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Family Closeness and Domestic Abuse Among Caribbean and South American Women in South Florida

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the importance of family member closeness as a protective factor against domestic abuse. We explore the link between long-lasting relations within the family and intra-familial violence perpetrated against women in Latino households in South Florida. We use data from an Inter-generational Transmission of Drug Use between Latina Mothers and Daughters (ITDMD) study. The study includes data on family relations and domestic abuse. We estimate a series of multivariate regressions to obtain the probability of abuse against women, the types of abuse inflicted and the relationship with the abusers. Our results indicate that among abused women, the effects of long-lasting relations within the family differ depending on the type of relationship between the abuser and the victim and the degree of closeness the victim feels towards other family members. Given these findings, there is a need to further study family relations and abuse in Latino households.

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Keywords

Abuse; Intra-family violence; Family relations; Latinas

Domestic abuse is a forceful tactic intentionally employed by family members to cause physical and/or psychological harm to the victim (e.g. emotional, physical, and sexual abuse). Although domestic violence in the United States (U.S.) has been widely researched (Agoff et al. 2007; Anderson 2010; Cunradi et al. 2009; Handwerker 1998; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998), the bulk of the literature on this topic has largely concentrated on the risk factors for abuse; few studies have discussed the importance of family member closeness as a protective factor in domestic abuse. These studies provide frameworks that place family-level contextual factors as measured by co-residence with parents, as the most influential of the ecological levels in determining children's exposure to violence (Cicchetti and Lynch 1993; Hanson et al. 2006).

However, extant studies have not looked at the quality of the child-parental relationship and their relation with lifetime domestic abuse. Moreover, despite abundant research, few studies have documented the problem of domestic violence and the underlying factors influencing it in U.S. Latino populations, the fastest growing and largest minority group in the United States (Adames and Campbell 2005; Agoff et al. 2007; Bonomi et al. 2009; Fedovskiy et al. 2008; Glass et al. 2009; Ingram 2007; Moreno 2007). The few studies which have documented domestic violence among Latinos, show limited and mixed evidence on its prevalence levels or information on the risk factors influencing this problem (Brabeck and Guzman 2008; Brown 2009; Hazen and Soriano 2007; Klevens et al. 2007).

Furthermore, since a large majority of the Latino population in the U.S. is of Mexican descent, many studies have focused on this immigrant group only. However, research on domestic violence has found that different Latino groups show variations in risk markers for wife assault and violence against women (Aldarondo et al. 2002). Wife abuse does not have the same disapproval among the different Latino groups (Kantor et al. 1994). Similarly, there is a paucity of research on the underlying factors influencing different types of domestic violence among U.S. Latinos (Strauss and Smith 1990). Several studies on Latino immigrant populations have documented that their cultural and traditional norms, family structure, and social support systems protect individuals against violent events, drug use and the development of mental and psychiatric disorders in the U.S. However, as acculturation increases over time, the patterns of immigrants are increasingly similar to their native counterparts (Escobar 1998; Vega et al. 1998).

Moreover, De La Rosa and White (2001) found that family pride (also called *familismo*), extended family structure, and parental involvement are deterrents for drug use and associated with a lower prevalence of child maltreatment among Latinos. The role of family traditionalism is also associated with family bonding as a source of "protection" against deviant behavior in Latino youth (Gonzalez Castro et al. 2007). This article examines the important role played by close, personal, and long-lasting family relationships in various types of domestic abuse in Latino households. In particular, it analyzes the relationships

between emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and family bonds (e.g., bonds between a daughter and her father, mother, partner, and siblings).

Family Relations and Domestic Violence

Research studies indicate domestic abuse affects the parent–child attachment process as victims tend to develop insecure, disorganized, and disoriented attachments (Carlson et al. 1989; Lyons and Snoxell 2005; Lyons-Ruth et al. 1999; Shen 2009; Sunday et al. 2008). However, studies focusing on the relationship between abused children and adolescents and parental attachment show mixed associations. Sternberg et al. (2005) looked at the effects of recent and life-time family violence on the quality of child-parental relationships and concluded child–parent relations are dynamic and depend on the type of abuse, when it occurred and who is the perpetrator and the victim. Moreover, in a critical review of the literature, Anderson (2010) indicates researchers have recently begun to study how the combined characteristics of victims of perpetrators may create a dynamic that facilitates or discourages conflict and violence.

In the current study, researchers analyze the relation between long-term family relationships and lifetime domestic abuse. We argue that *familismo*, a Latino value that emphasizes the importance of being rooted in the family and ensuring that one's actions contribute to the welfare of all family members (Behnke et al. 2008; Graham-Bermann et al. 2006), is posited to serve as a protective factor against abuse in the lives of Latino women. Our principal aim is to explore whether a long-lasting relation (i.e., a relationship where one can rely on and have confidence in the support of a family member) in Latino households is a protective factor against emotional, physical, or sexual abuse. We hypothesize Latina women who reported having long-lasting relationships with their family members have lower odds of reporting lifetime domestic abuse.

