Parallel Citizenship: Southern Californian Latino Gangs and their Concept of Citizenship

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Abstract: For Salvadorans who relocated to the United States, the marginalization imposed by American society, the victimization enacted by Mexican gangs, and their negative experience with El Salvador's practice of citizenship brought them to create the Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and modify 18th Street gangs in the neighborhoods of Los Angeles. Living on the fringes of society, they were kept from attaining the social, civil, and economic benefits of a liberal democratic model of citizenship. This paper claims that, in order to survive, they took it upon themselves to create a parallel model of citizenship, combining anarchism with "citizenship as agency" under the gang structure. Following Philip Oxhorn's analysis of models of citizenship, this study examines how Salvadoran refugees came to create such alternative citizenship in the framework of the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs. Analysis asserts that the structure and development of membership in the gangs is not a coincidence, but rather a response to their marginalization, negative experience of state citizenship, and their participation in public arenas modeled as an extension of social contracts. Understanding the views of these, now transnational, gangs in terms of citizenship can aid policymakers and Central American governments as they approach these groups, eliminating violence and promoting development.

Keywords: citizenship; Latino gangs; El Salvador; gang structure.

Citizenship: The Social Contract and Public Spheres

Citizenship is the link between individuals and the state, the embodiment of a social contract in which individuals are members of a sovereign state, which provides protection and entitles certain rights in exchange for duties those individuals are expected to fulfill. A reflection of state autonomy, the sovereign state determines the criteria of citizenship and avenues to access such status, as well as the extension of belonging to a national entity. Yet, as globalization expands, there is a rise in international migration and its correlate tends to be a tendency to access dual or even multiple citizenship. Concomitantly, the association

of citizenship and national identity with cultural roots and a common history is waning as populations are becoming more diverse and integrated into global society, making a utilitarian concept of citizenship seem more attractive. As tensions develop in citizenship, the reaffirmation of the traditional, culturally based form of citizenship often takes an individualist turn, geared to preserve a past culture, language, or religion. Nevertheless, scholars agree that the state continues to be the basic core of political organization, the root of social contract, and thus the determinant of citizenship.

T.H. Marshall (1950) traced the development of citizenship to be a sequencing of rights throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century. This transferred into three facets of citizenship that, according to him, have sequentially promoted civil, political, and social rights, the latter supported by the belief that everyone should share a standard level of social-economic well-being. More recently, cultural rights, including those of a collective character, were added to this spectrum of rights. Marshall believed that State institutions had the responsibility to ensure these rights through the judiciary, legislative, and welfare system. B.S. Turner (2013), on the other hand, has considered citizenship to be a collection of legal, political, economic and cultural actions that qualify an individual to be a member of society. This framework of practices guides a process that grants avenues of access to available resources and services. Here, there are two kinds of citizenship, the active form and the passive form. Active citizenship is linked to social citizenship in which there is participation in the community. Passive citizenship is when the individual lacks such participation in community affairs.

In this sense, interpretations of the social contract vary between a vision of rights citizens are entitled to and a perspective stressing those practices and actions citizens should exercise as full members of society, that is, practices that reflect a commitment and investment in society, and further on, reinforce the normative involvement with the institutional frameworks of the state. The public spheres play a crucial role in sustaining this contract between society and its government by providing a public space where individuals can discuss societal issues, develop public opinion, and thus influence political action.

As we move analysis into the enactment of citizenship, we should ask what are the consequences when the public sphere is ruptured, especially in urban areas with dense populations not fully integrated into the prevailing models of citizenship predicating liberal democratic models of participation and representation. Bickford (2000) suggests that the structure of cities impacts the public sphere, and thus how citizens interpret democratic governance and participation, resulting in a level of inter-subjectivity that divides the citizenry. Hyper-segregation, supported by institutional practices, is one way in which the public sphere is divided. Those who experience this are mainly minority groups and recently arrived immigrants, among other groups that may fall under second-class citizenship. These groups experience residential isolation and challenges to access basic services as well as the right to work, all of which impact these individuals' participation in the public sphere, the social contract, and thus belonging to the citizenry. It is in this case when marginalized groups create their own public sphere, limited to the boundaries of their community and neighborhood, and their own concept of citizenship. This paper will explore one such case, the development of alternative models of citizenship among the Latino gangs rooted in the *barrios* of Los Angeles, California.

