

## MODERATING INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL SUPPORT ON SUICIDAL IDEATION IN A SAMPLE OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS<sup>1</sup>

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*Summary.*—The present study explored social support as a moderator in the relationship between depression and suicidal ideation in a sample of 104 immigrant Mexican-American adults. Participants completed the Personal Resource Questionnaire-Part 2, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale, and the Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire. Ineffective social support and high depression were significantly associated with elevated suicidal ideation. Further analyses indicated a significant interaction between social support and depression in predicting suicidal ideation, thereby suggesting that social support may serve as a protective factor against suicidal ideation during the acculturative process.

Hovey (in press) and Hovey and King (1997), in their discussions of suicide risk among acculturating individuals, suggested that social support may serve as a protective factor against suicidal ideation. The present investigation examined this hypothesis by exploring social support as a moderator in the relationship between depression and suicidal ideation in a sample of 104 Mexican immigrant adults. Participants were 35 men and 69 women ( $M$  age = 32.1 yr.,  $SD = 14.5$ ) from an English as Second Language program for adults in Los Angeles. The participants were administered Spanish versions of the Personal Resource Questionnaire-Part 2 (Weinert, 1987), which measured perceived effectiveness of social support, the Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-Depression) (Radloff, 1977), and the Adult Suicidal Ideation Questionnaire (Reynolds, 1991) in a classroom setting.

The mean score for social support was 120.7 ( $SD = 26.4$ ). The mean score for depression was 19.6 ( $SD = 10.2$ ). The mean score for suicidal ideation was 10.2 ( $SD = 23.6$ ). Pearson correlation coefficients indicated that low scores on social support ( $r = -.27$ ,  $p < .003$ ) and high scores on depression ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .005$ ) were related to high scores on suicidal ideation. A multiple regression analysis for social support and depression on suicidal ideation indicated that scores on social support ( $\beta = -.26$ ,  $t = -2.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and on depression ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $t = 2.6$ ,  $p < .01$ ) were significant independent predictors of suicidal ideation but accounted for only 10% of the variation in suicidal ideation. To test the moderating influence of social support, a 2 (depression groups)  $\times$  3 (social support groups) analysis of variance was conducted to

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examine the interaction of social support and depression on suicidal ideation. Table 1 shows the means.

The findings lend support to the hypothesis. Although scores on depression and suicidal ideation were positively related, the interaction indicated that the depressed participants who lacked effective social support re-

TABLE 1  
MEAN SUICIDAL IDEATION SCORES BY SOCIAL SUPPORT AND DEPRESSION

Social Support	Low Depression			High Depression		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Low	1.6	2.6	9	30.1	41.0	25
Medium	4.2	7.5	19	4.2	8.5	15
High	2.7	6.5	25	4.6	11.6	11

*Note.*—The interaction of Social Support by Depression was significant ( $F_{2,98} = 3.92, p < .02$ ).

ported significantly more suicidal ideation than the depressed participants who reported adequate social support. The findings are consistent with the theoretical notion that social support may help buffer against the risk for suicidal ideation during the acculturative process.

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