Furthermore, we explore the protective effects of different family bonds (e.g. daughter-mother, daughter-father, among siblings, and between partners). Given the fundamental role parents play in raising their children, and the weakening effects of domestic abuse in parent–child relations (Russell and Saebel 1997), we also hypothesize that relationships between daughters and parents are more important in preventing domestic abuse than relationships between siblings or between respondents and their partners.

Types of Abuse Inflicted by Family Members

According to the seminal study on family violence (Straus et al. 2006), domestic abuse is present in every American neighborhood. Data on national trends on opinions and behaviors regarding parenting practices indicate that 36 % of respondents had observed an adult physically abusing a child and 71 % had seen an adult emotionally abusing a child (Daro 1999). Given the high prevalence of intra-family violence, it is surprising that little is known about the incidence of abuse experienced when a member of the household reports a close relationship with an abuser. In the case of abusive fathers DuFoura et al. (2008) argue that although a significant gap persists concerning the knowledge of fathers' roles in child maltreatment, literature suggests men are more likely to abuse children sexually and women

are more likely to be deemed responsible for the protection of their children. However, May-Chahal (2006) argues women are as likely as men to be perpetrators of childhood physical abuse. Furthermore, Straus et al. (2006) found mothers were more likely to have used physical violence towards children. Sibling rivalry is another form of intra-family violence that has not been widely researched and it is the most prevalent form of family violence.

The vast body of research on partner violence indicates intimate partner violence, which is understood as the physical or sexual assault of a sexual intimate, has been suffered by 25–30 % of women in the United States during their lifetime. Moreover, spouse abuse including physical, sexual, and psychological coercion and degradation might occur at even higher rates and is associated with a variety of health conditions in women (Campbell et al. 2007).

Relationships Among Family Members and Domestic Abuse

Research on the relation between abuse and attachment in non-Latino populations indicates power imbalances and inconsistent patterns of abuse enhance the strength of emotional bonds between victims and abusers (Dutton and Painter 1993). Power imbalances in Latino households are likely because of the cultural traits of *marianismo* and *machismo*, which might serve as risk factors for domestic abuse. According to Galanti (2003) *machismo* has both positive and negative connotations in Latino culture: “men are expected to behave valiantly to protect the honor and welfare of their families” (p. 183); however, “machismo may also entail men’s active subjugation of women and performance of high-risk activities to prove their masculinity, thus increasing health risks for men and the risk of domestic violence for women” (ibid.).

On the other hand, *marianismo* means Latino woman are expected to take care of her family, as well as submit to and take orders from her husband and any other authoritative male figures. Given the cultural importance of family among Latinos, there is a strong likelihood of power imbalances within the family and attachment might be caused by inconsistent behaviors, as suggested by the theory of traumatic bonding and models linking attachment and abuse. Dutton and Painter (1993) elaborated a theory of traumatic bonding which establishes that strong emotional attachments are developed in abusive relations featured by power imbalances and intermittent good-bad treatment. On the other hand, Henderson et al. (2005) argue the tenacity of attachment among family members is independent of relationship quality. Attachment in relationships is associated to the self-assessment of victims and abusers as distressed or supportive (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991). We hypothesized the abuse inflicted by a given family member is related to the strength of the relationships with other family members. To explore this hypothesis we study intra-family violence by analyzing the effect of long-lasting relations with each family member on the reported abuse inflicted by fathers, mothers, siblings, and partners.

Method

Participants

The data for the analysis originated from the Inter-generational Transmission of Drug Use between Latina Mothers and Daughters (ITDMD) study, which aimed to identify the risk

and protective factors that influence the intergenerational transmission of drug-use behaviors between Latina mothers and daughters (De La Rosa et al. 2010). This study was based on a sample of mother-daughter dyads recruited for a one time face-to-face interview between 2004 and 2006 in Miami, Florida. We analyzed data on 316 Latino women clustered in 158 dyads. These Latino women were recruited using the snowball sampling method and multiple outreach strategies. The study used snowball sampling techniques because of the difficulty to recruit pairs of Latina mother and daughters with different experiences of drug use.

Mothers and daughters were classified into four dyads based on whether they qualified as abusers of alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, ecstasy, and/or prescription drugs. In order to increase the variability in the sample, number of entry points was maximized as participants were recruited through community fairs, health clinics, advertisements on local Spanish radio and television stations, advertisements in a local alternative newspaper, announcements at local drug court programs, and via community based substance abuse support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). The general criteria for inclusion for all participants in the ITDMD study were: 1) consent to be interviewed for at least 2–3 h, 2) being 18 years old or older, 3) identifying themselves as Latinas, 4) living in a community setting of Miami-Dade County, Florida, 5) Having an eligible mother or daughter to participate; and 6) willingness to provide two telephone numbers to researchers for correspondence during participation in the study.