Origins of Latino Gangs in Los Angeles, California

Gangs have existed since the nineteenth century in large cities of the United States, particularly the northeast, Chicago, and industrial areas of the Midwest. It was in the twentieth century that gangs began emerging on the west coast, particularly in the Mexican immigrant communities of California and the Southwest. The origin of such street gangs is said to have been based in Los Angeles, often referred to as "the 'epicenter' of America's gang problem" (Diaz 2009: 14). This is due to the conditions and treatment that Mexican immigrants underwent in the early twentieth century, which shaped the barrio culture that many Latino gangs of Los Angeles are deeply connected to. The barrio culture is a reflection of the violent history of the American West, with the "continuing contest for cultural dominance between Anglos and non-white

minorities" (Diaz 2009: 35). Many Mexican immigrants experienced this when migrating to California in response to the growing agribusiness demand for unskilled labor. The children of this "Great Migration," between 1900 and 1930, would be the ones to develop the early Latino gangs of California.

The first Mexican youth gangs took root in the barrios of Los Angeles in the early 1940s: the 38th Street, the Alpine Street, Dogtown, and White Fence gangs. The increasing struggles of marginalized groups introduced fighting gangs in the late 1930s and early 1940s, opening membership to youths "who were estranged from the culture of their parents, rejected by the dominant society, and often left largely on their own" (Diaz 2009: 66–67). The barrios reflected what has traditionally been recognized as popular attitudes among Latino immigrants in terms of assimilating to American culture: many thought learning English or adopting American customs in food or clothing was unnecessary. Moreover, there was reluctance to take on U.S. citizenship, "often feeling that they would not gain much in a discriminatory society and would lose the protections that Mexican citizenship afforded them" (Diaz 2009: 65). Salvadorans in the 1980s would experience a similar estrangement, although in their case they were directly denied the chance to belong as the U.S. government did not recognize them asylum or refugee status. These sentiments would inspire the construction of their own gangs within the public sphere their community had created.

James Diego Vigil's multiple marginality theory further explains why these Latino gangs developed. The forces that marginalized first Mexican, and then Salvadoran, youth include "discrimination and segregation in low-income neighborhoods, poverty, poor schooling, minimal parental supervision, and distrust of law enforcement" (Diaz 2009: 43; Vigil & Yun 1996). The effects of marginalization were felt most by second generation immigrants who sensed alienated from both the old culture of their parents and the new culture of American society. As youth are in vulnerable stages of their lives, and agents of social control—such as schools, families, and law enforcement—fail to adequately provide means for socialization, the gangs give a sense of belonging that is absent elsewhere.

Signs of Citizenship and Belonging

An Alternative to Social Conformity

The decision to join the MS-13 or 18th Street gang is a result of the failure to undergo mainstream socialization and have strong connections to society, all of which are experiences that take part in the public sphere. These bonds, which encourage conformity, are based on four elements: attachment, commitment, involvement, and belief. According to social control theory, when these societal bonds are weakened, "deviance" crystallizes. In the case of the Salvadoran youth in Los Angeles, factors such as the family breakdown, single-parent households, and a lack of positive male role models were not only prevalent in those neighborhoods, but were also by-products of the racist barriers that prevented full integration into society. These factors affected the youth's ability to attach to social norms, and thus the desire to conform. Family and the education system are important for inspiring healthy goals in young adults as well as the commitment to conventional beliefs because the individual—due to strong attachment bonds—"seeks the approval of significant others or wants to prove that he or she is motivated to pursue laudable goals" (Vigil & Yun 1996: 141). However, due to broken families, the lack of parental presence in the lives of these youths because of the need to work, and the feeling that they do not belong, these Salvadorans do not find reason to commit themselves to goals that would tie them closer to a society they cannot relate to. Ideally, a youth has role models that serve as a guide towards these activities that increase commitment to socially acceptable goals, but the lack thereof deters the desire to be socially accepted and to believe in the social value system.

