

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

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Suggested running head: Family Closeness and Domestic Abuse among Latinas in South Florida

Acknowledgements

This study was supported by award number P20MD002288 from the National Institute for Minority and Health Disparities and awards R24DA014260 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse. The content is solely the responsibility of the authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities, the National Institute on Drug Abuse, or the National Institutes of Health.

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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. Our results indicate that long-lasting family relations are protective against domestic emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. Long-lasting relations with parents are only marginally more protective against domestic abuse than relations with siblings and partners. 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. Our analysis shows that long-lasting relations with fathers serve as both protective and risk factors for domestic abuse during the lifetime. Given these findings, there is a need to further study daughter/father relations in Latino households.

Key words: *ABUSE, INTRA-FAMILY VIOLENCE, FAMILY RELATIONS, LATINAS*

Domestic abuse is a forceful tactic, intentionally employed by mother, father, partner, child, sibling, or other family member 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 and discussed (Agoff 2007; Cunradi 2009; Handwerker 1998; Tjaden and Thoennes 1998), the literature on this topic has largely presented evidence on the risk factors for abuse; few studies have discussed the importance of family member closeness as a protective factor in domestic abuse (Hanson 2006; Holman 2000). 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; Bloom 2009; Bonomi 2009; Fedovskiy 2008; Glass 2009; Gonzalez-Guarda 2008; Ingram 2007; Agoff 2007; Moracco 2005; Moreno 2007; Perilla 1999). The few studies which have documented the problem of domestic violence show limited and mixed evidence about the prevalence levels of domestic violence among Latinos or information on the risk factors influencing this problem (Agoff 2007; Brabeck and Guzman 2008; Hazen and Soriano 2007; Klevens 2007; Brown 2009).

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. However, between the 1990 and 2000 census, the diversity of the immigrant Latino population in the U.S. increased with a growing number of immigrants coming from other countries in Latin America, particularly the Caribbean and South America (Massey 2008). Research on domestic violence has also found that different Latino groups show variations in risk markers for wife assault and violence against women (Aldarondo 2002). Wife abuse does not have the same disapproval among the different Latino groups (Kantor 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). This is surprising considering that supportive family relationships play a powerful role in the lives of Latinas/os (De La Rosa and White 2001; Gonzalez Castro 2007). It is important to note that the Latino community is increasing in diversity and little is known about the domestic violence patterns of Latino women from Spanish Speaking Caribbean and South American countries. This article contributes to closing this knowledge gap by illuminating the important role played by close, personal, and long-lasting family relationships in various types of domestic abuse in Latino households. In particular, we analyze the relationships between emotional, physical, and sexual abuse and family bonds (e.g., bonds between a daughter and her father, mother, partner, and siblings) of Caribbean and South American first and second generation immigrant women living in South Florida.

Family Relations and Domestic Violence

A wealth of research studies indicate that domestic abuse affects the parent-child attachment process. Victims tend to develop insecure, disorganized, and disoriented attachments (Carlson 1989; Egeland and Vaughn 1981; Lyons and Snoxell 2005; Lyons-Ruth 1999; Shen 2009; Sunday 2008). However, studies focusing on the relationship between abused children and adolescents and parental attachment show mixed associations (Stenberg 2005; Toth 1997).

Moreover, studies on a variety of populations suggest that domestic abuse might be negatively related to family attachment. Nonetheless there is a gap in the literature on relationships between family member closeness and domestic abuse. In this paper we address this gap and analyze the relation between long-term family relationships and lifetime domestic abuse using a sample of Latina women. We argue that *familism*, 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 2008; Graham-Bermann 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 test the hypothesis that 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) in Latino households. 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 pose as our second hypothesis 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 Domestic by (Straus 2006) domestic abuse is present in every American neighborhood and the highest risk of abuse is in one's own home, inflicted by family members. Research on intra-family violence and parenting practices indicate that the use of corporal punishment was reported by 83% of parents in the United States (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 and others (2008) argue

that although a significant gap persists concerning the knowledge of fathers' roles in child maltreatment, literature suggests that men are more likely to abuse children sexually and that women are more likely to be deemed responsible for the protection of their children. However, May-Chahal (2006) argues that women are as likely as men to be perpetrators of childhood physical abuse. Furthermore, Straus and others (2006) found that 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 that 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 2007).

In order to describe the associations between long-lasting family relations among family members and domestic abuse, we start by describing the prevalence of domestic violence by type of abuse and relation between victim and abuser in the observed group of Latino women.