The ITDMD study utilized a quasi-experimental design appropriate for exploring the relationship between long-lasting relations and domestic abuse in Latino households in South Florida for three main reasons. First, the sampling design, which specifies equal numbers of drug-users and non-drug users and mothers and daughters, allows us to control for drug use and adjust for household clustering. Second, an analysis of cross tabulations by dyad type shows that the distribution of domestic abuse is similar for mothers and daughters, non-drug abusers and drug abusers (Chi-square=0.4218; $df=1$; $p=0.5160$). Therefore, we used data reported by mothers and daughters as individual observations for this analysis. Third, the sample is diverse in terms of education, socioeconomic status, foreign born status, and country of origin, and although non-representative, it resembles the profile of Latina first and second generation immigrant women from Caribbean and South American origin living in South Florida.

Miami is the home of a large Latino population predominantly from Central and South America and the Caribbean. According to the American Community Survey 2010 estimates 52 % of the population in Miami-Dade County was foreign born and 94 % of this population came from Latin America or the Caribbean (U.S. Census Bureau 2011). In the current study sample, most people were born in Cuba (48 %), 7 % were born in Colombia, 8 % in Nicaragua, 6 % in Haiti, and the remainder (31 %) came from Mexico or other countries in the Caribbean and South America.

The mean age of the sample is 40 years ($SD=15.57$). Since we did not find evidence of a linear relation between age and the probability of abuse, age was categorized into three

groups: 33 years of age and younger (40 %), between 34 and 49 years of age (29 %), and older than 49 years of age (31 %).

Measures

The survey instrument was constructed by the research team at The Center for Research on U.S. Latino HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse. The questionnaire included existing and widely used measures on domestic abuse and long-lasting relations among family members and family history, as well as, sections on demographic characteristics substance use, sexual behaviors, sexually transmitted diseases and nutrition, among others. Data on family abuse and family relations among family members were collected using the questionnaire on family history and relationships which contained several items on lifetime and present abuse by family members and whether or not the respondent has a long-lasting relationship with each member of the family of origin and the current family (*The Addiction Severity Index; ASI*). We also collected data on type of abuse.

Multiple Forms of Reported Abuse—Women reported lifetime emotional, physical, and/or sexual abuse during their lifetimes. The respondents answered *yes* or *no* to the following questions which measured occurrence and types of domestic abuse: *Did any of these people (mother, father, brother, sexual partner/spouse, children or other significant family member) abuse you in your life: 1) Emotionally, meaning made you feel bad through harsh words? 2) Physically, meaning caused you physical harm? 3) Sexually, meaning forced sexual advances/acts?* These questions on abuse and family relations were taken from the family/social relationship composite scale of *The Addiction Severity Index* (McLellan et al. 1992). The Addiction Severity Index (ASI) has been used in multiple studies showing excellent reliability and validity across a range of types of patients and treatment settings in the U.S. and abroad. The ASI shows adequate psychometric properties as a clinical and research instrument in a Spanish-speaking population (Díaz et al. 2008). The version in Spanish used in the ITDMD study was developed for the Hispanic population. Interviewers were trained to probe with descriptions of abuse (push, pulled, ignored, disrespected). For each reported type of abuse the respondent was asked about the relationship with the abuser.

Family Relations—Participants were asked, *Would you say that you have had a close, long lasting, personal relationship with the following people (mother, father, siblings, sexual partners/spouse and children) in your life?* A close, long-lasting, personal relationship was defined as being able to rely on and have confidence in the support of the person in question. Participants responded to a list of family members with *yes*, *no*, or *not applicable* (if the person did not exist; e.g., if they did not have a sibling).

Data Collection

Respondents were administered a questionnaire in either Spanish or English. All measures were pilot-tested to ensure that they were culturally and linguistically sensitive to Latino culture. Many of these measures were already available in both English and Spanish and had previously been used with Latinas (Armsden and Greenberg 1987; Cohen and Hoberman 1983; O'Farrell et al. 2003; Turner et al. 2001). Measures not available in Spanish were translated into Spanish and back-translated into English in accordance with guidelines

established by the Institutional Review Board and Office of Sponsored Research Administration at Florida International University.

The interviews took place at locations convenient to participants. The majority of interviews took place in participants' homes (69 %) and at a public university facility (19 %). Interviews were conducted by 11 trained and supervised female interviewers. Interviewer training was guided by a manual developed to instruct interviewers about each of the measures in the study questionnaire. Researchers ensured data quality control and data collection process uniformity through supervision and the review of all the interviews and continuous communication and meetings with the interviewers. Interviews were periodically audio-recorded and reviewed by the study director for completeness and accuracy.

