed to have dealt with his “Wal-Mart” brand association by lashing out violently towards others. This association did not directly result in his violent ways of coping, but it did add “fuel to the fire” so to speak. The stigma that seems to come with wearing “Wal-Mart” brand clothing was dealt with in different ways by each child. Being stigmatized for wearing clothing from Wal-Mart does not seem to be a huge stigmatization that the members of the family dealt with while growing up. It seems that this brand association added and compounded their situations more than created new negative ones. Either way, the “Wal-Mart” brand association seemed to have dissipated when Eli and Cecy moved to different locations or lived with different family members that were either similar to their financial situations or had better ones thus improving their own financial situations. For Cecy, living in a community where mostly everyone was (and still is) considered poor seemed to neutralize the stigma while Eli seemed to have focused more on his small family and providing for them instead of focusing on how the “Wal-Mart” stigma affected him.

9.6.2 How does Pico Gardens’ Relative Deprivation relate to San Fernando?

Vigil (2007) begins one of his book chapters by discussing the “ethos” and “sentiment” when a person lives within the projects in Pico Gardens, “because all of you are poor in comparison with everyone outside of the projects, that feeling creates a bond of ‘us against them’” (55). Vigil seems to know that in communities where most of the population is considered by the Census Bureau poor or living below the poverty line a sense of a different type of community is born and flourishes. In an autobiography of a Mexican family that takes place during the late 1950’s to the early 1960’s, Lewis (1961) examines among many things the culture
of poverty, which according to Lewis as “a way of life, remarkably stable and persistent, passed down from generation to generation along family lines” (xxiv). The culture of poverty has its own modalities, is distinct when it comes to social and psychological consequences for its members, and is not considered in examining “primitive people” (Lewis, 1961, p. xxiv). The culture of poverty applies to only those people who are at the very bottom of the socioeconomic scale, the poorest workers, the poorest peasants, and the “Lumper Proletariat” (Lewis, 1961, p. xxiv). The culture of poverty is “a persisting condition”, according to Lewis (1961), and occurs when “stratified and economic system(s) is breaking down or is being replaced by another” (xxvi). When the culture of poverty is present in a community, members of that community seem to come together to increase chances of survival, and usually find alternatives located within the culture of poverty to common government aids such as hospitals and banks. The “us versus them” attitude that seems to come with the culture of poverty was apparent in Lewis’ work as it was present in Vigil’s work, even though Lewis’ work predates Vigil’s.

There seems to be a sort of tone that people from El Paso take with those that are raised in San Fernando. Vigil notes that there is a similar affect to those who speak with others from outside the projects, “meeting people from outside the projects is always the same: ‘you’re from the projects?’ with a look that indicates you are rough and tough” (55). Would this insinuate that San Fernando could be a whole town full of marginalized people the way that Pico Gardens is? Vigil notes that the whole area of Pico Gardens seemed to have been marginalized by the community’s economic status; it seems that San Fernando could be in the same category, which would explain the apparent relative deprivation that takes place there. Jay mentioned in his interview that his community was one of the best things in his life while growing up. He knew that he could count on his neighbors and friends to be there for him when he needed them to be.
Jay’s account of his community and the apparent culture of poverty present seems to echo Vigil’s described sense of community that is felt in Pico Gardens.

Carlos, Sophia, Jay and Cecy seemed to have known that they were poor, whether they knew it at the exact time while growing up in San Fernando or later on after they moved away from the San Fernando. It seemed to matter to them that they lived in poor community since they knew that “no one cared” if they were poor or not, since everyone else was in “the same boat” as they were. The family members knew that when they left the town they became a part of a marginalized, minority group but while living in San Fernando new sets of marginalization surfaced still. “Not being poor enough” or having a different faith seemed to set them apart from other community members in San Fernando.

Sophia, Jay, and Carlos seemed to have adapted to their financial situations while growing up to benefit themselves though. Jay and Sophia report wanting the “shiny metallic jackets” that social workers were giving away because they “looked cool” (Sophia) and “we’re free” (Jay), while Carlos seemed to have used his “poor” status for his own gains (the trip to Florida while still attending school). These statements insinuate that they adapted to their environments in different ways. Eli stated that he thought “being poor” was a state of mind, which seems to be a sentiment that his cousins and brother share with him given that “being poor” wasn’t something that they remember experiencing while growing up. Is there a direct relationship between being poor (as the United States Bureau would define) and accepting the “state of mind” of being poor? Does one precede the other in order for individuals to truly experience poverty? These questions are not fully explored here, but are important to consider and ask, given that this was one of the major types of marginalizations experienced by participants.
9.6.3 Physical Appearance as a type of Marginalization

Eli and Carlos report that they felt marginalized greatly because of how they physically looked and how others perceived their appearances. Eli states that looking more like an Anglo American was bad for him. This affected his luck with the ladies as well as his friendly relations with others who were Hispanic and even with those who he physically identified with (his Anglo German friend that will be further explored in the next chapter). For Carlos, the way that others perceive those within marginalized poor communities seemed to have had an effect on how others treated him while he was growing up and now as an adult. Vigil stated that those who conversed with individuals from the projects changed the way that they perceived them when the individuals stated that they were from “the projects.” In Carlos’ case, those individuals did not even have to ask where he was from because his physical appearance seemed to have given him away. For Carlos, the culture of poverty that he was a part of only seemed to help his situation when he left San Fernando. As mentioned before, physical appearance does not seem to be a factor that Vigil concentrates a great deal of time and research into. It seems though that including how an individual looks matters when that individual is perceived by others outside of their home environment. Including the physical aspect would enable the multiple marginality framework to grow and become even more versatile when applying to real world circumstances.
Chapter 10: The Ethnic Identity Crisis - A closer look at this specific type of Marginalization

All respondents report the same sentiment of not speaking the Spanish language well enough as a type of marginalization while growing up along the San Fernando/ El Paso/ Ciudad Juarez borderland. This admission furth ered the idea that the family members “weren’t Mexican enough” for their community by others. This is a rare commonality that all participants share and have in common despite gender, living situation, financial situation, and other environmental/ecological issues. All subjects were interviewed individually, and all said that not knowing the Spanish language well enough in reference to other people in their community was a major type of marginalization experienced while growing up. This seems to result from living in the El Paso/San Fernando/Ciudad Juarez area in general- those who didn’t live in San Fernando (Eli) felt the same type of resistance and pressure to speak “the right” Spanish from others in their own neighborhoods and communities, which suggests that this type of marginalization is a borderland issue in which many others may have experienced as well.

Accounts from each subject accentuate this striking ordeal that seems to de-humanize those who don’t know the Spanish language as well as those who come directly from Mexico.

10.1 Cecy’s Ethnic Identity Crisis - “I felt less of a person in San Fernando”

Cecy states that not knowing Spanish well enough to communicate with her Mexican peers in school was one of the most difficult experiences for her while growing up, “I felt less of a person in San Fernando because I didn’t speak Spanish.” The town’s proximity to the Mexican/United States border has historically accommodated to large numbers of Mexican nationals who come to find new opportunities of employment. Cecy continues to explain her struggle, “I remember being made fun of and feeling very embarrassed and less of a person
because of it.” She felt that everyone knew Spanish better than her in school, which seems to have created feelings of isolation, “I remember feeling like I was the only one in San Fernando that didn’t speak Spanish”, which brings other painful memories; “I remember being laughed at” when she tried to respond to those who spoke Spanish with her “broken” sentence structure. Cecy recollects that even “the white people” spoke Spanish.

Cecy is referring to the Anglo affluent farm owners’ children who attended the same area schools that she did. These farming families did not live within the community for the most part though. They lived in the outskirts of town within their farmland, so their experiences with Mexican nationals seem to have operated on a different level than Cecy’s school experiences with the apparent same type of group. In the farmlands of the El Paso valley, the social relationship that is created between the farmer, who is usually Anglo and his ranch hands, who are usually Mexican, is further examined in A Tale of Two Families: The Mutual Construction of ‘Anglo’ and Mexican Ethnicities along the US-Mexico border (Campbell, 2005). The article paints a rather “idyllic scene” of the Brogan (Anglo) kids and the Gomez (Mexican) kids playing with each other before and after school hours, and how “if anyone picked on the Gomez kids, the Brogan kids would defend them” (Campbell, 2005, p. 31). This social relationship seemed to have blossomed because of the special relationship that the two families had (one worked for the other), but those children and families who did not seem to have this sort of relationship with one another seemed to have developed a different negative social relationship, as Cecy and her cousins would dictate.

This experience has left Cecy feeling so traumatized that she felt it necessary to teach her own kids Spanish. AS mentioned before, Cecy hired a woman who spoke fluent Spanish to take care of her children in her home while she and her husband worked during the day. Cecy and her
husband make sure to encourage the caretaker to converse in Spanish with the kids so that they know the language. This experience has stuck with Cecy for so long that it has followed her into her parenting skills; teaching her children Spanish is essential to Cecy in order to save them from feeling such a large amount of embarrassment as they grow up in the nations southwest.

10.2 Sophia’s ethnic identity crisis: “Yes I am. I’m Mexican”…. 

Sophia’s ethnic identity crisis was a similar experience to her cousin Cecy. Sophia reported feeling marginalized in her own community by fellow classmates in school that knew Spanish “better than her” as well as when she left for sports events that required her and her team to travel outside of town. When Sophia was given Vigil’s definition of Marginalization, Sophia immediately recollected being called “guera” and a “gringa”, which are at times derogatory terms in the Spanish language that roughly translate to being called the descriptive white/blond and a white American, because her paternal grandmother was white. These terms can be used in a derogatory fashion as well as in a descriptive fashion by those who know Spanish and derive from Mexico. It is important for the reader to know that Gringa/Gringo does not have a direct translation to English; the above information is the closest description of the terms that can be given. Gringo/Gringa most often is used to refer to a person that is “not of this land”, which is ironic though since most of the American citizens are of Mexican descent and live in El Paso/San Fernando.

As mentioned before, it seems that all subjects recollect “not feeling Mexican enough” when compared to their purely Anglo American counterparts or their purely Mexican peers. Sophia remembers that because she didn’t speak the same type of Spanish that the people of San Fernando spoke she was considered an outsider, a “guera”, and a “gringa.” Sophia was raised mostly by her maternal grandmother though, who only spoke Spanish and who was born in
Mexico. But she went to preschool and was seen mostly with her paternal grandmother as well at this time. Sophia was seen around town more with her paternal, Anglo grandmother more than her maternal Mexican grandmother. Sophia and her brother only knew Spanish until the ages of about 5 or 6; it is technically their first language. But because of their guera paternal grandmother, and because she was seen more with her around town, Sophia was made fun of by the kindergarteners in San Fernando and was considered a “gringa.” Sophia’s cousins recall the same treatment from other San Fernando Mexican children that spoke the Spanish of their region back in Mexico. The Spanish spoken in the Borderland isn’t the same type of Spanish that is taught in the academic setting or the type of Spanish that is spoken in Central or Southern Mexico. This is a more supposed “informal” type of Spanish that developed due to the borderland region that it exists in. This “Spanglish” Spanish is made up of words that derive mostly from both Spanish and English words, a unique finding that makes the Martinez family situation interesting to examine. Some words in the “Spanglish” Spanish derive from English words, and mix with other Spanish words that derive from the Northern valley of Mexico.