Measuring the level of conformity these Latino gang members have to society through the social control theory is a way to demonstrate how they resist American social norms, rejecting the U.S. concept of citizenship and formulating their own membership. In the case of the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs, the barrios of Los Angeles had the common pattern of "macrohistorical forces and socioeconomic stresses

[which] cultivated an environment that actually discourage[d] the formation of attachment bonds" (Vigil & Yun 1996: 145). According to Vigil and Yun, these obstacles suppressed "the motivation for youth to exercise responsibility and discipline for work and family duties, as they found the paths to achievement blocked" (ibid.). Thus, their model of citizenship within the gang became an alternative to the one they were surrounded by in American society, first formulated as a different kind of social citizenship, and then developed to incorporate other aspects of citizenship, such as political and economic forms. Like other marginalized groups "confronted by the cold permanence of racism and oppression," these gangs "turned away from secular, Western identities and toward nationalism, ethnicity, or militant religions" (Hagedorn 2008: xxiv).

After exposure to political violence and state terror during the Salvadorian civil war, Salvadorian refugees came to the United Statse in hopes of new beginnings.[1] However, they were again marginalized and removed from the public sphere, thus looking to themselves for a system that would help them access basic services and give them an alternative model of participatory citizenship they could benefit from. By the twenty-first century, the MS-13 and 18th street gangs grew into institutionalized organizations. Philip Selznick's theory (1948) of institutionalization and its application by Hagedorn allow for the interpretation of citizenship characteristics in these gang organizations. According to this theory,

> institutions acquire an identity that is shaped by the need to adapt to changing conditions. These include rivalry with other organizations as well as power struggles by group leaders. As organizations institutionalize, they develop rituals and ceremonies that distinguish them from other similar organizations, and come up with an apocryphal organizational history. An organization produces a formal or informal structure with rules and role expectations, its members identify with the organization, and it gathers support from at least some elements of the broader community (Hagedorn 2008: 8).

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[1] The majority of first-generation MS-13 and 18th Street gang members were Salvadoran immigrants who sought refuge in the United States from their war-torn country in Central America. Only 2% of the Salvadoran population who applied for asylum status in the 1980s were approved, whereas the majority were labeled "frivolous" due to legalization provisions made by the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986, which only gave 146,000 Salvadorans legal status during the 1980s (Gammage 2007).

Thus, a relationship develops between the gang (organization) and the community, from which the organization gathers support while establishing rules and role expectations for its members that, in turn, shape their identity as a group and as alternate form of citizenship under a new social contract.

The Organization and the Community: A Social Contract

From the outside, it may seem that the sole purpose of gangs is to cause terror and support an illegal market of drug trafficking from which they gain most of their income. However, to the youth of the Salvadoran community, the Latino gangs instill in its members—as well as the community—a belief in the organization itself. The gangs provide its members with an alternative to the concept of citizenship represented in general society. At the same time, there is also a deeper relationship for its members because cultural ties make the bond stronger. The fact that these gangs have been institutionalized implies that:

> the gang's show goes on despite changes in leadership (killed, incarcerated, or 'matured out'); it has organization complex enough to sustain multiple roles of its members (including roles for women and children); it can adapt to changing environments (police repression or civil war); it fulfills some needs of its community (economics, security, services); and it organizes a distinct outlook of its members (symbols, rituals, traditions, sometimes called a subculture) (Hagedorn 2008: 9–10).

Thus, there is a commitment to involve and protect the community at different levels of the organization, and the organization is determined and persistent in making sure it survives any force that tries to eliminate its presence. As Hagedorn states, a "frustrated and demoralized population will reluctantly turn to armed non-state actors who can provide security of a sort, a sense of identity, perhaps the sole local supply of jobs, and rudimentary services that the state cannot or will not offer" (2008: 21). Certainly, that is what the gang has become for the Salvadoran and greater Latino community.