Data Analysis Strategy

This analysis is divided in four sections. First, we show descriptive statistics of the three main variables: 1) reported abuse during lifetime (e.g., emotional, physical, and sexual), 2) reported long lasting relationships with family members, and 3) for abused women, reported type of abuse inflicted by family members. All other control variables used in the analysis are then presented.

Second, in order to test our first hypothesis on the correlation between long-lasting family relations and domestic abuse we present estimated odds ratios of logistic regression models on the probability of reporting abuse. We included as independent variable in this model whether or not the respondent reported having long-lasting relationships with her father, mother, sibling, and partner. To test our second hypothesis on the relative importance of long-lasting relationships between daughters and parents as a protective factor against domestic abuse, we estimate predicted probabilities of abuse (using our first model for the following cases: 1) not having long-lasting relationships with any family member, 2) having long-lasting relations with the mother, 3) having long-lasting relations with the father, 4) having long-lasting relations with the siblings, and 4) having long-lasting relations with the partner. Differences in the probabilities of abuse indicate the diverse effects of long-lasting relations between daughter-mother, daughter-father, siblings, and partners on domestic abuse.

Third, to test our third research hypothesis on the link between long-lasting relations among family members and intra-family violence, we present estimated odds ratios of binary logit regression models on the probability of reporting abuse by fathers, mothers, siblings, and/or partners for abused women in the sample. We used as independent variables long-lasting relations and the same control variable as in the previous models and added type of reported abuse (e.g. emotional, physical, or sexual).

Since the sample for the study is a convenience sample using a dyadic model, we use generalized estimating equations in all binomial models to investigate relations in the data while treating the sample as a population and treating the tests for statistical significance as measures of fit for each of the parameters. Therefore, since our convenience sample does not allow us to make statistical inferences about Latino women in South Florida, the estimated standard errors are not used for this purpose.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Sample Description—Sixty nine percent of the participants were born outside the United States (84 % of the mothers and 54 % of the daughters). Thirty percent were from Cuba, 20 % from Colombia, 7 % from Peru, 6 % from Nicaragua, 6 % from Dominican Republic, 5 % from Honduras, 5 % from Puerto Rico, and 21 % from other, predominantly South American, countries. On average they had spent 56.08 % of their lifetime in the U.S. (64.87 % of lifetime abroad for mothers, and 47.29 % for daughters) (Table 1).

The personal income of Latina women in this sample is low in comparison to national standards for their ethnicity and gender. About 66 % of women in our sample reported having an annual personal income lower than \$15,000; 26 % reported an income between \$15,000 and \$35,000; and only about 8 % reported income higher than \$35,000, a figure close to the national median personal income. In contrast, 27 % of the women in the sample reported having less than high school education, 21 % were high school graduates or equivalent, 32 % had some college, and 20 % had a bachelor's or graduate degree.

Multiple Forms of Reported Abuse—The dependent variable in our study is reported type of domestic abuse during one's lifetime. Sixty-four percent of the women reported some type of domestic abuse, with 56 % reporting emotional abuse, 38 % reporting physical abuse, and 18 % reporting sexual abuse during their lifetime.

The literature suggests that very few women report physical or sexual abuse without reporting emotional abuse (Gidycz et al. 1995). Therefore, since women reported several types of abuse, we first estimated the frequency of all the possible combinations of abuse. There are three different types of abuse (emotional, physical, and sexual) and two possible answers for each: yes and no. Hence, we have 23 possible combinations of reported abuse during the lifetime. The four categories with the highest frequency are: 1) No abuse (34.49 %), 2) Emotional abuse only (25.00 %), 3) Emotional and physical abuse but not sexual (16.14 %), and 4) Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (13.61 %). The remaining 10.76 % of the cases were distributed among the other four remaining combinations of abuse.

Long Lasting Family Relations—Seventy-five percent of participants reported having close relationships with their mothers, 72 % had close relationships with their current or last partners, 71 % had close relationships with their siblings, and only about 54 % had close relationships with their fathers.

Family Members as Abusers—In the sample 39 % of women reported being abused by their partners, while 19 % were abused by their mothers, 10 % were abused by their fathers, 10 % abused by their siblings, 13.5 % were abused by children and other relatives. Abuse perpetrated by children against their mothers was not analyzed because of the low prevalence in the sample (3.5 %).

Multivariate Analysis

Protective Effects of Long Lasting Family Relations—In order to explore the relationship between reported abuse and long-lasting relationships with family members, and to test our first hypothesis that states Latino women who have long-lasting relations with their relatives are less likely to report domestic abuse, we estimated a binary logistic regression model on reporting some type of abuse during the lifetime. Predicted odds ratios shown in the second column of Table 2 suggest that having a long-lasting relationship with any member of the family is negatively associated with reporting abuse during the lifetime. In other words, our results suggest that long-lasting relations among family members in the current study serve as a protective factor against domestic abuse. The strongest protective effect is provided by having a close relationship with the mother (OR=0.39; CI 0.20, 0.79), followed by a close relationship with the father (OR=0.43; CI 0.24, 0.77). The relationships with partners (OR=0.66; CI 0.37, 1.17) and siblings (OR=0.72; CI 0.38, 1.34) are also protective against domestic abuse.