Sophia recalls a mean little girl named Claudia, “I was making a sandcastle when I was in the 1st grade and this girl was making fun of me saying (in a sing song voice) ‘Guera, Guera, Guera, Guera’ over and over again.” The little girl pointed her finger at Sophia while calling her this in a rather menacing way. She told Sophia, “You don’t speak Spanish. You’re not Mexican.” Sophia then exclaims “Yes I am. I’m Mexican.” The little girl then exclaimed “no you’re not, you’re white, you’re a gringa.” Sophia then started to cry, she became offended. Sophia states that in San Fernando, she was considered Anglo by her peers up until the 3rd or 4th grade. Sophia then describes that at this time she began to latch herself onto those who were considered gang members because she wanted to be identified as “Chicana.” But she did not join a gang at this
time though. Sophia’s aunts were “straight up Chicana gangsters”, so it was an identity that she wished to obtain for herself. After this epoch, she began to feel more included in her community up until the time that she was in high school.

During her sophomore year, Sophia left San Fernando to travel with the high school volleyball team to compete in other cities, such as Alpine and Lubbock, Texas. According to Sophia, the San Fernando team “won by a landslide”. Upon exiting the gymnasium, and after an exuberant joint feeling of collective success, the San Fernando team approached the opposing team to “shake their hands”, as is ritual when exiting a playing field. This is a sign of good sportsmanship, it’s something that I remember doing as a child as well when playing team sports, and this is supposed to entail that each team congratulate the good effort that was brought forth by the other team. The opposing team would have nothing to do with this though, which can be seen as insulting. Sophia remembers that the other team and their supporters began to throw beans on the court as the San Fernando team left the gym, which further insulted the team, adding salt to the gaping wound.

Sophia took away from this event a staunch indication by the home team that the San Fernando team was a bunch of “beaners”, which is a derogatory term that references Mexicans and Mexican Americans alike. Sophia was extremely offended by this whole ordeal. But the insults would not stop as the team left the gym: on the way back to San Fernando, the team tried to stop to pick up something to eat at a local restaurant before they hit the road but were refused service by the hostess, even though the establishment was filled with people at the time and seating was readily available. It was obvious to Sophia that the restaurant was open and accepting business, but not their business. When they finally found a restaurant that would serve
them, the team was “stuffed in the back” of the establishment, in a banquet room with the doors closed, as if the group needed to be hidden away from the local patrons.

A letter of apology was later sent to the San Fernando team from the opposing team’s high school principal for the bean throwing incident, but none the less this incident of blatant racism was a memorable one for Sophia. Sophia stated, “I’ve never quite experienced that; this was the first time that I had felt this sort of offence ethnically.” It seems that Sophia would not be the only person in her family that would be treated differently when she left the protection of the “little bubble” that is El Paso and its vicinities.

10.3 Jay’s Ethnic Identity Crisis: “….I understood Spanish, I still understand Spanish…”

Jay states that he felt he was marginalized because of the language that he speaks, which is the “Spanglish” Spanish/English mix that was mentioned before. “I guess maybe the only type of marginalization that goes on in my community is that I don’t speak enough Spanish, I probably get made fun of more now than when I was younger, it wasn’t bad but it was still there…(he explains a little more by what he means)…you’re in the culture but not that much, you don’t get some of the jokes, you don’t watch the same type of TV genre so you don’t get the punch line.” Ironically, Jay’s first language is Spanish, as mentioned before, but children still made fun of him when he was a child since he “spoke it up until I was like 3 or 4… then once I started hanging out with my grandma (Martinez, the Anglo grandmother) I just spoke English. I understood Spanish, I still understand Spanish, it’s just the grammar and the linguistics of it, I still get it confused.” Jay mentions the same type of change that occurs when he made public appearances with his Anglo paternal grandmother as does his sister. There seems to be a change in how others in this community perceive an individual once it is made known that this individual is related to an Anglo person. A stronger connection to the Anglo relative is made by
others in the community. It didn’t matter that Jay knew Spanish first, and that he would talk to everyone as a child in Spanish, what mattered more in the social aspect was that he was related to an Anglo outsider.

Like Sophia, Jay remembers a time when he left the town of San Fernando and was discriminated against for being ethnically identified as Mexican more than American, which is ironic given that he wasn’t “Mexican enough” in his own community. Jay mentions that, like his sister, once he leaves El Paso it’s different for him, that people notice “the accent” and that he gets treated differently when he leaves the area. Jay has a similar racist out of town experience as his sister: “One time we got off of the bus in Van Horn, (the basketball team) and they (management in the store they visited) had all the clerk’s line up in the aisle to eyeball us, the fucking Mexican kids.” Jay continues his story, “People outside this community….it’s a different story…oh you speak a lot of Spanish, (his response would be) bitch I barely speak Spanish.” When Jay left out of town, he spoke too much Spanish, but while in his own community, he didn’t speak enough Spanish, which is contradicting and could be seen as confusing to an adolescent child who is trying to figure out their own ethnic identity. But Jay seemed to already know how to handle such incongruity though given his past experiences: “It’s just life, you deal with people. Some people are just (more) hateful than other people, I’m just trying to do my job and help…. ” Jay still feels that his language is an issue in his everyday experiences as an adult today. He still feels that he still struggles to speak with his Mexican maternal grandmother, and his Spanish speaking peers.
10.4 Eli’s Ethnic Identity Crisis- “I was too white for the Mexicans and too Mexican for the whites, always.”

Eli reports feeling discriminated against while growing up, “I was too white for the Mexicans and too Mexican for the whites, always. I remember going to Juarez, I knew Spanish first, I’m fluent in Spanish, and I remember going to Juarez and having these cute Mexican girls like talking about me and stuff like that, and me playing the stupid white boy. When I thought everything was going good, I would start speaking Spanish and freak them out.” Eli was in grade school when this occurred. Eli seemed to understand his paradoxical position within his own community from a young age: he seemed to understand that he looked like an Anglo in a community where Mexican Americans dominate the overall population percentages, but he also understood that he wasn’t an Anglo in the way that Mexican American children thought of either.

Eli’s understanding of what means to be Mexican American and Anglo as well seems to seep into his family relations, more specifically with his only brother: “I remember Carlos had like those wrestling dolls, like the Hulk Hogan dolls. I remember he had that and I had a stretch Armstrong, and he had all these like, cool white people toys I wanted, like the trailer trash white people toys. I remember he looked more Mexican than me, but he was more red neck. I think it was because of grandma (Martinez, the Anglo grandmother). He was into the monster trucks and the wrestling, and all that stuff, and I wasn’t, I was into the little shitty cartoons.” It seems that Eli distinguishes certain items to be restricted for people of certain ethnicities. Eli could also be determining what is “red neck” or what kind of toys that “red necks” play with from previous experiences with those that he thought or were told are “red neck.” He may have associated things that are “red neck” from earlier encounters with those that we classified as such, or he
may have learned what this means from major media and entertainment outlets. It is interesting to note none the less the distinguishing characteristic of what it means to have “cool white people toys” through Eli’s eyes.

Eli tells me about the epoch in his life when he found out he had ancestry in Scandinavia, “I was called ‘white boy’, growing up.” When Eli found out that he had Scandinavian roots, he boasted gleefully about it. He also recollects a close German friend that he use to have that was not so happy about Eli’s new found heritage, “He would always criticize me, ‘I hate it when all you mixed white boys try to act all German and European and you’re not, you’re an American white boy’, so even the whites would criticize me that I’m not white enough or whatever…I’m not European enough….It’s funny because I speak more German than he does.” Language seems to be a major factor when considering a person’s ethnic identity for Martinez family members. Eli continues to tell me about his German critic, “I remember having these big discussions with him, cause I lived with him for like a year…that I need to stop acting European or that I need to stop acting more white than I really am.” Eli reported having a stronger connection to his Scandinavian roots though as an adult. He also acknowledges that he is Mexican, but that he feels a stronger connection to his European roots. It is possible that maybe his physical appearance might have something to do with this, as Eli stated later that “race was always a big issue with me, it’s difficult being a mutt.” Eli, as mentioned before, seems to be fully aware of his mixed blood lines, and that this life of being a “mutt” has been difficult for him while growing up. While he looks like “a white boy” on the outside he knows that this is not all he is ethnically. Although he identifies more with his Scandinavian roots than his Mexican American roots, he is proud to be a part of both ethnic groups none the less.
10.5 Carlos’ Ethnic Identity Crisis- “…..and now I’m Mexican as shit”

Carlos was judged in San Fernando because of his grandmother being white, which is similar to what his cousins Sophia and Jay described to me as well, “they thought I was more white cause my grandma was white so a lot of Mexicans didn’t like me out there (in San Fernando), cause I had a white grandma, for whatever reason. I moved to North Carolina and now I’m Mexican as shit, and it doesn’t matter if I have a white grandma, cause listen how we talk, my name’s Carlos, I had a mustache in 7th grade, your Hispanic.” Carlos shares with me that his daughters have already begun to feel that sort of discrimination at such a young age in school.

It seems that moving to another state furthered Carlos’ marginalization. The fact that his grandmother was Anglo didn’t seem to matter much in North Carolina as much as it did in San Fernando. Carlos’ accent and the way that he looked seemed to matter more to children in North Carolina. Even his name seemed to have insinuated that he was different from the rest of his Anglo peers. Carlos seemed to have been in situations both at home in San Fernando and afar in North Carolina where he felt that he just didn’t belong, for whatever reason. Like his cousin Jay, Carlos seemed to have dealt with it as he went along in his life: in a nonchalant, face value aspect. This could be because it happened so much that they got used to being treated that way. This could also be because this occurred so much on a regular basis that they began to internalize and understand what kind of ethnicity they really are from early ages. It seems that these family members have had a lot of time to think about how they ethnically identify, which is great if it were for positive reasons, but it seems that the family members questioned themselves because of the taunting negative experiences that presented themselves throughout their childhoods.
10.6 Discussion for the Ethnic Identity Crisis Section

10.6.1 The “Spanglish” phenomenon and how Ethnic Identity is created

A dominating factor that did not help the ethnic identity crisis situation that the Martinez kids found themselves in was that many families from the Ciudad Juarez valley and regions beyond (Central, Southern Mexico) were moving to the San Fernando/El Paso area because of the boom in employment in the early to mid-1990’s; this meant that a different members of the Spanish language family would enter this region, further complicating the language apprehension of Mexican American children like Sophia and her cousins who spoke a mix of English and Spanish, also known as “Spanglish.” This seemingly neglected family member of the Spanish language family tree seems to have a negative connotation. The Spanish that is spoken in the El Paso/San Fernando region seems to hold less value than the Spanish that is spoken in Mexico City. Then again, the Spanish that is spoken in Madrid, Spain is supposedly better than the Spanish spoken in Mexico City. It seems that there is a vicious cycle: the more that the language is mixed with other cultures, the more it is seen as tainted.

In an article by Tuner, Davidson-Hunt, & O’Flaherty (2003), the possible positive outcomes that can come when two cultures co-exist right next to one another is examined in order to explore how resiliency can result from such positive enriching relationships. The authors propose that “cultural knowledge systems can integrate producing a richness of knowledge and practices that enhances the resilience of local societies. Cultural edges, rather than being border zones between discrete social entities, are zones of social interaction, cross fertilization, and synergy wherein people not only exchange material goods but also learn from one another” (Turner, Davidson-Hunt, & O'Flaherty, 2003, p. 440). This article reports on the positive social relational outcomes that can occur when borderland regions such as the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez
area coexist right next to each other. Resilience is thought to be stronger in these areas because of the rich cultural integration (Turner, Davidson-Hunt, & O'Flaherty, 2003). This does not seem to be the case though in San Fernando when it comes to language acquisition and culture sharing.