An Informal Structure, A Public Sphere

When Mara Salvatrucha first came into existence, between 1985 and 1988, many joined the gang because it "provided a source of protection, assistance, associations, and connections for newly arriving Salvadoran immigrants and for immigrants who were having problems becoming part of the community" (Valdez 2011: 25–26). Because of the rapid increase in membership, by the early 1990s MS-13 had secured enough power to influence the gang subculture of Los Angeles. Beyond the initial reasons for joining a gang, organizations such as Mara Salvatrucha offered a worldview, a belief system that outlines membership. This indirectly secures allegiance, strengthening not just dependency but also loyalty to the gang. Such experiences are especially true for young teenagers.

This coincides with Hirschi's concept (1969) of the socialization process in that early street experiences, pre-gang cohorting, and insufficient schooling experiences all significantly undermine a youth's attachment to conventional goals (Vigil & Yun 1996: 154). When the *commitment* to goals is destabilized by these experiences, their *involvement* in activities that will lead to social acceptability—and *belief* in the social value system presented by American society—disintegrates. The gang offers an alternate belief system for the immigrant youth and those interested in joining the gang. Aside from high dropout rates for Latinos in the area, once they were out of school, they "'drop[ed] into' gangs and commit[ed] themselves to the gang's values and norms. Street socialization additionally alienate[d] youth from what [was] learned in the schools, and societal discrimination and economic injustice further erode[d] allegiance to conventional commitments" (Vigil & Yun 1996: 154). When they lost this connection, the gang encouraged participation in activities that helped the youth gain respect in the streets, mainly through acts of violence. This changed the youth's definition of success for one that is deviant and against social control, the gang having offered an alternate socialization process with new beliefs.

The gang became a substitution for the education system that failed many Latinos, and gave them a chance to still attain a respectable status in the streets. As one scholar of Latino gangs explains, the gang is "'the family of last resort…when the parents are absent, abusive, or just worn down by the pressure of

barrio life,' and it becomes 'a school when public education disintegrates" (Diaz 2009: 43–44). By 1999, the Latino street gangs—"many of which now had a mixed-race membership"—were the fastest growing type of gang in the country (Valdez 2011: 33). They were still loosely structured, working in small subsets of the gang that they were associated with. Those who fall into a role of leadership within the gang are those who are most prone to violence and criminal activity. They are referred to as "shot callers" (slang for street or prison gang elites), and can be as "young as fifteen or sixteen years old, can exert a strong influence over the subordinate gang members and have a major impact on the gang's activities" (Valdez 2011: 35).

Gender roles have also played an important, and in some ways revolutionary, part on the structure of gangs and the concept of membership. Traditionally, women were not allowed to join gangs. These Latino gangs broke the gender barrier: women could join formerly all-male gangs, create an all-female gang, and even become co-leaders of a gang. In addition to sharing leadership roles, female members were also allowed to partake in "drive-by shootings, robberies, carjacking and murders, and in some cases they shared equal responsibility with their male cohorts for the protection of gang turf and fellow gang members" (Valdez 2011: 32). In some instances, their treatment in the gang revealed them as equals to men. Even when deciding to join these gangs, women had the choice of being "jumped" in just like men, where for a certain length of time members of the gang are allowed to beat the nominee. Alternatively, women had the option of being "sexed" in, something that men were not offered. In this situation, "a dice is rolled to determine how many gang members [the woman] has to have sex with in order to solidify her membership into the gang" (Valdez 2011: 35). Girls also had to fight to gain respect (status and recognition) just like the male gang members, but once this was obtained, they relied on their reputations and less on fighting (Chesney-Lind, Shelden, & Joe 1996: 198). At the end of the day, whereas women were also granted a form of membership and citizenship to these gangs, there was still a sexual double standard that characterized "'male gang members' as well as neighborhood views of girls in gangs. Girl

gang members were labeled 'tramps' and symbolized as 'no good,' despite the girls' vigorous rejection of these labels" (ibid.).