In order to test our second hypothesis on the relative importance of long-lasting relations with mothers and fathers vs. long-lasting relations with siblings and partners as protective against domestic abuse we estimated predicted probabilities of abuse. The probability of reporting domestic abuse in the absence of long-lasting family relations is 0.9344 (CI 0.8169, 0.9785). The probability of abuse for women who reported having long-lasting relations with their mothers is 0.8489 (CI 0.4677, 0.9729). The probability of abuse for women who reported having long-lasting relations with their fathers is 0.8602 (CI 0.5203, 0.9722). The probability of abuse for women who reported having long-lasting relations with their siblings is 0.9106 (CI 0.6292, 0.9839). The probability of abuse for women who reported having long-lasting relations with their partners is 0.9106 (CI 0.6292, 0.9839). These probabilities indicate that long-lasting relations with parents are more effective in preventing domestic abuse than long-lasting relations with siblings and partners; however, the differences are marginal.

Models on Types of Abuse—To further explore the dynamics of domestic abuse within the household and describe the profiles of intra-family violence in the observed sample, we estimated binomial logistic regression models on the probability of reporting emotional, physical, or sexual abuse among domestic violence victims ($n=206$). Our main independent variables are the family relationships between the victims and their abusers. We included all previous control variables and long-lasting relations with family members.

The estimated odds ratios on the probability of reporting emotional, physical, or sexual abuse during lifetime are shown in Columns 2, 5 and 8 of Table 3. The estimated odds ratios on the probability of reporting emotional abuse indicate that mothers (OR=2.29; CI 0.70, 7.49), partners (OR=2.16; CI 0.85, 5.47), and siblings (OR=1.55; CI 0.41, 5.88) are likely to inflict emotional abuse. On the other hand, fathers (OR=0.53; CI 0.19, 1.51) are not likely to emotionally abuse their daughters.

The results shown in Column 5 indicate the estimated odds ratios on the probability of reporting physical abuse during the lifetime. All family members are likely to have physically abused participants in this sample. Partners (OR=4.93; CI 2.31, 10.51) and fathers

(OR=4.43; CI 1.30, 15.11) are the most likely followed by mothers (OR=3.24; CI 1.34, 7.86) and siblings (OR=3.19; CI 1.17, 8.74). The results provided in Column 8 of Table 3 indicate that fathers (OR=4.46; CI 1.66, 12.01) and partners (OR=4.37; CI 0.65, 12.36) are the most frequent sexual abusers in this sample. Siblings (OR=1.68; CI 0.68, 4.14) and mothers (OR=1.05; CI 0.42, 2.67) are less likely to be reported as sexual abusers.

Models on Family Members as Abusers—Our third research hypothesis tests whether the protective effects of family member closeness differ depending on the relationship between the victim and the abuser. In order to analyze the association between being abused by a close family member (father, mother, siblings, and partner) and having long-lasting relations within the family, we estimated separate models on the probability of being abused by each family member on all abused women in the sample. The main independent variables in the models are long-lasting relations with each family member (e.g. father, mother, siblings, and partner). We use as controls age, educational level, income, place of birth, drug use, and reported type of domestic abuse (emotional, physical, or sexual).

Fathers as Abusers—Table 4a shows the odds ratios of having long-lasting relations with family members on the probability of being abused by father among all abused women. Having a close long-lasting relation with the mother (OR=1.04; CI 0.38, 2.85) is not protective against father's abuse during the lifetime. However, having a close long-lasting relation with the father on average (OR=0.20; CI 0.07, 0.58) serves as a protective factor against domestic abuse. Having a close long-lasting relationship with the partner (OR=0.43; CI 0.17, 1.07) or siblings (OR=0.63; CI 0.24, 1.63) is also negatively correlated with paternal abuse.

Mothers as Abusers—Column 5 in Table 4a shows odds ratios of having long-lasting relations with family members on the probability of being abused by mother for all abused women. Among abused daughters, those who have a long-lasting relationship with the mother are less likely to report maternal abuse (OR=0.27; CI 0.12, 0.59) than abuse from other family members. However, those who reported a long-lasting relationship with the father are 2.76 (CI 1.27, 6.02) times more likely to report maternal abuse than abuse from other family members. Having a close relationship with the partner (OR=0.66; CI 0.31, 1.40) and with siblings (OR=0.76; CI 0.35, 1.68) serve as protective factors against maternal abuse.