In another project conducted by the principal investigator, the oral history of San Fernando was examined more closely in order to explore the possibility of gang culture becoming transnational in the El Paso/Juarez valley area (Telas, 2011). The town experienced an economic boom when a major clothing manufacturer set up shop in the town and provided numerous jobs to the towns’ people. A chili pact factory flourished in this area as well and was able to provide new comers from Mexico with job opportunities. A tractor company also set up shop in this area at the time. These factories as well as a few others flourished in San Fernando and the Mexican families that moved to the area enjoyed their new found wealth (Telas, 2011). Mexican nationals from as far as central Mexico came to the El Paso/San Fernando region to find jobs that paid more than what they were getting at the present time in their place of origin. But when the North American Free Trade Agreement became reality, most if not all the factories that inhibited the area moved south of the border in order to provide cheap labor to the manufacturers, leaving a community filled with Mexican and American adults ready to work with virtually nowhere to work (Telas, 2011). In understanding this background at least slightly, we are able to comprehend the volume of Mexican children that attended the local schools in San Fernando during this time period, as well as the mix of Spanish family languages that essentially entered the area.

In presenting an intriguing collection of narratives from the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez area, Vila (2005) was able to explore and make sense of how individuals from the area are able to construct their own identities based on “others” (other people), region, race, ethnicity, religious
views, gender, sexual orientation, age, and class, among other specific types of signifiers. Vila (2005) wanted to show that “…to investigate the complex processes of identification… in some way or another, actually organize(s) the behavior of border actors in the Ciudad Juarez-El Paso area.” (6). Vila felt that religious aspects were important in signifying what it means to be a “Mexican” and to be an “American”, among other things (Vila, 2005). Vila also felt that “others” played a big part in how individuals portrayed themselves and their own ethnic identities. He found that some individuals felt that they needed to prove that they were “Mexican enough” when these certain individuals did not share the “common sense” assumptions for Mexican ethnic identity markers, such as religion (“all Mexicans are Catholic”), and other markers (for Martinez family members, having a “white” grandmother).

I agree with Pablo Vila in this regard: it seems that when the “others” in the proximity of the Martinez family kids did not feel that the family members were fluid enough with the common ethnic identity markers that they were familiar with in regards to being a “true Mexican”, they made sure to point that out to the Martinez children. Peers of the Martinez family seemed to have not agreed with how the Martinez family members identified or acted around them. For Cecy, Sophia, Jay and Carlos, having a “white” grandmother did not go along with what it means to be a “true Mexican” according to their peers. Their supposed “lack” of the Spanish language furthered others’ taunts. Eli seems to have felt the ethnic sting from two apparent cultures: the Anglo and the Mexican/Mexican American, respectively. But Eli also seems to have used these “un-expectations” to his advantage: knowing Spanish enough to communicate to others as well as not physically looking like his Mexican counterparts in school seemed to provide Eli humor in his almost dire situations. He knew that the “others” around him did not expect for him to speak the language, and since he looked like a “guero” (an Anglo); it
would probably be OK for them to talk to him condescendingly in Spanish. Since he knew Spanish, he was able to counteract these insults, thus surprising his apparent opponents. Surely, the Mexican “others” in the lives of the Martinez family had an impact on them when it came to the construction of their individual ethnic identities while growing up in the El Paso/San Fernando valley.

I feel that there is still not enough research available to fully explore this ethnic identity phenomenon, but from my own experience living within the borderland of El Paso, there is a truly stark distinction that is made between those who know the “right Spanish” and those who don’t know the “right Spanish.” Working in retail and food industrial services within this region has given me firsthand experience. There are many times that Mexican nationals come into retail stores and restaurants demanding that the ones who attend to them speak “the right Spanish” and often complain to management when those individuals do not speak to them the way that they wished. I was made to feel that I didn’t know Spanish enough, even though my own family speaks the language to me, I understand fluently, and I’ve taken extensive Spanish language course work at the University level. Even though there is literary works available about the construction of one’s ethnic identity, more research needs to be conducted in El Paso to fully explore this language phenomenon. Discourse in the area is fully entrenched in the topic, but not much academic work has been published about it.

All the Martinez family members that were interviewed reported not feeling Mexican enough because of the treatment that they received from their peers in reference to their knowledge of the Spanish language. Knowing the “right” type of Spanish seemed to be a major deciding factor by others that determined “how Mexican” these individuals were, more so than skin color and lineage to Mexico.
10.6.2 What does it mean to have “cool white people toys”?

There seems to be another material association that has been made between the items that Anglo’s possess and the items that Mexican Americans possess; Eli stated in his interview that his brother had “all these cool white people toys” and that he didn’t have these sorts of items. He associated certain toys with the Anglo population, “I remember Carlos had like those wrestling dolls, like the Hulk Hogan dolls. I remember he had that and I had a stretch Armstrong, and he had all these like, cool white people toys I wanted, like the trailer trash white people toys.” Eli then seemed to have defaced his own interests when he stated that he was “into the little shitty cartoons.” It is unclear what these cartoons were, but he seemed to have less value for them than the “cool white people toys” that his brother had.

In reference to the earlier discussion on name brand association and being poor, there seems to be an ethnic association with certain items as well. Apparently, only Anglo’s have certain toys, according to Eli, and Mexican Americans have different types of toys that probably “aren’t as cool”. Certain ethnic groups obtained certain items, while others obtained different types of items. It is unclear how Martinez family members came to identify certain items for certain ethnic groups, but it is apparent that there is a distinction. What it means to be “gringo/gringa” is a type of ethnic identity that Mexicans and Mexican Americans know and define for others, apparently even in regards to material items. The term Gringo/gringa is often correlated with being American, Anglo, and someone who does not know Spanish. There are certain items that the “gringos/gringas” are associated with, and there are certain items that Mexican’s and Mexican Americans are associated with.

In discussing what it means to have “cool white people toys”, the apparent knowledge and delivery of the Spanish language, and what it means to be identified as “gringo/gringa” we
can further understand the plight of not only the Martinez family members but possibly others in the El Paso/San Fernando area that may have felt this type of marginalization as well.
Chapter 11: Kinship between Family Members and the possible Resiliency learned from them

The family bonds that each member of the Martinez family report is extensive. Each member’s living situation varies greatly. Members of the Martinez family describe different scenarios in which each of their immediate and kin family members either helped them during tough times or further hindered them in the same scenarios. Carlos re-defined what the terms immediate and kin type family members meant in order to accurately describe how his grandmother’s relationship with him did not compare to any other member of the family while Sophia agreed that she engaged with both types of family members happily and freely as defined in this study.

Each member reported different upbringings: even siblings who had the same mother did not report the same type of upbringing and the same type of outcomes. Eli and his brother have only met a few times throughout their lives, and Jay reacted to his parents’ divorce differently than his sister did. The following is each member’s recollection of how immediate and kin family members helped them through the marginalized and adverse events that occurred in their lives while growing up in San Fernando and other parts of the United States. The end of this section will contain a discussion of possible explanations that could accurately explain their stories in the world of academia.

11.1 Cecy’s Family Bonds- “He had confidence in me, I didn’t’ want to let him down”

Cecy remembers finding hope during the time she lived with her uncle and his wife through Christianity. It is apparent that her uncle introduced her to the religion, and she has held onto it to this day. Even through her difficult, fuming teenage years, Cecy remembers that “I could remember finding hope… within the Bible.” She reports that she found peace while
reading the Bible. On the Likert scale measurement provided that is further explained in the Methods of Research chapter of this writing, Cecy recalled this being a level 5 out of 6, which is an “extremely good” event in her life. Cecy recalls that going to church was also important for her in her life. She considered this a very positive thing for her. This occurred during the time that she lived with her uncle, Mr. Martinez, and his family. Since she did not live with her parents growing up, Mr. Martinez and his family provided positive religious family experiences for her and her sister Joan. During church, she would spend time with her kin and the “church family” as she dotingly called them. Cecy was referring to the people that she and her kin went to church with, other church-goers, they were not related to her, and they were more neighbors from down the street and family friends. Mr. Martinez is still a positive influential figure in her life today. It seems that through a kin family member, Cecy was introduced to religion which is a social ritual that social scientists usually see introduced to a child through parents. Carlos recalls a similar event: he makes it a point to tell me that his grandmother was the person that introduced him to religion and helped him develop a faith in God. In both these instances a kin family member was the key person to introduce such an idea though, not the parents. Religion is noted for both Cecy and Carlos as something that they value greatly in their lives and will be discussed in this section’s discussion.

Cecy describes her relationship with her cousins as good ones as well, “we had fun, we played and it was time away from growing up without parents…we all were kids and we had fun together.” Cecy remembers her aunts, her mother’s sisters, being in and out of her life throughout her childhood, “I remember wanting to love my aunts and (to) spend more time with them, but of course they were into drugs too (like her mother).” Empty promises that were never kept by her aunts are what she recollects most often. She and her sister were and still are extremely close
since their mother and their aunts were in and out constantly and used drugs the same way. Time spent with kin having fun seemed to have been the time needed away from the reality of not having parents around for Cecy.

Cecy remembers that her uncle was “just so worried that we would fall into drugs” like their mother and aunts. Cecy thinks that he was so strict with them while growing up because of that. Cecy states that her uncle was so overprotective during the time that she lived with him. She mentions that she “felt so trapped” because of it. This could be a suffocating experience growing up. Sophia reports the same type of overprotectiveness as well: “I could not wait to leave El Paso because of them (her parents)… they were so controlling, I wasn’t allowed to do anything.” Sophia states that this was a lead motivating factor that led to her want to move away from home when she graduated high school. It’s interesting to note this experience because it seems that the harder Mr. Martinez and his then wife tried to keep their kids and nieces safe the more the children resented them for their actions.

When her grandfather was sober and around (not working), Cecy reported that she adored the man, “he is probably the one person that has had the most impact on my life even though he was not the first person that I lived with. I remember that during the short times that I did live with him wanting to be just like him.” Cecy remembers that during the time that she had run away from Mr. Martinez’s home, her grandfather was “very much supportive” of her decision of wanting to be on her own even at such a young age. Her grandfather would eventually come to San Fernando to help Cecy move to Arizona after high school. He bought her first car, helped her co-sign her first apartment, and even helped her get her first mattress.

Cecy also recollects that Mr. Martinez was very much into sports. Cecy mentions that he had “all of us playing something” whether it was baseball or basketball, to name a few of the
family’s favorite sports. “When I was with my uncle we were always doing clinic type things during the summers.” These “clinics” that Cecy mentions refer to intensive amounts of time dedicated to drilling sports-like techniques into players. These “clinics” are meant to create a better athlete. Mr. Martinez used to coach a number of sports leagues in the San Fernando community; he is well remembered by many of the cousin/sibling group’s close friends alike as a good man, and someone that the community could look up to because of the help that he offered in regards to providing sports for local kids to participate in.