Formalities of the Organization: Citizenship

Several gang traditions and rituals embody aspects of the model of citizenship it offers members. As previously mentioned, in order to join the gang, one had to partake in the initiation ritual of being "jumped" in. Some say this process is to reassure the group that the nominee could handle a beating, or furthermore, that he or she was strong enough to be part of the gang. If nothing else, this ritual sheds light on the gang mantra that stands for violence and fear: "The more you fear me, the more you respect me" (Valdez 2011: 35). This ritual has changed from the time Mexican gangs first formulated it. Back then, "membership was informal and did not require the violent entry ritual common among later gangs—beating and sometimes commission of a criminal act, including murder, to prove one's steel" (Diaz 2009: 66). Indeed, the definition of membership, and thus citizenship, is different from that of Mexican gangs. With increasing competition in the drug trafficking business, violence in neighborhoods where gangs resided also increased. It spread to occur "in churches, aboard public buses, at movie theaters, and on or near school campuses. Young Latino gang members in particular have tended to be very violent…always prepared for a chance encounter with rivals" (Valdez 2011: 35).

Yet, this idea of violence and respect ties into another defining characteristic of citizenship in Latino gangs: honor. Valdez makes it known that, "in the Latino street gang culture, losing a life in defense of the neighborhood is considered an honor both to the gang and to the individual gang member who has paid the highest price"; the individual's sacrifice will be avenged by his surrogate family, his gang (2011: 35). Their death is often memorialized in a well-attended funeral—considered to be another ritual of the gang—where gang members wear special clothing and lay down the gang's colors on the coffin. Not only does this sound like a military ceremony, but it also depicts the idea that these members are citizens of the same organization. Even the laying down of gang colors can be a metaphor for laying the colored flag of their

common citizenry. In some cases, a member's death is seen as a martyr of "the cause" in rivalries against other gangs. To be a citizen of this group is to gain respect in the community by showing strength through physicality. It reflects ownership and power of the streets that so many ethnic gangs fight for.

By the time the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs developed, a dominant ideology that fear and violence is how one gains power, control, and respect in the neighborhoods enabled several Latino gangs to take over entire communities. An additional way gangs were able to implement fear and intimidation was through drug trafficking. This trend really began in the 1950s with the emergence of the Mexican Mafia, a prison gang in California commonly known as La Eme (the "M") (Valdez 2011: 26–28). The "M" wanted to gain control over the Latino street gangs and drug trafficking activity in L.A. partly by monopolizing such ideology of violence. By 1993, the Mara Salvatrucha gang started to partake in drug trafficking, as well as extortion, robbery, and murder, aligning itself with the Mexican Mafia by using the number "13" along with their gang name (Valdez 2011: 29). This indicates a coalition between the two gangs because the thirteenth letter of the alphabet is "M," thus implying an association with the Mexican Mafia when they refer to themselves as MS-13. Doing so connects them directly with the source that is monopolizing and influencing drug trafficking business in the area. The way these gangs were able to institutionalize and organize their business was through the founding of the Sureños, "a general term for Southern California Latino gangs that includes La Eme, MS, and the 18th Street Gang" (Valdez 2011: 28). The "M" gang served as a foundation for this network.

The ability of multiple gangs to network with each other demonstrates not only organization and institutionalization of a system, it also implies economic citizenship. Every member within each gang has a duty to fulfill as part of a greater systematic process that ideally guarantees each gang wealth and income. To be a member—a citizen—of the gang means to help take part in their illicit business. And the system is only growing more and more as these gangs are able to expand. According to their level of organization and type of activity, a gang can be classified as first-, second-, or third-generation. In the case of MS-13,

they are "evolving toward a third-generation structure as it deepens its level of organization across the country" (Valdez 2011: 36–37). This implies that they are "highly structured and center on the acquisition of money and power through sophisticated criminal activity. They operate across borders and can come to resemble crime syndicates more than street gangs" (Valdez 2011: 36).