Relations among family members and domestic abuse

We argue that family closeness is a protective factor against domestic abuse. However, since we focus on long-lasting relations among family members, we further study the associations between long-lasting relationships among family members and the reported abuse inflicted by family members. Research on the relation between abuse and attachment in non-Latino populations indicates that 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 due to 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* is the counterpart to *machismo*. A Latino woman expected to take care of her family, as well as submit to and take orders from her husband and any other authoritative male figure. Given the cultural importance of family among Latinos, there is a strong likelihood of power imbalances within the family and the attachment that might be caused by inconsistent behaviors, as suggested by theories and models linking attachment and abuse (e.g., theory of traumatic bonding and the Bartholomew’s model of attachment) (Bartholomew and Horowitz 1991). We suggest that 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. We test the hypothesis that protective effects of long lasting family relations with each family member are different depending on the relationship between the victim and the abuser(s).

Our research explores three hypotheses:

H1: Those who have long-lasting relations with their relatives are less likely to report domestic abuse.

H2: Long-lasting relations with mothers and fathers have larger protective effects against domestic abuse than long-lasting relationships with siblings or partners.

H3: Among abused women, the protective effects of family member closeness differ depending on the relationship between the victim and the abuser.

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 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 households. These Latino women were recruited using the snowball sampling method and multiple outreach strategies. 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 hours, 2) being 18 years old or older, 3) identifying themselves as Latinas, 4) living in Miami-Dade County, Florida, and 5) willingness to provide two telephone numbers to researchers for correspondence during participation in the study. Latina mothers and daughters who were not living together in the same household were also included in the study. The

following groups were not part of the study sample: (1) Latina women without daughter(s), (2) Latino women who could not provide a phone number for follow up communication, (3) Latino women whose daughters did not live in Miami-Dade County, and (4) Latino mothers or daughters that were institutionalized.

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. In previous research drug use has been found to be a risk factor for domestic violence. 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; d.f.=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 has traditionally been ranked among the cities with the highest percentages of immigrant populations in the U.S. and is home to Latino populations predominantly from Central and South America and the Caribbean. The diversity of Miami's population is reflected in the composition of the convenience sample for this study. According to the American Community Survey 2005-2009 estimates (U.S.CensusBureau 2008) 50% of the population in Miami-Dade county was foreign born and 93 % of this population came from Latin America or the Caribbean. In the sample we are using for this paper 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 and 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 included questions on demographic characteristics, substance use and abuse and family history, among others. Questions on family history and relationships 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, among other variables. The next paragraphs describe the instruments used to collect data on lifetime domestic abuse by type of abuse, intra-familial and partner violence, and family relations of participants.

Multiple Forms of Reported Abuse. The current study utilizes the definition of interpersonal violence derived by (Band Winterstein and Eisikovits 2009). It characterizes domestic abuse as a forceful tactic, intentionally employed by a family member to cause physical, sexual, and/or psychological harm to the victim. Women in this sample reported on 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?* The questions on abuse and family relations were taken from the family/social relationship composite scale of *The Addiction Severity Index* (McLellan 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. This composite scale assessed if the participant experienced emotional, physical, or sexual abuse in their lifetime. 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 2003; Turner 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 a southeastern public 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 eleven 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. Interviewers also received intensive supervision by the study director throughout the course of the project to ensure data quality. Interviews were periodically audio-recorded and reviewed by the study director for completeness and accuracy.

Data Analytic Strategy

Data analytic strategies were designed to explore the following research hypotheses:

H1: Women who have long lasting relations with their relatives are less likely to report domestic abuse.

H2: Long-lasting relations with mothers and fathers have larger protective effects against domestic abuse than long-lasting relationships with siblings or partners.

H3: Among abused women, the protective effects of family member closeness differ depending on the relationship between the victim and the abuser.

For the purpose of our analysis we will consider women respondents, their parents, partners, and siblings. Prior research has found that domestic abuse is associated with variables such as income, education, and drug use (Dube 2001; Jin and Keat 2010; Kyriacou 1999; Sierra 2009; Stith 2004). We included in our analysis women's personal income, level of education,

and whether or not the respondent was a drug abuser. In addition, given our sampling design, we included age and place of birth as additional control variables.

The analysis is divided in four sections. First, we present descriptive statistics of the three main variables: (a) reported abuse during lifetime (e.g., emotional, physical, and sexual), (b) reported long lasting relationships with family members, and (c) 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 shown in Table 2 for the following cases: 1) not having long-lasting relationships with any family member, 2) having long-lasting relations with the mother only, 3) having long-lasting relations with the father only, 4) having long-lasting relations with the siblings only, and 4) having long-lasting relations with the partner only. 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, as described in the *Introduction*, the literature on intra-family violence suggests that the types of abuse depend on the relation between the victim and the abuser. We describe the probability of abuse by type of abuse reported and inflicted by a given relative. We estimate

binary logit regression models on each type of reported abuse (e.g. emotional, physical, and sexual) and the relationship between the victim and the abuser. In addition to the controls used on the first model, we include long-lasting relations with each family member as a control variable.