Cecy describes that her uncle placed his children and his nieces in “McDonald leagues”, which are references to year round youth sport teams that play other teams that participated in the same divisions (usually delegated by age), which created a competitive nature among the siblings and cousins. Cecy remembers that “we were always out having a lot of fun playing sports.” Her cousin Sophia, echoes this notion of having fun playing sports with her cousins: “my dad would have us walk over to the track (since their house was located near the local high school, about two city blocks away) and would have us race each other. One of us would win, and then he would yell ‘ok let’s do it again and see who wins this time’. It was always fun.” Sophia and Cecy would create a friendship through cousin-ship during this time; “we got along very well…she really understood me”, states Cecy, “she would help me sneak the phone late at night (to my room) so that I can talk (to her then boyfriend).” It seems that this memory is a favorite for both Sophia and Cecy.

Overall, Cecy knew that even though she constantly moved between Texas and California, and even though she felt so unwanted at times during her adolescence, she knew that she “always had some place to go.” Even so, during her adolescence she didn’t consider her family an important deciding factor in her life because she was “in a very selfish stage” of her
life. “I’m sure I hurt Sophia’s feelings when I ran away”, Cecy recollects. As mentioned before, Cecy and Sophia are still extremely close to this day. Cecy and her sister Joan are inseparable; “even though (back then) it was different, now I wouldn’t consider leaving Arizona unless she can come with me.” It seems that the bonds that Cecy has with her family are stronger now than it was then because of the experiences that they have all gone through.

After Cecy began to go to college in Arizona, she further realized that she “needed to depend on myself,” and that she needed to act on her own behalf if she wanted to stay out of San Fernando. But it seems that she was able to gain all this confidence in herself only after she acknowledged that she knew that she could count on her family members for support. This type of confidence comes after an individual is able to understand their own past, adapt to it, and then move on to future endeavors knowing that they were able to learn positive features from these adverse and marginalized experiences. Since Cecy felt that she had especially her grandfather’s support through tough times, she was able to understand her own situation and move on to better ones that she created herself. It is possible that she may not have been able to make sense of how she was able to overcome until years later upon reflection as an adult. As Walsh (1996) stated in her article, “resilience is forged through adversity, not despite it” (7). Obviously Cecy did not learn this from her grandfather in a clinical setting, but she still was able to overcome her adversities and marginalities despite the absence of family therapy in a controlled setting through her kin.

Cecy states that her bonds with her immediate and kin family helped her come out of the anger that she was feeling as well, “when you lose people you love, it makes you realize how important they are to you… you realize that life is too short. You need to value that time that you have with those that are important to you.” Cecy states that “you realize how your choices affect
other people… I’ve learned to see things differently now.” When asked if the absence of her bonds with her family (immediate and kin) would have affected her progress with her temperament in the past, “it’s my family instilling my values in faith that have really resulted in the healing.”

11.2 Sophia’s Family Bonds- “…the best part of my childhood…”

While growing up, Sophia considered “our family unit” as one of the most positive things in her life, “every holiday we were together, that was the best part of my childhood up until the age of about 12-13 years old.” Remember that Sophia and both sides of her family (both maternal and paternal) went through harsh times for about a year between the ages of 13 and 14. Her maternal grandfather tried to commit suicide and Cecy and her sister Joan were about to be forced to move to North Carolina with their paternal grandmother and their cousin Carlos. Joan was pregnant during this time. This year was considered tough for Sophia when she explains her life to me. Sophia’s family reacted to her all together in different ways, “my cousins (on maternal side) stopped talking to me, so did my aunt and uncle.” She continues, “My parents tried to sit us down and talk to us about it….I remember knowing that it wasn’t my fault…. ‘don’t worry about it’….my grandmother distanced herself from us.” When Cecy ran away, Sophia reacted by trying to become closer to her cousins that she knew were going through a tough time, “we grew closer….I wanted for them to know that I was there for them, especially since I knew that Joan was by herself, and I knew that Cecy was by herself…we did become closer…I think that we always tried to maintain that relationship.”

Sophia’s childhood was mainly a delight because she had such close proximity to her other family members: “we all lived so close, down the street from one another.” She recollects that she and her brother would join her cousins and the other kids that lived on her block and
would play hopscotch, “we would play every single thing you can think of.” Sophia, with a big smile on her face, thought of the old cars that used to occupy the family houses’ curtilage: “we used to pretend to drive the cars; we would all pile in and have fun.”

Playing sports was another positive outlet for Sophia’s that was instilled into her by her father, “he always tried to do it for the whole community, not just us.” She speaks of the “McDonalds leagues” that Cecy mentioned in her interview. Mr. Martinez was an active role model for the community, as was his mother (“grandma Martinez”), by being one of the few that sponsored these team played sports competitions. Sophia believes that her father was so “gung ho” for sports because of the type of upbringing that he had, “he had such a tough time growing up that I think sports were an outlet for him.” Like Cecy, Sophia remembers that around the age of 6 her father took her and her cousins to the local track field to “see who could run around” the entire length of the track (without stopping). Mr. Martinez would then time the children on how long it would take them to run the length of the track, and the Martinez competitiveness was born when he pinned cousin against cousin or sibling against sibling to see “who was faster.” Of course this was done in a friendly and up-beat manner.

Sophia remembers that the children used to “pretend chase” their parents back to their house a few streets away when they used to visit their paternal grandmother, “we used to look back and run faster when we saw my parents car coming, She laughs hard and pauses to catch her breath, “it was so much fun.” San Fernando is a small enough town that family members lived only a minute or two drive away from one another. It seemed easier for people to just walk around since everyone lived so close to one another.

Sophia has played baseball, volleyball, ran in track and cross country, and also won awards while on the basketball team, “sports kept me out of trouble; I wanted to get a scholarship
so I never went out and drank during high school, it kept me out of a lot trouble.” Sophia also used to referee little league games when she was about 15 years old. Her father use to coach the teams while she refereed them. When Sophia wasn’t playing sports, she was helping the community. The sportsmen mentality that was instilled by her father is something that would stay with Sophia for the rest of her life; while teaching in New York city, Sophia would eventually become assistant coach and help a few of her players gain scholarships to state schools in the surrounding North East area. She has also become active in city youth organizations that assist at-risk youths in overcoming their adversities and becoming functioning members of society.

Sophia’s love for sports seems to stem from her father. Her father seemed to have been a good influence when Sophia was a child. It seems that the bond between father and daughter is extremely important when it is considered a healthy one. Sophia was able to bond and communicate with her brother and cousins through the sports that her father taught them to participate in. Through her father and sports, she was able to bond more effectively with her cousins. Sophia and Cecy would create a strong bond that maybe exists between sisters because of the morals and sportsmanship that her father showed them.

Sophia remembers learning valuable lessons from her older cousins Cecy and Joan: “I saw Joan’s potential and how it went down the drain (when she got pregnant)…I also saw Cecy’s potential and how she overcame it (her hardships). I thought that she was going to go the same route, but I saw her overcome it.” Sophia is referring to Joan’s early pregnancy and Cecy’s triumphant capitalization of her own resources (or lack of) despite her hardships. Having both cousins in her life at this time is considered both a positive and a negative. Providing both good and bad examples for Sophia would ultimately lead her to ponder both lifestyles and contemplate
what kind of lifestyle she wanted for herself. Sophia felt that these elements mentioned were among the best things in her life. Because her brother was so much younger than her, and because she was the older sibling, she drew peer guidance from her cousins. Examples from other family members, both good and bad, are essential for individuals who find themselves in this sort of situation.

Cecy was Sophia’s best friend while growing up, “we had bunk beds, we would stay up and talk even after it was time to go to bed.” At this particular junction in her life, Sophia remembers having a few self-esteem issues that she had a hard time coping with. Sophia worried about “being fat... and not having a boyfriend” when she was younger. Sophia remembers Cecy being a good friend and a good role model through this hard adolescent time even though Sophia did her “dirty work” and would get into trouble with her parents because of her cousin. It was because of Cecy’s kind words during this time that Sophia found confidence. Sophia remembers when Cecy ran away from home, “it was a tragedy for me…I remember her telling me ‘I can’t’ take this anymore Sophia… I love you and I’m always going to be there for you but I can’t take living with your parents.” Sophia understood, and was very sad, but she knew that Cecy was right. This was a tragic event for her because Cecy was a person that Sophia really looked up to during this part in her life, “she was my best friend.” Sophia reports that after this event, she had a hard time making friends that happen to be girls.

Sophia felt that she can rely on her kin during a time of crisis, “most of the time, they are my support.” She feels the same way for her immediate family now, but not during her childhood. She feels that she can always rely on her brother Jay for support. She felt that while growing up, she could not rely on her parents, “I didn’t feel that I could go to them for everything because I felt that they would judge me.” On the Likert scale provided during the
interview that measured the emotional intensity of events, Sophia rated her kin “the most important” while growing up. “They were who I hung out with, they were my friends….that’s who I would hang out with after school, on the weekends, we were always together.” The constant “hangout” stopped when Cecy graduated from high school: as mentioned before she moved to Arizona to attend college. Sophia was a freshman in high school when Cecy moved to Arizona. Up until this time, Sophia’s kin was the most important in her life.

Sophia considers her kin during life choices, “absolutely.” Sophia always went to Cecy for guy advice, “they played a major role in my decisions.” While growing up, Sophia’s immediate family was also considered important while making life choices, but in a different way, “I felt that they (her parents) would judge me.” This seemed to have more of a negative affect than a positive one. Sophia recollects when she was contemplating her departure of the cross country team during high school, “you don’t even understand the hassle that I went through with my father. I was going to just give in and say ‘ok I’ll run’…. He wouldn’t’ speak to me for like over a week.” This apparent negative influence of her parents would spread to her decision making abilities while she dated boys in high school. She knew that if her parents did not approve, it would be harder for her to see her beloved.

Sophia thinks that her past experiences with her family groups have definitely helped shape her future parenting skills: “as much as I hated my parents while growing up, when I was an adult I understood…. I understood as an adult that they loved me and that they were trying to protect me.” Even though Sophia hated that her parents were so protective of her, she still felt blessed knowing that they supported her, “they were at my every game, and kids were jealous of that. They (her parents) would drive for five hours to see me play…I think kids were jealous of that.”
When asked how his family reacted toward him when he was going through difficult times, Jay responded that “they were there for us, more so my mother than my father… maybe he did the best he could, they were pretty much always there…my sister has always been there, she’s almost tom-boyish, she’s almost like my brother, just with makeup.” He laughs at his comment about his sister. His cousins Cecy and Joan have always been there for him as well, “I’m very close with my paternal cousins; we’ve always been tight since I was a kid.” He reiterates that his mother has been more helpful to him during tough times than his father; “emotionally she’s always been strong …. She set me up good (in life) like that, I’ve always felt that I’ve had her support, whether it’s good or bad, she’ll always back me up, I’m her *miño* (a word that roughly translates to “my son” in Spanish, a mother would call to her son using this word).”