Although these gangs support an informal economy, and may cause havoc to reach statuses of power, they still provide an alternate job market and income source for their members. Yashar argues that the illicit activity that gangs partake in actually harms the rights and forms of citizenship through distortions, such as violence and fear, which are produced by the illicit economy (2013: 437–439). It deprives basic citizenship rights, including freedom from harm, which is considered fundamental. However, Yashar is referring to the liberal democratic form of citizenship where certain civilians are incorporated in the public sphere and social contract, and fall outside of these immigrant communities. The majority of those within the Latino community have not been granted the same level of citizenship or participation in the public sphere as the majority of the greater population, and thus are secluded from free market competition in U.S. society. The creation of these gangs in one way is to respond to this dilemma by taking it upon themselves to develop a system so they can still compete in a free market economy. The violence and fear they inflict in the neighborhoods is to secure their power in order to guarantee a chance at competing in the illicit economy, their only way to make profit fast. Many times, this violence is inflicted on the enemy rather than on members of their own community. So, in perspective, it depends on whose citizenship is being analyzed. Members inside and outside of the gang in the surrounding community, who receive protection and other benefits from the presence of gangs, are granted opportunities to practice forms of citizenship—it is not violated. Those who are outside of this system and are caught in the cross fire, essentially those who do benefit from U.S. society's model of citizenship, probably will experience some side effects of this alternate form of citizenship being nearby.

A Model of Citizenship

Anarchism

The Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street gangs provide opportunities for members to practice different kinds of citizenship duties and privileges. The gang's connection and relation to the greater community is a form of social citizenship. Their representation, dedication, and loyalty to a particular gang versus other gangs is a form of political citizenship. And finally, partaking in a systematic means of drug trafficking in order to earn some form of income is a representation of economic citizenship. Although it seems that these are basic practices of any form of citizenship under any model of government, whether it be populism, socialism, liberal democracy, or anarchy, some of these practices are restricted more than others. Of these options, however, it seems that the restructured form of gang citizenship mostly agrees with and fits the structure of anarchy. For one, there is a literal absence of government because these gangs chose to depend upon themselves rather than the local government for needs and assistance. Their negative experience of death squads by the Salvadoran government in addition to marginalization by American society upon arrival to Los Angeles have shaped and influenced this view. Furthermore, the ideology of violence and intimidation in order to gain power, respect, and control reflect ideals of an anarchic model and form of citizenship. Even Valdez alludes to the idea when he says that "the varied motivations that bring youths into gangs also tends to encourage anarchic attitudes" (2011: 37). At the same time, these gangs have institutionalized themselves to their conditioned state in society.

Nonetheless, these gangs are not a form of lawlessness and political disorder in society because they have institutionalized themselves, as the negative and traditional notion of anarchy implies. Rather, their structure is what Pierre-Joseph Proudhon would dub as anarchism, a concept he began to embrace and defended in 1840 in *What is Property?*:

> In a given society, the authority of man over man is inversely proportional to the state of intellectual development which that society has reached. . . . As man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy. . . . Every question of domestic politics must be decided by departmental

statistics; every question of foreign politics is an affair of international statistics. The science of government rightly belongs to one of the sections of the Academy of Science, whose permanent secretary is necessarily prime minister; and since every citizen may address a memoir to the Academy, every citizen is a legislator. But, as the opinion of no one is of any value until its truth has been proven, no one can substitute his will for reason—nobody is king (Proudhon 1840: 264–265).