Fourth, 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 was not designed as a probability sample, but as 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: In our sample of Latina women, 69% percent 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).

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.

Twenty seven percent 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 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 2^3 possible combinations of reported abuse during the lifetime. The four categories with the highest frequency are: a) No abuse (34.49%), b) Emotional abuse only (25.00%), c) Emotional and physical abuse but not sexual (16.14%), and d) Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse (13.61%). The remaining 10.76% of the cases were distributed among the other four remaining combinations of abuse.

(TABLE I ABOUT HERE)

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. Since the study focuses on domestic abuse, we do not consider abuse perpetrated by persons outside the households (e.g. other relatives and friends), nor do we explore abuse perpetrated by children against their mothers due to 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 II 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 Latino households in South Florida 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.

(TABLE II ABOUT HERE)

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 only is 0.8489 (CI 0.4677, 0.9729). The probability of abuse for women who reported having long-lasting relations with their fathers only 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.

(TABLE III ABOUT HERE)

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 III. 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 the Latino women 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 III 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).

(TABLES IV-A AND IV-B ABOUT HERE)

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 IV-A 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 IV-B 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 IV-B. 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 it also is a risk factor for abuse by others family members.

DISCUSSION

Emotional, physical, and sexual domestic abuse against Latino women in South Florida are highly prevalent and should be considered a public health concern. For this reason, in this article we aim to explore factors that prevent domestic abuse. We argue that *familism* within Hispanic households strengthens the protective effects of long-lasting relationships among family members against domestic abuse. Moreover, we further explore patterns of intra-family violence by incorporating 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 Latino households in South Florida.

This article explores three main research questions on (a) the protective effects of long-lasting family relations against domestic abuse during the lifetime, (b) the different protective effects of long-lasting family relations with parents and other family member, and (c) the effects of long-lasting family relations on abuse inflicted by fathers, mothers, siblings, and partners in a sample of Latina women in South Florida.

The results suggest that there are protective effects of long-lasting relationships against domestic abuse in the observations analyzed. However, the protective 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.

The remainder of the discussion section is organized into three sections. In the first section we concentrate our attention on the protective effects of long-lasting family relations on domestic abuse. The second section focuses on intra-family violence and examines the role of family members as perpetrators of abuse towards Latino women. The third section provides a description of the role of each family member on domestic abuse.

Protective Effects of Long-Lasting Relations. The results presented suggest that long-lasting relationships with a caring member of the household have protective effects against domestic abuse. Our first research hypothesis is consistent with the observed patterns on the protective effects of long-lasting family relations against domestic abuse. Long-lasting relations

with mother and father are marginally more important to protect Latino daughters in South Florida from all forms of domestic abuse than long-lasting relations with siblings or partners.

Family Members as Abusers. As reflected in the literature on domestic abuse, fathers, mothers, siblings, and partners inflict different types of abuse on women. Our findings using a sample of Latino women from the Caribbean and South America confirm these patterns. Mothers and partners are more likely to emotionally abuse women than fathers and siblings. Physical abuse is inflicted by all family members and sexual abuse is more frequently perpetuated by fathers and partners. Although the results support our hypothesis on the protective effects of long-lasting relationships with family members, they also indicate that relationships with different family members have different protective or risk effects depending on the type and cumulative forms of abuse. Therefore, including family members as perpetrators in the analysis is key to understanding the dynamics of domestic abuse and intra-familial violence. The observed patterns of sexual abuse suggest that partners and fathers are the primary perpetrators of sexual abuse. These results are similar to those discussed by Dufoura et al. (2008) and May Chahal (2006). They argue that both parents are as likely to be perpetrators of childhood abuse, but men are more likely to abuse children sexually.

The Role of Long-Lasting Relations with Family Members among Abuse Women. Our third research hypothesis on the different protective effects of long-lasting family relations and their association with the relationship between the victim and the abuser(s) is supported by our data. Among abused women, long-lasting family relations with all family members (except relation with mother) are protective against paternal abuse. As expected, 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.

Long-lasting father/daughter relations in Latino households in South Florida have protective effects against domestic abuse. However, the effect of this paternal bond is not uniform for all types of abuse. Long-lasting relations with a non-abusive father serves as a protective factor against domestic abuse; however as expected, a paternal bond with an abusive father appears as a risk factor for sexual abuse. Regarding the effects of paternal bonds in intra-family violence, women who have long-lasting relations with their fathers are more likely to report abuse from their mothers and siblings than from their partners. Moreover, a paternal bond is a protective factor against partner abuse.