When asked how he reacted toward his paternal grandmother dying, he replied “well, I’ve experienced death before with other funerals (referencing his aunts), but she raised me when I was about 4 or 5 years old, she always told me to do *ojitos* (which is a Spanish reference word that roughly translates to “little eyes” which insinuates the person told to bat one’s eyes repeatedly and rapidly while looking at the loved one), and then when I was younger (15 or 16) she came to visit from North Carolina and she gave me a whole bunch of stuff like a silver necktie, and the Lego kit, a whole bunch of key chains and mini games like twister, but it was cool.” Jay’s maternal grandfather died first in 1994, and then his paternal grandfather passed away about 3 or 4 years ago in 2010.
Jay feels that he can rely on his kin during a time of crisis: “most definitely, back then and now, even when we fell out of water and stuff we’re still tight, we get over it….We’re not always going to enjoy the people we hang out with, (your family), but you got to deal with it, we deal with it through love, strong love.” Jay feels that he can rely on the female portion of his family when he was asked if he relied on his immediate family during a hard time: “not so much my father, not in the recent past (after the divorce).” Jay states that his kin was “pretty much everything to me” while he was growing up, “that one would be the number 6 (he’s referencing the Likert scale that was mentioned before)….even though I was the baby we’ve always done things together, they’re good people they’ve taught me so much, they shaped who I was, I’m just a cool cat, they taught me how to be a cool cat, what’s funny is that most of them are female, it was good backing, it created structure.”

Jay reports that his kin has helped him through tough times by being there “through and through” for him, “they’re always there making an effort to come out and chill, to do their thing.” Hanging out and spending time together is what Jay considers another “6” on the Likert scale, it’s the number one thing for him, “it’s six rated important, it’s a must, it’s almost as if showing loyalty or something like that, (me: like a gang? Jay: yes, like a gang. I laugh because he puts an emphasis on how important it is to hang out with his family). Our clanship is tightly sown.” Jay continues to explain how “hanging out” is so important. Evidently, hanging out solidifies the relationship for the Martinez family, “every time (we hang out) it’s a learning experience.” Jay explains that even though they (he and his kin) talk about the past, they speak about events with a learning, adaptive attitude, they mention what they learned from their experiences, “there’s an understanding of why we did what we did at the time, (and) it’s always a growing relationship that’s growing positively.” This indicates that they are aware of how their
past has affected them, and how their relationship with one another has helped build a positive future for the majority of the family. Resilience may not have been learned in a professional psychiatrist’s office, but it was learned none the less, which may lead to future inquires about how they were able to obtain this sort of positive trait without professional guidance or assistance.

Jay’s immediate family has helped him through tough times emotionally, financially, and surprisingly “culturally”, “my sister was in the same boat (as me growing up), she didn’t know Spanish either, it was her first language and then yah, she lost it too but then she regained it and then now she’s a Spanish teacher so that’s like ‘wow’, that’s something, you had nothing (of knowledge) about the subject, and now you’ve mastered it and now you’re teaching it….It’s a good influence.” Jay looks up to his sister because of how she was able to overcome her marginality and how she, if anything else, has been able to capitalize on her skills in her life because of it. Sophia is a positive example for Jay in this instance.

Jay’s kin and immediate family is important when life choices are being made (back then and now), “it’s not to say that I need their approval but I take their advice very…I’ll take it into thought….but I got to do my own thing sometimes, but I also don’t want to be seen as a traitor, I don’t know, it’s almost cultic.” Jay again mentions how “hanging out” is a must, and that if he doesn’t “hang out”, it’s seen as taboo. Jay describes his immediate family’s effect on his life choices as “slightly more intimate….I guess it’s out of respect, I don’t want to disrespect them by doing something wrong or in ill fashion.”

Jay reiterates the importance of sports as a bonding ritual among the Martinez family “clansmen.” “My cousin Joan was a division 1 athlete, she had potential. I became my sister’s camera man for her sporting events. I enjoyed going to those things, some people might not pay
attention to it, I was one of those kids who paid attention, I like sports, I still like sports, my wife
gets mad at me cause I yell at the TV.” Sports helped the Martinez family bond because “we
were always doing things together, we would watch the game then we would go eat, the church
thing too, we would be involved with the church.” When asked about church, Jay responded “it
was fun, but church is church, you know, it’s religion, religion is a whole other story.” Church
was “one of the things that helped the family bond.”

Jay feels that his past adverse and marginalized experiences that he and his family
underwent has shaped his future parenting abilities. “just hanging around little babies, I had to
take care of them and stuff like that, (it’s) helped nurtured better parenting for me.” Jay’s cousins
have children, which is who he is referencing here. “(it’s about) teaching you’re kids to work
well with others, teamwork, work hard, and set in place good morals.”

Jay’s last note about his family seems to further rectify that his family’s outcomes are in
fact resilient: “Our bond gets a little bit more strengthened when we see our other family
members striving, whether it’s my dad retiring with high honors, or my mom getting a degree
and getting a nice position in a business administrative office, or my sister overcoming her
Spanish struggle and now teaching Spanish, or my cousin Cecy getting her doctoral degree, or
even my little cousin graduating high school with her trauma in the car crash, things like that. It’s
all motivation for us to keep on striving cause we encourage each other. Those actions, those
goals that are reached, it’s just to say ‘hey we’re doing our thing man’. I love my family they
made me who I am no matter if they disrespect me or do anything that could hurt me, I’m still
going to love them, I’m taught to love, that’s what my family taught me, that’s what I’m going to
do.”
11.4 Eli’s Family Bonds—“I’m going to spend most if not all my life alone so I better get used to it”

What was one of the most startling facts that I learned about Eli was that he knew little to almost nothing about his maternal family members, “one of these days we got to sit down and you got to read to me what they said, or you just tell me, I want to know, but I don’t know my mom’s side of the family.” He then continues to let me know the extent of his relationship with his mother, “I’ve spent maybe three days with my mom, like if you count the time as consecutive, like ‘stop go stop go’, (he’s referencing the total number of hours), it’s maybe three days that I’ve spent with my mom my entire life. It’s a little here, a little there, one time spending the night, just scattered. I saw more of my dad than my mom. My brother Carlos…I saw him one time at 13 (years old) and then like two or three years ago.” I was there for the second time: the family had gathered to celebrate “D”s 15th birthday, one of the few times that Eli had been in the same room as his two other siblings. “Z”, his other sister, was not in attendance.

Eli faintly remembers his maternal grandmother, but the memory seems to be painful, so we change the subject and he continues to tell me about his interactions with his brother: he tells me about the types of toys that he and his brother used to own, and that they were both very different from one another. Eli and his brother Carlos could have come from different planets if it were possible, it seems that their common interests are at a minimal, even now as adults. They had never really grown up alongside each other, and there’s almost a seven year difference in age.

Eli recollects more of his experiences with his mother, “she would use me and my sister as bait, (she would call other family members and say that) ‘the kids are struggling send money’, (to which family members would reply) ‘no we’ll send groceries’, (to which his mother replied)
nah I don’t want groceries I want money’ (to which family members would reply) ‘no’, (to which his mother would reply) ‘I don’t need your help’. After enough of that my mom said ‘I ain’t taking care of these kids anymore take them’, then I lived with my grandma. I’ve been a vagabond; I’m just moving all over the place.”

Eli felt that his family (both immediate and kin) may as well as may not have been helpful to him while he was going through hard times, “it’s always a tug of war with me in the middle; it’s even like that now. My immediate (family), my grandma….wouldn’t allow the family to help me out (while growing up)…she didn’t let me get the help I needed. My outer kin (kin by definition of this project) fought to try to get me to see a psychiatrist, study harder and stuff like that.” Eli’s states that his grandmother was not a helpful guardian, “she was loving and caring, but being a parent now, I know that a kid doesn’t need love, they need discipline, they need to be ready for the world, and I don’t think she did a good job on that.” Eli’s “outer kin” wanted him to “just behave” since “they were the ones that were being called into the office every time I bit a teacher, hit a teacher, fight with the students, I was fighting with everyone, I was just thrashing, I was the embodiment of chaos when I was younger.”

Eli does not feel that he can rely on his kin during a time of crisis entirely: “well, half, some (of them). Ever since the beginning there has always been half of them hate me and half of them don’t. Since I left my ex, there (are) rumors that I’m a drug user, a Satanist, and a pedophile.” He proceeds to let me know that some distant relative’s wife accused him of being a pedophile. Eli is a very affectionate father; on numerous occasions, I’ve seen him hold and kiss his young children, as if he would never see them again, as a father showing that he loves his children. Never have I felt that he was going to hurt them. It was always a love that seemed to know no bounds, a love that can only be shared between a father and his children. But others
may have misconstrued this very public and unapologetic sign of affection. Eli is also very affectionate with his other kin; this seemed to make other family members uncomfortable, for whatever reason. “There’s this whole division, it’s all around, (and) it’s ridiculous.”

But Eli does not feel this way around his maternal kin, “no, you kidding me, I like them, I have nothing against them, they’ve shown me nothing but kindness. I remember one time running into Uncle Manny (Mr. Martinez), it was so fucking badass… we were on base for some reason, and I was with my cousin Chris, and the week before we (Eli and Chris) went to Toys R Us and he got all these toys and I didn’t get jack shit. I ran into Manny out of the blue and he bought me this big fucking Legos thing and it was so fucking bad ass. I’m like struggling to carry it, it was my size. He bought it. He saw me and I vaguely remembered him and I’m like ‘hi Uncle Manny’ and I remember him smiling and being kind to me and then buying me a gift. It was just so fucking awesome….and it’s always been like that (with them). I’ve always felt like family with them, always, I’ve always felt welcome.”

Eli thinks that he would have been better off growing up with his maternal kin versus his paternal kin, “because the way I am, I’m a little bit vulgar sometimes, and (I end up finishing his sentence, telling him that his paternal kin are the same way). I think that if I would have had my brother in my life…it’s more like how I am, the other family (paternal) are a little more prissy, but they’re entrepreneurs.” He begins to let me know that his paternal family is successful “they’re more of a classy upscale family, and I’m more of a fighting, drinking guy, so I think it would have been better if I grew up with Jay….throwing rocks at people (we both laugh, I know that he misses his cousin Jay at this point). I feel like I have a lot of them in me.” This statement leads to an interesting inquiry: Eli is no doubt a Martinez. He acts like them; he portrays the same type of intelligence and understanding of his past that his maternal kin illustrate. He
understands that his past has helped him become the person that he is today, as do his maternal cousins. If he has only spent a few days with them his entire life, how is he like them?

A possible explanation of why this may be follows: the times that Eli did visit with his maternal family could have been so impressionable for Eli that he held these experiences closer than other social experiences with his paternal kin. The few times that Eli visited with his maternal kin could have been so strong and could have been enough to influence him for the rest of his life. Another possible explanation would favor the biological elements that Eli could share with his maternal kin, which would raise the bigger question, how much do you learn from your family via visual and physical experiences and how much do you inherit from them? This is a big question, and is not the main focus of this project. This question may be answered in later research.

When asked if he can rely on his immediate family during hard times, Eli felt that he can rely on his aunt during hard times, and “that’s about it.” Eli didn’t report his family as extremely important while growing up. He rated them as a “1” on the Likert scale provided, meaning that they really weren’t that important at all to him as a child, “it was just me, always me, ever since I can little I can remember telling myself ‘I’m going to spend most if not all my life alone so I better get used to it’, you know, my dad, my mom not being there, my grandma…even now like look at my immediate family. My mom and dad are gone, my grandma and grandpa are done, my brothers and sisters are gone, my children are gone, the core of a family, all of it is removed, I’m literally alone, I’m with secondary family….it’s always been that way for me.”