Essentially, liberty and justice of the individual would be best achieved in a system such as

anarchism where there is absence of a sovereign yet not necessarily implying disorder in society. For many

immigrant cultures, "anarchy offer[s] both resistance to mainstream capitalist society and a community

determined to change society to one that valued individual freedom while promoting collectivity" (Kelland

2010: 39–40). Proudhon's thoughts on government institutions may also align with those who have been

excluded from its public sphere:

> Experience, in fact, shows that everywhere and always the Government, however much it may have been for the people at its origin, has placed itself on the side of the richest and most educated class against the more numerous and poorer class; it has little by little become narrow and exclusive; and, instead of maintaining liberty and equality among all, it works persistently to destroy them, by virtue of its natural inclination towards privilege. . . . We may conclude without fear that the revolutionary formula cannot be Direct Legislation, nor Direct Government, nor Simplified Government, that it is NO GOVERNMENT. Neither monarchy, nor aristocracy, nor even democracy itself in so far as it may imply any government as all, even though acting in the name of the people, and calling itself the people. No authority, no government, not even popular, that is the Revolution. . . . Governing the people will always be swindling the people. It is always man giving orders to man, the fiction which makes an end of liberty (Proudhon 1851: 108, 126).

Anarchism dismisses the Hobbesian idea that man, outside the protection of a sovereign, faces

misery and a short life; man can survive without it. The state would be replaced by a form of society that

ran on mutual cooperation, which fits the model of the Sureños in Southern California. These gangs have

structured themselves this way in society, an institutionalized group that relies on themselves to pursue

certain goals and provides an alternate form of membership based on collectivist values.

Citizenship Outside of the State

Philip Oxhorn's analysis of alternative models of citizenship demonstrates how Salvadoran

refugees came to create the model of citizenship found in the MS-13 and 18th Street gangs. Angled with a

historical perspective, he asserts that the structure and development of membership in such gangs is not just a coincidence, but has been in response to their marginalization and negative experience of power structures. Oxhorn acknowledges that the central motivation "for the evolution of citizenship historically has been the mobilization of self-organized groups challenging their own perceived marginalization" (2013: 475). In many ways, this was the state that Salvadorans found themselves in Los Angeles beginning in the 1980s. Citizenship in its most basic form promotes rights and responsibilities under a banner of equality for a predefined group of people. It naturally "distinguishes 'us' from 'others'," yet this implies that there are "tendencies to impose internal homogeneity and external domination over the 'other'" (Oxhorn 2013: 479). The unification and loyalty that is required of members to MS-13 and 18th Street can be considered internal cohesion through identity formation, which rings true to another aspect of citizenship: it is also subjective in that "specific citizenship rights reflect the varying priorities, cultures and histories of different peoples" (Oxhorn 2013: 481). The Latino, and more so Salvadoran, identity of these gangs not only birthed their existence, but also helped unify the gang against other gangs.

During the twentieth century in Latin America, the dominant model of citizenship was *citizenship as cooptation*. Especially for civilians before, during, and after El Salvador's civil war, the privilege to social rights of citizenship—often "segmented, partial and unequal"—depended on "political loyalty and/ or a de facto acceptance of the limits of social change through social mobilization" (Oxhorn 2013: 485). Thus, if civilians were against the Salvadoran regime, their rights to social citizenship were taken away because they were marked as enemies of the state and ruling elites. As social citizenship was taken away, fighting for political citizenship was considered secondary and precarious in light of survival. Furthermore, the last two presidential elections prior to the civil war abused the right to political citizenship because of voter fraud and manipulation of the ballot system.

When Salvadoran refugees fled, and relocated to different parts of the United States, though mainly in California and Texas, they were exposed to another model of citizenship: *citizenship as*

consumption. It is based on the idea that a citizen's economic resources determine the amount of access he or she has to social and civil rights (Oxhorn 2013: 485). Many members of the Latino community continued to be segmented and marginalized, while inequality remained the same, unable to take part in this free market of voters where voting power is channeled through delegates and the active participation in the public sphere. Oxhorn suggests that this form of exclusion leads to a greater danger: "people will give their political support to apparently effective leaders who promise to address pressing problems by any means, independently of the toll that this takes on both democratic institutions and the quality of citizenship more broadly" (2013: 486). For the Salvadorans in Southern California, their investment in political support went to the Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street gangs who satisfied the necessities of many members, from an informal job market and source of income to membership and protection.