Siblings as Abusers—Column 2 in Table 4b contains the estimated odds ratios for having long-lasting relation with family members on the probability of lifetime abuse by siblings. Abused women who reported having long-lasting relations with their partners (OR=0.59; CI 0.24, 1.44), mothers (OR=0.79; CI 0.31, 2.04), and siblings (OR=0.87; CI 0.35, 2.18) reported, on average, a lower probability of being abused by their siblings than by other family members. However, having a close long-lasting relationship with the father increased the odds of sibling abuse among abused women by 2.50 times (CI 0.93, 6.75).

Partners as Abusers—The odds ratios of having long-lasting family relationships on the probability of partner abuse are shown on Column 5 of Table 4b. Given that relations within the family of origin precede relations with partners, in this model of partner abuse there is an

implied causality between the relations with the members of the family of origin and partner abuse. Having long lasting relations with father (OR=0.69; CI 0.35, 1.35) or mother (OR=0.83; CI 0.39, 1.75) are protective factors against partner abuse.

As described in numerous studies, on average, women who reported having long-lasting relations with their mothers or fathers are less likely to report lifetime partner abuse than abused women with poor family bonds. Long-lasting relations with partner or with siblings are only marginally associated with partner abuse among abused women. On average women who reported having long-lasting relations with their siblings or partners are marginally more likely to report lifetime abuse by partners than other domestically abused women. The results suggest that long-lasting relations with fathers are protective against their abuse, but they are also a risk factor for abuse by other family members. In the next section we discuss these results within the literature on domestic violence and long-lasting family relationships.

Discussion

Our results suggest there are protective effects of long-lasting relationships against domestic abuse. One of the potential explanations for the association between long-lasting relations and domestic abuse in Latino households is that *familismo* within Hispanic households strengthens the protective effects of relationships among family members against domestic abuse. However, these effects are not uniform for all family members. Moreover, when intra-familial abuse is included in the analysis, the effects of long-lasting family relationships indicate that abuse dynamics within the family not only depend on existing family bonds, but also on the relationship between the victim and the abuser. In order to further explore patterns of intra-family violence we incorporate family members not only as agents that might prevent domestic abuse but, as the literature suggests, as perpetrators of abuse. By looking at both positive and negative effects of family members on abuse, we provide a more comprehensive description of the patterns of abuse and the importance of family relations in this sample.

In addition to the distinct cultural traits of the Latino families, their immigration experience is a factor that needs consideration. In this analysis we included whether the respondent was born in the U.S. or in Latin America or the Caribbean. Our results indicate the foreign born were less likely to report life time abuse. The literature on the experience of Latino abused women indicates they are more likely to conceal victimization than U.S. born women (Caetano et al. 2009; Weidel et al. 2008). Moreover, immigrant Latino women with lower levels of acculturation might rationalize the abuse as normal (Garcia et al. 2004; Moreno 2007). As language barriers decrease and acculturation increases immigrant Latino women are more likely to recognize and report domestic abuse. Since the average proportion of lifetime in the U.S. for immigrant women in this sample is close to 70 % and we focus on life-time abuse we believe that our respondents were less likely to conceal victimization than Latino recent immigrants.

To look for explanations of the effects of long-lasting relations on abuse we refer to the literature on parent's attachment and child and youth abuse. The body of research on parent–

child attachment has shown mixed associations. On one side, studies have emphasized that non-abused children tend to rate their parents more positively than abused children and that child physical maltreatment has a negative effect on the parent–child relationship (Lopez and Heffer 1998; Shen 2009; Sunday et al. 2008). On the other side, other studies point that the parent–child bonds are dynamic and that children develop multiple mechanisms to reframe their parent’s abusive behavior (Peled 2000; Sternberg et al. 2005). However, the majority of these results are based on non-Latino populations. Studies on Latino populations focusing on the links between family relations and domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, teen pregnancy and exposure to HIV (Behnke et al. 2008; Garcia et al. 2004; Gilliam 2007; Weidel et al. 2008) have consistently underscored the relevance of the cultural traits of *familismo*, *machismo* and *marianismo* to contextualize domestic abuse in Latino families. *Familismo* is a protective factor because it centers on the importance of family relations, loyalty and reciprocity and solidarity among the family members. The results presented suggest that long-lasting relationships with a caring member of the household have protective effects against domestic abuse.

We further analyze family relations and abuse. Long-lasting relations with parents are more protective than long-lasting relations with other family members. The literature on parenting indicates that Latino offspring tend to communicate with the parent of the same gender (Behnke et al. 2008; DiIorio et al. 1999). Therefore, long-lasting relations between daughters and mothers should have stronger effects on abuse prevention. Although our results are consistent with this expectation, the difference between the protective effects of long-lasting relations between daughter and mother and daughter and father is not large. Even though, only 54 % of women in the sample reported having a long-lasting relation with their fathers, daughter-father relations are relevant to prevent domestic abuse towards Latino women. During the last decade studies have challenged the traditional stereotypes depicting Latino fathers as domineering and unwilling to engage in egalitarian relationships. Qualitative comparative data between Latino and fathers of other races show that Latino fathers tend to be warmer, more engaged and less controlling towards their children (Hofferth 2003).