When asked how both types of family helped him through tough times, Eli replied that “they didn’t, they were too busy fighting each other to see what’s better for me. They would tell my grandma, ‘he needs to go to therapy, he needs to study’ and my grandma would fight
them…my aunt told me a story…the whole family was in this big yelling match about something
I did, and I stood up on the couch and yelled at the top of my lungs and said ‘stop fighting!’, I
was little so I was just jumbling all these words so they looked at me and said ‘ehhh’ (as if what
little Eli didn’t know what he was talking about), and then they continued fighting.”

When asked if both types of family are important when considering life choices, Eli
replied “no.” His aunt wanted to be involved in his decision to leave his family, but when he
went to her for advice, she didn’t say much, which led him to acknowledge now more than ever
that he must make his own decisions, “it’s a blessing, I’ve learned to just stop and think things
through a lot.” But Eli feels that sometimes this need to “stop and think things through” can be
overwhelming as well, sometimes he can’t sleep at night or he over analyzes things and gets
distracted.

Eli doesn’t not recollect any events outside the home that helped him and his family
members bond, “I did football but it was all by myself, I took guitar ensemble and won first
place and they (his family) weren’t there when I did it, I had to catch a ride with a friend.” Eli
states that his family did not support him at all until he won first place, “then they were all over
it.”

Eli feels that his past experiences with his family members have helped shape his
parenting abilities, “I just think about everything that they did and do the opposite. I learned a lot
of family dysfunction with my family, I see my family and how bad they were and it gave me
perspective on how life really is.”

11.5 Carlos’ Family Bonds- “kin is everyone else except for my grandma”

When asked about the adverse events in his life, Carlos began to explain an early memory
of his mother shooting up heroin with her sister (his aunt) inside a locked room. He remembered
seeing his mother’s arm “go out”, and a needle filled with the drug goes into her arm, and seeing her tattoo on her leg (it’s how he knew that he was looking at her). At the time, he does not remember being traumatized because “you don’t know better” at that time as a child. He knew that his mother did drugs; he had just never seen her actually do it, “I knew she did dope all my life, I just seen it then, so that wasn’t that traumatic I knew she did it, I just never was witness to it.” Carlos reports that his grandmother dying was much more traumatic event than when he saw his mother shoot up heroin.

Carlos explains how he felt about his parents’ absence in his life, “… (back when he was a child) me not having a mom and a dad didn’t affect me, I have a grandma who loves me, I’m ok none of that shit is going to affect me or hold me back. Now as a grown man I look back and say ‘how could it not affect you?’, how could you not be affected by something like that, of course it’s going to affect you I would just lie to myself and say ‘it’s cool’, you know what I’m saying, I’m cool.” He recounts that while growing up people don’t really think about their lives in the present until they get older, he and his cousins and brother seem to share the same sentiment. The extent that Carlos becomes reflexive throughout the interview is impressive. He knows what kind of life he has experienced; he knows that the events in his life helped him become the person that he is today. He knows that as a family, they will overcome together because of the things that they all went through. The outcomes may have been different, and some members of this family may still be struggling to find their place in the world, but the adversities and marginalities that the Martinez family members experienced all happened within a similar context. Carlos knows that they will all overcome together.

Although he loves his grandmother completely for raising him and giving him his faith in God, he at times didn’t understand her decisions when it came to his aunts. The family bonds
that she shared with her daughters was something that Carlos couldn’t grip onto as a kid and as a young adult, “a lot of times I would get mad I’d be like, man my grandma made some stupid decisions, she’s being stupid, and now that I have kids I see (now) that I’d probably do the same, cause she use to let my aunt Deanddra, we used to call her “Tia LoLo”, and Deanddra had robbed me all my life man, like she was a drug addict too, she was a Heroin addict she smoked crack, her man liked to smoke crack, she use to shoot heroin and smoke crack and stuff, and they just…they would rob us all the time and my grandma would always let her come back.” He continues to explain the relationship that he had with his aunt, “My Tia was in my life way more than my mom was, she as with us when we lived in Puerto Rico, she was with us when we lived in Texas, she went with us to North Carolina, my mom never went with us to Carolina, Deanddra was there. She was almost like a big sister, cause she wasn’t real responsible, she wasn’t a like good role model (as an) aunt or nothing, always a drug addict……”

Carlos emphasizes a little more on what he learned from his grandmother’s relationship with her daughters, and he explains that he understands now why she made those decisions to keep “letting” her troubled children “back in”, “…I mean that’s her daughter, you know what I’m saying, how you going to put your daughter on the streets? She kept letting her back in, my grandma…..man like….cause she was uber, uber Christian, she was a true Christian, she was a Bible warrior…she had a real relationship with God.”

Carlos continues to tell me about how his grandmother helped him find faith in God, “She kept us in church, she gave me the foundation with God, and even when I was…I’ve sold drugs most of my life, honestly, until my kids were born that’s the way I got by was selling, you know, whatever, it was mostly weed. Honestly I’ve moved pills, I’ve moved whatever. Even when I was selling crack…. I would justify it to the Lord. I’d be sitting there on the
corner….praying to God as I stand there with crack rocks in my pocket saying ‘hey I need this because I need to help with food or I need to help with this, we’re barely getting by’, and that’s what my grandma did….my grandma gave me the Lord, she gave me a God that has always been with me through the good and the bad, He’s always been there, even (during) the times that I didn’t believe in him anymore, even the times I questioned my faith…He was there because she gave me that faith.”

Carlos tells me about the type of relationship that he had with his mother by reminiscing about the time that he went to see her in Midland TX, “before school started, she called me saying she was having a whole lot of trouble in Midland, saying she had no family, she needed some family support, she had just gotten out of prison. So I ended up going out there to help her out from North Carolina, which was a bad choice. She ended up getting locked up, so I went back to North Carolina. She called me again when she gets let out, ‘hey I’m sorry, it was a situation that I couldn’t control, if you could come back I would really like it’. So, again to Texas to Midland to go help her out, she ended up in some more shit, gets sent to the halfway house, she ends up running away. It was during Christmas time, which was wack cause I was by myself during Christmas time in Midland TX with nobody. Uncle Manny (Mr. Martinez) said he was going to come get me, so I didn’t have to spend Christmas alone. So he came and got me and I chilled with Jay and Sophia and them for Christmas. Then when I went back, I could tell somebody had been in the house, I knew it was my mom….there was cigarettes and beef jerky wrappers (he lets me know that she had a thing for beef jerky). So I get a call three days later telling me ‘hey, your mom ran away from the halfway house, you know where she’s at?’ This is news to me; I’m stuck here in Midland. Uncle Manny (Mr. Martinez) ended up coming to get me again, and then sent me back to North Carolina.” Carlos explains that he still loves his mother
even though he knows that she did him wrong, “no matter what your parents do you’re going to have love for them, my mom did me dirty my whole life, and I love her because, that’s just a bond that you have with your mom, it’s just crazy….they can fuck you mentally or physically, people just still love they mom it’s crazy.”

Carlos knows that if it weren’t for his grandmother being such a positive presence in his life, his life as he knows it now might have been dramatically different. Carlos rates his grandma’s positive presence in his life on a Likert Scale as a “7”, which is more than the allotted 6 categories, “she was the best thing that probably ever happened to me, her and my kids are neck and neck. Honestly if it weren’t for her, where would I be? My mom was a dope head, she couldn’t handle me….I probably would have ended up living with Danielle (Joan and Cecy’s mom) and when she died, and there was nowhere to go, who knows if I would have ended up in foster care, with grandpa (who he really doesn’t like), who knows where I would have ended up, ended up fucked up, dead, who knows.”

Later on during the interview, Carlos explains his view on his family a little more. Carlos notes that “my family is real weird.” He cuts me off while I’m trying to ask him about how his family (both types) responded to him during his adverse events in his life. He makes it a point to tell me that his family is “weird.” “Our family is not…definitely not the norm…we’re really, really weird….Joan and Cecy, they’re not my sisters. We were adopted together, so technically yeah (we’re sisters). Their mom died of a heroin overdose, my mom was in and out of jail, so my grandma adopted us…like Cecy and Joan I consider my sisters, they are probably the closest family, but they’re so close to each other that I get left out a lot. They went through a lot together, they saw their mom die. They are blood sisters. So for the longest time, I don’t think they considered me their brother, I think I might have pushed that issue (with them) cause I
considered them my sisters. I think I kind of pushed that issue where they’ll say it now…’oh yeah Carlos is my brother’…but it’s always been me and my grandma. Like, that’s the only like, real family unit that I’ve felt that I had.” Carlos lets me know that even though he considers Cecy and Joan his sisters, he’s had his differences with them and vice versa, which brought Carlos to his major point, “kin is everyone else except for my grandma.” Carlos redefined my terms of immediate family and kin in order to really portray his point of view.

Carlos also notes that he never really had any sort of animosity toward his mother until his daughter was born “I’m sure it was always there, but it never came out until Aralia was born….when she was born, I would look at her and I would be like ‘how could you do that to me?’ I was that small, how could you not give a fuck? How could you drop a cigarette on a one month old kid, and it burnt through their arm?” I was probably screaming for a while. You realize how much it (maltreatment) affects you, how could it not affect you?” Carlos knows that his daughter’s birth “put a lot of shit into perspective.” Carlos reports that this event was life changing for him, which is similar to what his brother had to say as well about his own children.

11.6 Discussion for Family Bonds/Resiliency section

11.6.1 Could there be such a thing as being too controlling as parents?

Vigil (2007) states that this type of authoritativie parenting could do more harm than good: “in the case of the overwhelmingly Latino population in Pico Gardens, authoritarian parenting is actually counterproductive and can be harmful” (15). Vigil (2007) continues to explain that “in urban neighborhoods the relation between parental involvement and monitoring is such that both too little (permissive parenting) or too much (authoritarian parenting) could result in problem behavior for children” (15). But authoritative parenting could also serve as a type of buffer “that can lessen the influence of a violent environment or neighborhood on
vulnerable youth” (Vigil, 2007). Vigil continues to explain that “the effects of this buffer are further bolstered when the youth in a community have other healthy relationships with hardworking adults who are not involved with gangs or other criminal activities, such as drug sales enterprises. These relationships strengthen youth’s social capital and often result in avenues to legitimate job opportunities that are not readily available to youth without those connections” (16). Vigil does not mention whether or not these positive relationships could be with kin family members though.

For Cecy, this other positive adult relationship may have been with her grandfather, “He believed in me.” Cecy states lovingly and emotionally that her grandfather was able to “get her” when she was “all mixed up”, even at the ripe and tender age of 14 years old. “He had confidence in me, I didn’t’ want to let him down.” Cecy’s relationship with her grandfather seems to be a perfect example of Vigil’s “other (type) of healthy relationship” with a “hardworking adult” who wasn’t involved with gangs or other types of criminal activities. Kinships should be considered when discussing Vigil’s family bonds and parenting styles in order to, again, further the working definition of the multiple marginality framework so that it may become a stronger influence in academic literature. Like the multiple types of marginalities that can engulf a family, there should be multiple types of remedies available to families who find themselves in these predicaments. Multiple causes should have multiple answers.