Women in Latino households, although subject to cultural values such as *machismo* and *marianismo*, are the central figures in the household in terms of raising children. In our sample, almost eight out of every 10 daughters reported having a long-lasting relation with their mothers. Consistently in almost all models included in the analysis, having a long-lasting relationship with mother is protective against domestic abuse. This pattern might indicate that having strong maternal bonds serves to prevent the onset of violence, which might be characterized by experiences of emotional abuse. Moreover, having strong maternal bonds is negatively associated with abuse from siblings and partners, but does not have any effect on abuse by fathers, which might be explained by the cultural traits of *machismo* and *marianismo* in Latino households. In addition, as observed in non-Latino households, mothers are more likely to emotionally abuse their children and are as likely to physically abuse their children as other family members.

Relative to the effects of long-lasting parental relations on domestic abuse, long-lasting relations with siblings are not as important to protect Latino women against domestic abuse. However, family bonds among siblings might be protective of cumulative abuse (particularly physical and sexual abuse). Having long-lasting relations with siblings also diminish the likelihood of experienced abuse from mothers, fathers, or siblings, but it is independent from partner abuse.

We included data on relations with partners in the analysis because we are studying lifetime domestic abuse. As with other family members, having long-lasting relations with partners is protective against domestic abuse. As in the case of siblings, having long-lasting relations with partners is not as important to preventing domestic abuse as the relations with parents. Having long-lasting relations with partners does not protect against emotional abuse relative to non-abuse; however, it is negatively correlated against experiencing physical and sexual abuse. Strong bonds with partners are negatively associated with abuse from other family members, but it is independent from partner abuse.

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, the analysis suggests that mothers predominantly inflict emotional abuse, fathers and partners are more likely to be perpetrators of sexual abuse, and physical abuse is imposed by all family members. Third, maternal long-lasting relations are protective against abuse by other family

members; long-lasting relations with siblings and partners are protective against abuse by parents. Moreover, strong paternal bonds are risk factors for maternal and sibling abuse, but it is protective against partner abuse. 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 to their children to foster the prevention of domestic violence.

LIMITATIONS

This analysis is based on a cross sectional convenience sample of Latino women in South Florida. 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 and structures of power within the family. There is a need for studies that use mixed methods to explain general patterns and simultaneously provide the qualitative data necessary to explain the observed behaviors are needed.

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 rather preliminary, 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. Prevention campaigns should underline the risk of experiencing multiple types of abuse once abuse has been experienced. Similarly, schools in predominantly Latino neighborhoods should provide family

workshops or orientation materials concerning the importance of cultivating a strong close relationship between parents and their children, with particular emphasis on the role of the fathers in preventing future experiences of abuse for their daughters.

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Table I. 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 ⁶	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
Siblings as Abusers	0.1013	0.3022
Partner as Abuser	0.3892	0.4883

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

⁶ All 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 II. Binary Logistic Regression on the probability of reporting any type of abuse during lifetime

Variables	Any type of Abuse		
	Odds Ratio	95% CI	
		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 III. Estimated Odd ratios of binomial logistic models on the probability of reporting emotional, physical or sexual abuse

Variables	Emotional Abuse			Physical Abuse			Sexual Abuse		
	Odds	95% CI		Odds	95% CI		Odds	95% CI	
	Ratio	LL	UL	Ratio	LL	UL	Ratio	LL	UL
Family Member as Abuser									
Father	0.5353	0.1896	1.5109	4.4340	1.3008	15.1122	4.4620	1.6578	12.0095
Mother	2.2883	0.6987	7.4947	3.2424	1.3378	7.8593	1.0542	0.4164	2.6687
Siblings	1.5490	0.4081	5.8785	3.1941	1.1673	8.7408	1.6756	0.6786	4.1379
Partner	2.1632	0.8545	5.4761	4.9283	2.3101	10.5139	4.3675	0.6480	12.3592
n			206			206			206
QICu			185.38			255.77			237.17

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

Table IV-A. Estimated odds ratios on the probability of reported abuse by a family member

Variables	Abused by Father			Abused by Mother		
	Odds	95% CI		Odds	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	2.76	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		
QICu	175.35			224.82		

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study

Table IV-B. Estimated odds ratios of on the probability of reported abuse by a family member

Variables	Abused by Siblings			Abused by Partner		
	Odds	95% CI		Odds	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	0.69	0.353	1.349
Partner	0.592	0.244	1.44	1.107	0.537	2.282
Siblings	0.867	0.345	2.178	1.092	0.525	2.271
n=	206			206		
QICu	188.32			252.84		

Source: own calculations using data from the ITDMD study