The literature on abused Latino women has addressed the importance of family relations and social support as factors that facilitate women to leave abusive relations (Garcia et al. 2004). However, studies have not looked at the association of long-lasting relations among family members and the dynamics of intra-household abuse. We explore if the perpetration of abuse by father, mother, siblings or partners is related to long-lasting relations within the family. Our results for abused women indicate that long-lasting family relations with all family members, except relation with mother, are protective against paternal abuse. Long-lasting relations with mothers, partners, and siblings are protective against maternal and sibling abuse; however, long-lasting paternal relation is positively associated with maternal and sibling abuse. In the case of abuse by partners, our results indicate that having a long-lasting relation with mother and/or father is negatively associated with partner abuse. Bonding among siblings is not related with partner abuse in this sample of Latino women in South Florida.

In Latino households fathers are seen as providers and central figures of authority in the households as they have the “right” to exert control over the wife and children (Gilliam 2007) and mothers in Latino households are the central figures in the household in terms of raising children. These asymmetric power relations and different roles in the family might explain in part the diverse associations we find between long-lasting relations with family members and abuse. Consistent with the literature on intimate partner violence and social support women who have been abused but have long-lasting relations with parents are less likely to be victims of partner abuse than abused women without family bonds.

The literature has focused on previous episodes of abuse to predict abuse among household members. In this analysis we present a different approach. Instead of looking at poor family bonds or abuse in the family to study further abuse or other types of conflict, we study family bonds or long-lasting family relations and their associations with domestic abuse during the lifetime. From the current study we can draw three main conclusions. First, long-lasting relations with family members act as protective factors against domestic abuse. Second, long-lasting relations with parents are more protective than relations with other family members. Third, abuse by their family members differs by type of abuse. Mothers are more likely to abuse their daughters emotionally while fathers are more likely to exert stricter and severe abuse. Fourth, our results suggest that among abused women, the protective effects of long-lasting relations with each family member are not uniform. Fathers play a significant role in intra-household abuse.

Limitations

As our results indicate it is necessary to further explore the role of fathers in Latino households from a cultural perspective in order to better understand their role as providers of care and moral codes for their children to foster the prevention of domestic violence. Longitudinal research is needed to further understand the directionality and dynamics of domestic abuse in Latino households over time. Moreover, future research should include data on specific cultural traits, structures of power within the family, changes in family structure over time as well as more detailed data on abuse histories and standard measures of abuse such as the Conflict Tactics Scale. The results point that in order to further understand the roles of fathers and mothers as important agents in the prevention of domestic abuse, and other health related events such as teen pregnancy, HIV exposure and poor mental health, we need to consider variables that measure not only long-lasting relations among family members, life time abuse and types of abuse and women characteristics but also data on evolution of quality of life over time. Despite limitations, the present study is the first of its type among non-Mexican Latinas in the U.S. to collect information about family relationships and domestic violence among Latina mothers and daughters. Although the study is cross-sectional and the results cannot be generalized to Latino women, we hope that the present results serve as a platform for future research regarding culturally competent Latina domestic violence prevention and treatment programs in South Florida and for other Latina groups experiencing domestic violence.

Recommendations

The analysis presented suggests that a healthy family environment and close family relationships may lower the prevalence of domestic abuse among Latinas. The dyadic and quota sampling design of the ITDMD study allow us to learn about the patterns of abuse and the relationship between family bonds and life-time domestic abuse from a group of first and second generation immigrant women from South America and the Caribbean. The use of this sample to carry out a quantitative analysis on the topic shows that the maximization of variance and the use of quota and dyadic design are efficient in studying low prevalence events in specific populations.

There are several studies that address domestic violence on Latino populations; however, few of them consider family relations and family bonds as explanatory variables for abuse or any other health related outcomes. In addition, we noted a paucity of research on Latino fathers particularly on how their behaviors and immigration experiences have effects on health outcomes for their wives and children. Further studies are needed in order to design efficient and culturally sensitive interventions in schools and health care facilities that prevent intra-family violence, intimate partner violence, teen pregnancy, HIV exposure and psychiatric disorders associated with the exposure to violence.