11.6.2 The Development of Religion and its Effect on the Martinez family individuals

Sophia recollects that her family was “really grounded in the church…the church became our family.” She remembers that while growing up “(I) couldn’t wait to go to church.” Sophia also couldn’t wait for the “vacation bible classes” which were offered during the summer time while school was out. Sophia remembers that her family was “really grounded” in the church and
the bible classes that were offered: “we did projects, it was really positive for me.” Sophia recalls the church in Socorro (about 30 miles away from San Fernando, located in the valley of El Paso) that they used to go to. The pastor would come over to their house, the “trailer”, and “my mom would make everyone enchiladas…there was never a drop of alcohol in the place because my parents never drank at all. We all got along, it was always positive, we all had fun.”

Cecy recalls, as mentioned before, finding hope while reading the Bible as an adolescent, which was introduced to her through her uncle. Carlos would find God through his grandmother. Eli seems to have developed religion in a different arena than his maternal kin members, and Jay does not seem to delve too much into religious activities now as an adult. But for those members of this family that do report a strong religious presence in their lives, during childhood and as adults, kin are those key individuals that first introduced them to faith and believing in hope. Without seemingly knowing, kin members of the Martinez family members would essentially instill types of coping mechanisms within Cecy, Sophia and Carlos.

In an article that examines the effectiveness of religion and spirituality as alternatives and/or additives to medicine in healing children who are critically ill, Barnes, Plotnikoff, Fox and Pendleton (2000) state that “a child’s sense of spirituality and/or engagement in a religious community may provide a structure for positive coping strategies” (900). The authors are of course speaking about the role of religion and faith in medical practices, but the statement above could easily be directed toward social behavior as well, “spirituality and religious involvement can also help children withstand the emotional assaults of sexual abuse, racism, cultural destruction, and the traumas generated by refugee experience and life in the disenfranchised urban neighborhoods” (Barnes, Plotnikoff, Fox, & Pendleton, 2000, p. 901). It is obvious that religion and faith can become powerful tools to individuals who find themselves in tumultuous
events in life. Barnes, Plotnikoff, Fox, and Pendleton (2000) also mention throughout their article that religion is mostly discussed with children within the immediate family unit, there is no mention of extended family members being an integral part of the child’s spiritual development, leaving the reader to conclude that children most often develop their religious preferences through their parents and the immediate “nuclear” family unit.

But this is not the case with the Martinez family members: they (Cecy and Carlos) developed their spirituality through kin members of the family. In learning about how Carlos and Cecy developed their spirituality, academics can explore more specifically how this occurs, why it may occur, and how this is important in overall familial development.

11.6.3 Sports, the Martinez’s, and its important role in Family Bonds

Sports events, the family playing sports together, and everything else that would come with sports seems to be extremely important in familial bonding with the majority of the Martinez family members interviewed. Cecy, Jay, and Sophia note over and over again that sports were a very important type of family bonding in their lives while growing up together. It wasn’t about just playing a sport together; it seems that watching sports (live or in person), talking about sports, and going to support each other in their various sports participation all together created a type of family bond that they most enjoyed while growing up.

In an article by Giulianotti (2005), the social theoretical arguments of Georg Simmel are applied to the “tartan army” in order to analyze a “subculture” that consists of a group of supporters that travels to Scotland football (soccer) matches. While studying the “tartan army”, Giulianotti (2005) noticed that “the sports crowd acquires a distinctive collective form when certain kinds of unification materialize” (291): the group seems to come together and bond while they are all watching their favorite football team in action. “Football matches provide the Tartan
Army with the cultural circumstances in which the sociable interplay of conflict and concord occurs pleasurably and peacefully” (Giulianotti, 2005, p. 293).

Obviously Giulianotti is discussing just the fans and the “act of spectating” a famous international football team: just imagine how Giulianotti could have expanded his research if he had added the actual playing of the sport to his project. Presumably, the social bonding that can occur while spectating would only grow more so when the group of people is also playing the sport that they love to spectate. It seems that Martinez family members are perfect examples of the strength of social bonds when a group of people spectate, play, and discuss sports in general. Like the multiple issues that can affect a family negatively, there can also be multiple ways that a family encounters an event (sports) and bond in a positive way.
Chapter 12: Conclusion/Discussion

My research on the Martinez family was inspired by my insider knowledge of this family, particularly the adversities and marginalizations that the second generation of the cousin/sibling group experienced as children and adolescents that stem largely from the first generation of this family (their parents), and the marginalized community that they come from. The largely successful outcomes of their adulthood ultimately drew me to question their fundamental strategies. The mothers of these 6 children, a set of three sisters, all died years apart of heroin overdoses and were extensively involved in delinquent and criminal activities, including gang membership and prostitution. The fathers of this generation of children were at best absent and, at worst, had completely abandoned them. As a result, as children, these research subjects were raised by a series of aunts, uncles, and grandparents – most of who were impoverished and led chaotic unstable lives. As children and adolescents, many shifted residence numerous times from home to home and from state to state growing up. In addition to being marginalized by poverty, lack of contact with their biological parents, and unstable homes, they reported a variety of other types of marginalization, all of which were, to some extent, implicated in their offending careers in adolescence and early adulthood. Yet, in spite of these problems, these subjects, and their extended kinship networks, demonstrated considerable resilience that was related to the cessation of their offending and entry into mainstream society as fully functioning adults. Major findings, and their relation to prior research, are discussed below.

12.1 Relational Resilience

In terms of relational resilience Cecy and Sophia found hope and strength through their close kinship during childhood, while Cecy and Carlos found their religion and faith in God from their kin (her uncle and his grandmother). Instead of finding hope, strength and religion from
their immediate family members, these cousins found the strength to overcome and continue to the next steps in life by seeking kin for guidance, understanding, and belonging.

When immediate family members were not available for guidance, kin were able to provide the important familial relationships to family members who desperately found themselves seeking such assistance. Martinez family members could have created fictive kin networks to supplement the absence of the immediate family social networks, which involve those who share no biological traits, in order to create the immediate family members that were absent while growing up, as other populations do at times. In an article by Oswald (2002) that identifies the key relationship processes that promote the survival and growth of gay and lesbian family networks, fictive kin is described as the individuals that are chosen to take part in a family unit by an individual or group individuals who have been discriminated against, whether biologically related or not (375). In creating a family unit made up of different individuals, gay and lesbian family units were able to still create the social family networks that heterosexual couples are believed to enjoy. Social networks such as these enable the growth of resilience within gay and lesbian households (Oswald, 2002). The Martinez family members could have created fictive kin family members that could have enabled them to still create a social network to draw utilities from, but they did not. They chose to confide in their kin during adverse events and marginalizations, and still continue to do so today as adults. It seems that because of the adversities that they all experienced, they drew closer together. All family members state in some form or another that they have all stuck together because of the adversities that occurred to them throughout the years. Because of adversity, they drew closer together.

It seems that as a group, the majority of this family knows how to overcome the possible undesirable outcomes of marginalities and is able to cope with their adverse past experienced
during childhood because of the types of relationships that they have with their kin more so than
the relationships that they have with their immediate family. Parents served an important
presence though, but more as a negative influence than a positive one. Some Martinez family
members felt that their parents were the best examples of who not to be as adults when they were
children, which still can be classified and portrayed as a positive outlook. Their parents’
unhealthy decisions as adults helped the children see how life could be when certain paths are
taken instead of others, as well as helped them realize how they want to live their own lives as
adults. They found strength only in each other when life was found to be unbearable. I believe
that the Martinez family members found relational resilience, or family resilience, mostly
through their kin, as according to Walsh’s (1996) and Fraser & Jenson’s (2011) definitional
frameworks.

It is important to note that while Walsh’s (1996) resilience work stems from a controlled,
clinical setting (psychological, family counseling), her findings of relational or familial resilience
seems to have been found in non-clinical settings while listening to the Martinez family members
recount their stories of their own triumphs over their tough childhoods. The same can be said for
Fraser and Jenson’s (2011) resilience frame work: their theory of risk and protective factors is
obviously found here within the Martinez family group since it was grandfathers and uncles who
provided positive social relationships for some Martinez family members, but again in a non-
formal setting. Possible itemization of this type of resilience could be deemed as raw relational
resilience, a seemingly natural type of resilience that was cultivated socially within a family unit
from an early age apparently without professional intervention. I deemed this type of resilience
raw because the term seems to come from within, as if instinct. But in reality, this type of
resilience was taught to the Martinez family members through the guidance and presence of kin.
Developing this type of resilience could provide struggling families with more natural alternatives than the clinical options available today. Professionals would introduce the concepts to a family that seems to be at risk for adverse outcomes because of exigent circumstances from its early stages of development in order to instill lifelong positive, resilient behavioral patterns within each family member. Professional intervention would initially be kept at a minimal. Providing such holistic information and guidance could save families money and time, as well as cultivate a stronger family unit from within the home instead of a professional’s office.

More research must be conducted in order to positively correlate the positive social connection between kin, individuals, and the possible resiliency that can develop from such relationships. The current research has indicated that this new field is promising and should be further developed.

12.2 Gender and Crime

Concerning gender and crime, the Martinez family findings suggest that there are similarities with prior research about the types of crimes that are committed by males and females. The criminalities that resulted from the types of marginalizations experienced as well as the adverse events described were similar to the general criminological trends found throughout the United States. James Diego Vigil predicted in his own studies that marginalizations experienced by individuals would lead to street socialization and gang life, which were found to be true in this case study as well. Jay, Carlos, and Eli report criminal behavior that is typical of minority males, while Cecy and Sophia report the typical entry and exit into petty types of crimes.

This information holds that the criminal variance depending on gender among Martinez family members accords to the typical statistics that the United States Department of Justice
would predict of males and females (Greenfeild & Snell, 1999). According to Steffensmeier and Allan (1996), the gender variances in crime are further described, “Both men and women are more heavily involved in minor property and substance abuse offences than in serious crimes like robbery or murder. However, men offend at much higher rates than women for all crime categories except prostitution” (460). The same types of general statements about the national gender and criminal behavior variances can be stated about the Martinez family members because their reported criminal activities seems to fit the national mold for criminal expectations of males and females. The gendered varied criminalities of the Martinez family members were also an expected outcome of marginalization and experiencing adverse events throughout childhood and adolescence.

12.3 Marginalization and the Ethnic Identity Crisis

Types of marginalizations that could occur within an ethnic community as described by James Diego Vigil were found to be mostly true in this case study as well. San Fernando seems to fit Vigil’s profile of a poor, ethnically saturated marginalized community where gangs, crime, and racism occur on a daily basis. The outcomes that Vigil predicted in California (gang membership, violence, delinquency), where his research takes place, was further maintained in the El Paso/San Fernando area and within the Martinez family members activities. All members interviewed report criminal delinquency at some point in their lives while growing up, whether minor or major acts were committed. But there is a major unexpected outcome that Vigil does not explore fully in his work, but should be further examined and included into the multiple marginality framework in order to create a better understanding of the different types of populations that could fit his general descriptions of marginalized populations outside of California, again where most of his studies have taken place.
Vigil does not include an Ethnic Identity Crisis component that all Martinez family members report experiencing as a type of marginalization. This component was an unexpected find for this project. Like Pablo Vila found in his work, the unexpected find was promoted by what the “others” (meaning other people) around the Martinez family members identified as being “Mexican” and what is not “Mexican” (Vila, 2005). Since they did not seem to be what the hegemonic discourse dictated Mexican Americans to be, they were tormented for it by the “others” around them. None the less, Martinez family members still found solace in each other during such harsh criticisms while growing up.