The gang approached *citizenship as consumption* by transitioning to a third model of citizenship that they created for the Latino community of Southern California: *citizenship as agency*. In this case, the active role that members have within the gang is meant to represent and support the disadvantaged groups that fall within their community. The focus on rights is still material, such as in the case of citizenship as cooptation, since the gangs help members of the community to attain services and opportunities that otherwise they could not attain through the government because of their marginalized status. Some of these social services are seen as priorities, such as healthcare, education and overcoming poverty. Although this model of citizenship favors social rights over other forms, citizenship as agency is the model most likely "to allow for the institutionalization of identity-based rights in that it recognizes the important role actors demanding such rights must play in their definition and enactment" (Oxhorn 2013: 489). The MS-13 and 18th Street gangs have indeed institutionalized themselves in part by becoming agents of collective identity and identification, with a voice and say in achieving certain rights based on their articulated identity as Latinos and Salvadorans.

Each model of citizenship reviewed specifies a stage that led up to the current formation and model

of citizenship that members of these Latino gangs exercise. Citizenship as cooptation was a top-down

implementation of citizenship that dictated social and political inclusion through social control and loyalty.

The state reinforced systems of inequality while trying to contain and repress potential and actual protest by

the popular classes. El Salvador was no different in their means to fight the FMLN-FDR opposition. The

transition to the United States revealed another model of citizenship where the criteria was measured more

so by economic abilities rather than political loyalty. Here, Salvadorans were limited from contributing to the

public sphere, and thus the social contract. This led to the creation of gangs and the variant of the third

model of citizenship that has a bottom-up approach to achieving the needs of the community. This variant

of the model is guided by the idea that a predefined group can reach effective equality in terms of self-

organization. Some would even consider this third model a form of state decentralization, which can be a

side effect of what gangs are doing today.

Conclusion

The analysis of both Proudhon's concept of anarchism and Oxhorn's exploration of different

models of citizenship enable to follow the evolution of citizenship models that Salvadorans were exposed

to, leading to what seems to be a morphed model that combines anarchism with citizenship as agency

under the Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street gangs. Marginalization from the public sphere in the urban Los

Angeles setting and negative government interactions are only some of the reasons why these

Salvadorans decided to come together and organize themselves in a way that would help them achieve

citizenship rights and characteristics that were not attainable through U.S. society. Joining these gangs give

them protection and membership from a society that makes them feel "alienated and marginalized by both

the dominant urban white culture and the established Mexican American population" (Valdez 2011: 24).

The cohesion and identity gives them a sense of political citizenship to exercise against other gangs who

challenge them. The extended relationship these members have with the community develops a sense of social and civil citizenship in which the gangs come to represent and replace for some second-generation youth the "family, mistress, employer and nation" as Tom Diaz remarked (2009: 5). Finally, although many have claimed that illicit activity harms citizenship, some refugees and their children did not benefit from consumption as a model of citizenship. As we saw, all these factors have led them to develop the gang frameworks to provide an alternate avenue of attaining social services and acceding resources, providing a form of income and thus a variant of economic citizenship.

Gang members are the product of their experiences, both within society and vis-à-vis the State. Deborah Yashar indicates that they are "a reflection of the weakness of contemporary states and citizenship not only to protect citizens but also to integrate gang members as citizens prior to their recruitment, and during their time, as gang members" (2013: 446). In some ways, the crystallization of gang cultures is the fault of the State for not successfully delivering a form of citizenship that should promote equality or at least access to all forms of entitlements. In other words, that development has been the state's failure to register and flexibly respond to how globalization has affected models of citizenship practiced in specific countries. As migration continues, there is an opportunity for nations and societies to redefine citizenship in a manner that would embrace multiple groups and identities, especially those that have been marginalized and excluded from the public sphere. Perhaps then, democracies would have a second chance to incorporate these Latino gang members, whether they stay in Los Angeles or are deported back to Central America and other regions of the world. If not, they will continue to take it upon themselves to find alternative forms of citizenship fitting their horizons and needs.

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