

Title: Parent's Knowledge of Domestic Violence's Impact on Children: Cultural Considerations for Latino families

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Introduction: In the United States, 15.5 million children live with families where domestic violence has occurred (Ellison 2014). The perception that the children are too young to remember or be affected by violence among adult partners may contribute to negative outcomes associated with domestic violence in families, particularly in Latino and other underserved communities. Previous research suggests that children who witness violence are more receptive to psychological, neurological, and socio-emotional problems in their development. (Carpenter, G. L., & Stacks, A.M (2009). *Lideres Comunitarias*, a group of women survivors and advocates for families affected by domestic violence, have been working in Atlanta, Georgia for the past four years to help others in the community and bring awareness of how domestic violence affects the entire family.

Purpose: This study provides preliminary analysis of a larger, mixed-method evaluation of Latina-led domestic violence community workshops in Georgia. This study seeks to examine knowledge of the effects of domestic violence on children who witness violence using a cultural specific measurement tool. Additionally, the quantitative analysis documents and explores the relationship among communication and knowledge regarding the issue of Domestic Violence in Latino households with children.

Method: Researchers from the National Latino Network and Georgia State University collaborated with staff and community leaders from Caminar Latino to develop a Latino cultural specific measurement of domestic violence (CSDVK) for the larger study. Workshop participants from a church retreat and participants attending parenting classes were invited to participate in the study. A questionnaire that included a demographic survey and questions concerning domestic violence were administered before and after the workshops. The questionnaire was conducted in Spanish, the preferred language of all participants.

Results: Participants (n=26) ranged in age from 18-52 years. All but one reported having at least one child. Most of the participants were women who came from different countries of origin: Colombia, El Salvador, Venezuela, Mexico, Honduras, Dominican Republic, and the United States. Participants had lived in the United States between 5 months to 51 years. Most participants had a high school education or less and only one participant had attended college. Participants' occupations were mostly in the service industry with a few (n=2) being in the health and culinary industry. Regarding communication about domestic violence with children, the majority of participants (n= 18) reported willingness to talk about the issue of domestic violence with a son or daughter, though communication was unrelated to domestic violence knowledge. A series of Spearman correlations showed that participants who endorsed "Domestic violence only affects children if they witness physical violence directly" were also less likely to agree that yelling and insulting are a form of domestic violence, $r(26) = -.736, p < .05$. They were also less likely to correctly identify the false statement that a survivor has access to services *only* if they

are documented, $r(26) = .527, p < .01$. Additionally, participants that were unsure that domestic violence affects children without witnessing the violence directly were more likely to agree with “There are certain situations when hitting a partner is acceptable”, $r(26) = .527, p < .01$.

Conclusion: A limitation of our study is that it was a small sample size. As most of the participants were parents, it would be beneficial to have more programs including culturally specific parenting skills and education workshops. Additionally, programs directed to the youth who have experienced domestic violence need to be developed with culture-specific measures to better aid children. Programs such as *Líderes Comunitarias* can help reach families and their children to gain a better understanding of the children needs (Serrata et al., 2015).

References

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