The supposed language “inefficiency” as identified by others that Martinez members encountered while growing up in the El Paso/San Fernando area seems to be a large cause for them to feel inadequate within their ethnicity group. Being bilingual and knowing the Spanish/English (Spanglish) mix that is frequently spoken in the region seems to have not helped family members socially incorporate well with those who knew Spanish “better then them”. This was an interesting find since in other cases, bilingualism is seen and most often revered as a gateway to future success not only for the individual who knows two languages but for the individuals future generations as well. In an article by Guan & Knottnerus (1999) that examines closely the structural ritualization of Chinese Americans during the process of acculturation and the possible marginalizations that could be occur, the extensive use of the English language by the second generation of Chinese Americans is described as a positive thing for upward mobility, “Repeated use of English has, therefore, not only involved social change in the sense of alterations in the frequency of ritualized practices actors engaged in, it has provided the new generation a structural opportunity for upward mobility into the middle class (and further integration into mainstream American society)” (63).
an increased proficiency in English and related social communicative skills and their efforts on educational, occupational, and residential choices, Chinese families in the middle and upper income brackets increasingly acquired the means to move out of crowded Chinatown communities” (63). The Martinez family members are not only bilingual, but they also have acquired a new type of Spanish/English dialect that is unique to the El Paso/Ciudad Juarez area, a third language if you will. But in all accounts, knowing this language mix as well as not knowing Spanish “well enough” according to other’s standards seemed to have been more of a burden than a gift while growing up. Being bilingual as adults seems to have benefited the family members greatly as a means to gain employment, but the social stigma of not knowing Spanish well enough still stings when they return to El Paso/San Fernando even now as adults.

If anything, this find further vindicates Vigil’s theoretical framework since for the most part, San Fernando and the Martinez family members fit the description of a type of marginalized population according to Vigil. Attempting his theoretical framework in a different geographic area where the numeric majority of the population is considered the social and numeric minority of the general population in other places outside of El Paso/San Fernando makes the broad and strong statement that Vigil’s work is worthy and should be tested within areas such as El Paso/San Fernando. Sampling such theoretical framework in different populations makes it stronger and more flexible. Adding the Ethnic Identity Crisis found within the Martinez family members only makes his work stronger, and adds to its validity in other populations. It would be interesting to find the other types of unexpected outcomes in future research that exercises Vigil’s theoretical framework.
12.4 Other alternatives causes and future research design

There could be other alternatives that could explain the reasons why the Martinez family members thrived when they in reality statistically were not supposed to: religion, education, biological factors, and the culture of poverty are lead outside factors that could have contributed to each family member’s success in adulthood, instead of kinship. But religion and the culture of poverty as described by Pablo Vila could be counter argued. Religion seems to have stemmed from kin in this project, but could have also attributed to individual motivation in overcoming hardships. None the less, religion was still introduced by kin. The culture of poverty has been seen as a coping mechanism for individuals who find themselves within it. People who are within the culture of poverty stick together not because they choose to but because they are distrustful of outside government entities that are supposed to provide that help, leaving the impoverished with no other real choice but to rely on their own community’s resources for help (Lewis, 1961). Martinez family members were indeed found to be impoverished while growing up, but this seems to be more of a common trait than a resource, as Vila found in his study of five Mexican families. Martinez family members state that they were poor, but that this was not the reason why they felt that they needed to stick together. Education attainment and biological factors could be true alternative causes, given that it is unknown where Cecy developed the idea that she needed education to stay out of poverty, and given that Eli was able to overcome his life experiences even though he felt that his family was no help to him.

Future examination instruments, such as the questionnaire used to direct the interviews, must be modified more in order to improve the design and the terminology of certain interview questions in order to inspire more open-ended responses from participants. In no way do I wish to lead on participants, so re-examining my questions to further promote open-ended questions
will further my efforts in providing more extensive responses that detail their own lives more so than answering my prompt questions.

The next major goal for this project is to further seek families that have been through adversity and marginality in order to examine the possibilities of kinship cultivating a positive influence for individuals, which would enable individuals to overcome such hardships. Supplementing other family stories to the Martinez family oral histories will further kin relational resilience ideas and help create an understanding for social health policy makers so that better at-home familial development can begin to develop.

A major component for future research and development would be the expansion of case study numbers, and in creating a quantitative aspect to this research. We will be able to further explore the possibilities of kin and their abilities to provide family members in dire situations where they are alone, defeated, trampled on by life with positive social attributes that can help them prevail and continue to a healthy adulthood. Adding a quantitative perspective will surely enhance our understanding of such an ostensibly natural type of resilience: quantitative measures add to the ethnographic stories collected, providing a fuller outlook on the issue. Both qualitative and quantitative methods prove to add different dimensions to future research, which can further answer questions.

The relationships that each individual Martinez family member has with one another is a clear example of how the majority of this family was and still is able to overcome their own adversities and marginalities through family resiliency, and the understanding, love, and support that comes with the concept. If such information can be taught and shared with countless other family units that find themselves in peril, the strife for a better and more understanding society is that much closer to realization, a realization that can come one family at a time.
Appendix

The Strength of Family Bonds: a look into the lives of a family that has overcome Adversity and Marginality.

Pseudonym________________________________________________________

Age___________________

Sex___________________

Ethnicity________________________________________

Our in-person/interactive interview will be conducted in order to provide an oral history of life events that involved Marginality, Adversity, and the role of that Family had in overcoming such events.

**General Questions about Individual Adverse Events**

1. What is your earliest memory of an adverse event? (an adverse event is considered here an event that greatly upset you in some way)

   a) How old were you when this event occurred, approximately?

   b) How did you react to this event?
2. Please rate the severity of the adverse event on a scale from 1 to 6;

   1-bad, but not that bad (this is the minimum level of “bad”)
   2-not so bad
   3-pretty bad
   4-really bad
   5-extremely bad
   6- The worst event in my life. (This is the maximum level of “bad”)

3. What other adverse events have you experienced that truly affected your life before the age of 18? (you can mention the worst thing that ever happened to you here)

   a) When did this occur (at what age)?

   b) How severe were these events to you (using the same scale mentioned before)?

   c) How did you react to them?

4. What were the positive things in your life as you were growing up?
a) When did these positive things occur? (at what age did these things occur?)

b) How did you react to these positive things?

c) How positive were these things to you on a scale from 1 to 6?
   1-Good (this is the minimum level of “Good”)
   2-A little better than Good
   3-Pretty Good
   4-Really Good
   5-Extremely Good
   6- The Best thing in my life. (This is the maximum level of “Good”)

5. What was your family situation while you were growing up? (Did you live with your parents?) How often did you move? Were your parents around? (if possible, provide a timeline that includes how many times you moved, why you moved, and how did moving around so much affect you)

6. According to the given definition of Marginalization, how have you been marginalized growing up (if at all)?

7. What was your family situation while you were growing up?
8. Were you considered “poor” or “rich” by others?

9. Did your living situation affect how others treated you and viewed you as an individual?

   YES
   NO

   How so?

10. Did your gender, ethnicity, or immigration status affect how others treated you? Please describe in full detail.

Questions about the Strength of Family Bond relationships

*Kin*-family members that are included in the non-immediate grouping; these people can include Uncles, Aunts, Cousins, and Grandparents

*Immediate Family*-those family members that are exclusively included in the immediate grouping; these people include only Parents and Siblings.

11. How did both immediate and kin family members react toward you when you were experiencing the various adverse events described earlier?
12. Was your parent/guardian helpful during the adverse events you experienced? How were they helpful to you? (Were they there for you?)

13. Do you feel that you can rely on your kin during a time of crisis? (back then and now?) If yes, how so?

14. Do you feel that you can rely on your immediate family during a time of crisis? (back then and now) If yes, how so?

15. How important were your kin to you when you were growing up?
   1-Not Important at All
   2-A little Important
   3-Pretty Important
   4-Really Important
   5-Extremely Important
   6-The Most Important

16. How has your kin helped you through tough times?

17. How has your immediate family helped you through tough times?
18. Would you say that your kin are extremely important to you when considering life choices (back then and now)? Why or Why not?

19. Would you say that your immediate family is extremely important to you when considering life choices (back then and now)? Why or Why not?

20. Did you enjoy eating dinner with your kin and your immediate family?

21. Were there any events or activities outside the home (such as sporting events) that helped you and your family members bond? Provide example if possible.

22. How have your family experiences helped shape your parenting abilities?
Questions pertaining to possible Criminal Involvement

23. Have you ever been involved in gang activity and/or delinquent or criminal activities? If your answer is no, please proceed to “Respondents who did NOT become involved in Criminal Activity”

YES

NO

24. When were you involved actively in gangs/crime activities? (Between which time periods; childhood to adulthood, adolescence to late adulthood?)

a) At what age did you begin participating in these activities?

25. What kind of bad behavior/criminal activities did you get into? (Fighting with your Kin, siblings, stealing from Wall Mart?)

26. When was the last time you participated in these activities?

27. Why did you become involved in gangs/crime activities? (Did you need to in order to survive?)

28. To what extent did the adverse experiences you described earlier influence your participation in the gangs/criminal activity/delinquent activities just described?
29. To what extent did your financial/living situation influence your participation in these activities?

30. To what extent did other sources of marginalization influence your participation in these activities?

31. Are you still involved in gangs/criminal activities right now? (if your answer is “no”, this would conclude this section)

   YES
   NO

   a) If yes, what kind of activities are you involved in now days?

If you are not involved in criminal activities anymore;

32. Did your connection with your immediate family/kin contribute to your ultimate departure from gangs/crime activities?

   YES
   NO

   Why or why not?

33. Do you feel that if it wasn’t for your immediate family/kin and the connection that you have with them that you would still be involved in gangs/crime activity?

   YES
   NO

   Why or why not?
For those respondents who did not become involved in criminal activities;

34. Did you keep away from crime because of your immediate family/kin and the connection that you have with them?

YES

NO

35. How did your immediate family/kin influence your decision to keep away from a life of crime? (Is there a particular event that needs to be mentioned?)

36. Was there a particular family member that influenced you the most while growing up?

YES

NO

a) Who was it? Why did this person influence you so much?

37. How did this person influence you in deciding NOT to join gangs or delve in criminal activity?

38. Is there anything else that you want to share with me as far as your experiences with family pertain?
Bibliography


Vita

Angelique Nevarez Maes is a student that has earned her Master of Art’s degree in Sociology from the University of Texas at El Paso in May 2013. She went to Ysleta High school from 2000-2005, completed her Associate of Arts degree in Criminal Justice at El Paso Community College in December 2007, and completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in Psychology in August 2010. Angelique was on the Dean’s List with the College of Liberal Arts from 2009 to 2010, and has received awards for her GPA from the Student Support Services program. She served as the President of the Sociology Club during her time as a Master’s student, and graduated with a 3.9 GPA. Angelique has also spent 2011-2013 as a Teaching Assistant with the department of Sociology and Anthropology. She will continue onward to complete her Doctorate of Philosophy degree in Sociology at the Texas A&M University. She is considered a Lechner Scholar and has received extra funding at Texas A&M University because of this honor. She will continue her work with the Family Unit and Crime into her future as an academic scholar.

Permanent address: 9745 Staubach
El Paso TX 79927

This thesis/dissertation was typed by Angelique Nevarez Maes