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Table 1

Descriptive statistics of family attachment, abuse, and sociodemographic characteristics of Latina women recruited in Miami, FL

Variable	Average proportion	SD
Types of abuse		
Emotional abuse	0.5633	0.4968
Physical abuse	0.3797	0.4861
Sexual abuse	0.1835	0.3877
Categories of cumulative abuse		
Category I: No reported abuse during lifetime	0.3449	0.4761
Category II: Reported emotional abuse only	0.2500	0.4337
Category III: Reported emotional and physical abuse	0.1614	0.3685
Category IV: Reported emotional, physical and sexual abuse	0.1361	0.3434
All other categories ^a	0.1076	0.3104
Sociodemographic variables		
Age		
Women younger than 34 years of age	0.4019	0.4911
Women between 34 and 49 years of age	0.2848	0.4520
Women older than 49 years of age	0.3133	0.4646
Education		
Less than high school	0.2690	0.4441
High school or equivalent	0.2120	0.4094
Some college	0.3196	0.4671
Bachelor or graduate degree	0.1962	0.3977
Personal income		
Less than 15,000	0.6551	0.4761
Between 15,000 and 35,000	0.2627	0.4408
More than 35,000	0.0759	0.2653
Place of birth		
U.S. born	0.3133	0.4646
Born in Latin America or the Caribbean	0.6867	0.4646
Average proportion of lifetime in the U.S.	0.5608	0.3651
Substance abuse		
Abuser	0.4746	0.5002
Long lasting relations in the nuclear family		
Close relationship with mother	0.7500	0.4337
Close relationship with father	0.5380	0.4993
Close relationship with siblings	0.7120	0.4535
Close relationship with partner	0.7247	0.4474
Abusers in the nuclear family		
Mother as abuser	0.1899	0.3928
Father as abuser	0.1013	0.3022

Variable	Average proportion	SD
Siblings as abusers	0.1013	0.3022
Partner as abuser	0.3892	0.4883

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

^aAll other categories are: reported only physical abuse, reported only sexual abuse, reported emotional and sexual abuse but not physical abuse, reported physical and sexual but not emotional abuse

Table 2

Binary logistic regression on the probability of reporting any type of abuse during lifetime

Variables	Any type of abuse		
	Odds	95 % CI	
	Ratio	LL	UL
Long lasting relations in the nuclear family			
Close relationship with mother	0.3946	0.1969	0.7910
Close relationship with father	0.4323	0.2430	0.7690
Close relationship with partner	0.6590	0.3708	1.1709
Close relationship with siblings	0.7151	0.3802	1.3447
Sociodemographic variables			
Age			
Women younger than 34 years of age	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Women between 34 and 49 years of age	1.2548	0.6843	2.3014
Women older than 49 years of age	0.5447	0.2934	1.0113
Education			
Less than high school	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
High school or equivalent	0.7601	0.3660	1.5787
Some college	1.3073	0.6431	2.6578
Bachelor or graduate degree	1.4835	0.6655	3.3065
Personal income			
Less than or equal to 35,000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
More than 35,000	1.2288	0.7373	2.0477
Place of birth			
U.S. born	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Born in Latin America or the Caribbean	0.8458	0.4437	1.6124
Drug use			
Non-user	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
User	0.7328	0.4235	1.2678
N			316
QICu			389.30

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

Table 3

Estimated odds ratios of binomial logistic models on the probability of reporting emotional, physical or sexual abuse

Variables	Emotional abuse			Physical abuse			Sexual abuse		
	95 % CI			95 % CI			95 % CI		
	Odds	Ratio	LL	UL	Ratio	LL	Odds	Ratio	UL
Family member as abuser									
Father	0.5353		0.1896	1.5109	4.4340	1.3008	15.1122	4.4620	1.6578
Mother	2.2883		0.6987	7.4947	3.2424	1.3378	7.8593	1.0542	0.4164
Siblings	1.5490		0.4081	5.8785	3.1941	1.1673	8.7408	1.6756	0.6786
Partner	2.1632		0.8545	5.4761	4.9283	2.3101	10.5139	4.3675	0.6480
n				206			206		206
QICu				185.38			255.77		237.17

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

Table 4

Estimated odds ratios on the probability of reported abuse by a family member

Variables	Abused by Father			Abused by Mother		
	95 % CI			95 % CI		
	Ratio	LL	UL	Ratio	LL	UL
Long lasting relations						
Mother	1.045	0.384	2.845	0.266	0.12	0.587
Father	0.198	0.068	0.581	2.760	1.266	6.017
Partner	0.429	0.172	1.069	0.659	0.309	1.405
Siblings	0.625	0.239	1.632	0.764	0.348	1.679
n=	206			206		
Variables	Abused by Siblings			Abused by Partner		
	95 % CI			95 % CI		
	Ratio	LL	UL	Ratio	LL	UL
Long lasting relations						
Mother	0.794	0.309	2.039	0.829	0.392	1.753
Father	2.504	1.003	6.252	0.690	0.353	1.349
Partner	0.592	0.244	1.440	1.107	0.537	2.282
Siblings	0.867	0.345	2.178	1.092	0.525	2.271
n=	206			206		

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study