ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Why is Family Violence Lower Among Mexican Immigrants? The Protective Features of Mexican Culture

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Abstract
Although immigrants tend to be less involved in crime than the native-born, less is known about whether immigration is protective regarding family violence and, if so, why. This is especially problematic given that some cultural features of immigrants, such as machismo, may increase family violence. Using a random sample of adults in El Paso County, Texas, the present study finds that family violence is substantially lower among first generation Mexican immigrants compared to 1.5 generation immigrants, second generation Americans and third generation or higher Americans. Higher levels of acculturation to Mexico among first generation immigrants partially mediated, or explained, this finding. However, familism and machismo were not higher among first generation Mexican immigrants; and, while lower among first generation immigrants, acculturation to the US was not associated with higher levels of family violence. Implications of these findings are discussed.

Keywords Immigration · Family violence · Immigrant generations · Mexican immigrants · Acculturation · Familism · Machismo

A great deal of misinformation and political hyperbole surrounds the issue of immigration and, in particular, its relationship to crime. Public opinion regarding immigration and crime is often predicated on fear mongering and sensational myths (Martinez and Lee 2000). Contrary to popular belief, however, a large literature zeroing in on the immigration and crime nexus shows that immigrants exhibit lower levels of crime when compared to native-born groups or that no difference between the groups is present (e.g., Alvarez et al. 2014; Bersani 2014; Lee and Martinez 2009; Morenoff and Astor 2006; Peguero and Jiang 2014; Rumbaut et al. 2006; Sampson 2008; Sampson and Bean 2006; Sampson et al. 2005; Wright and Benson 2010; Zhou and Bankston 2006). This holds true in spite of the low socio-economic status and other sources of disadvantage that typically befall immigrants. The scope and consistency of these findings has led to the formulation of the "immigrant paradox" (Peguero and Jiang 2014; Wright and Benson 2010), which Sampson and Bean (2006: 9) describe as "the finding that Mexican immigrants, despite their economic disadvantage, experience disproportionately lower rates of violence compared to second- and third-generation Americans." Noted scholar Robert Sampson (2008) goes so far as to attribute the decline in the crime rate that the United States from the 1990s to the present as due, in part, to the proliferation of immigrants — particularly because of the cultural values they possess and bring to host communities that might suppress crime.

The present study focuses on the relationship between being first-generation immigrant and family violence[1] which, unlike some other aspects of the immigration-crime relationship, has received relatively little empirical attention from scholars (Gonçalves and Matos 2016). To date,

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[1] We use the term "family violence" to encompass violence that may occur between family members, such as violence between siblings or across generations, in addition to violence between intimate partners.
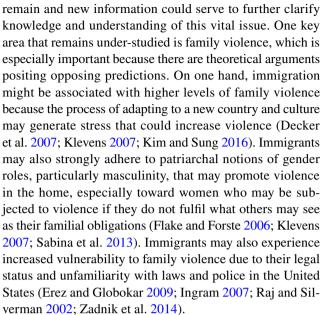
a small body of literature examining the link between generational status and family violence suggests that Latina/o (e.g., Sabina et al. 2015) and non-Latina/o immigrants (e.g., Wright and Benson 2010) typically evince lower levels of family violence than non-immigrants (but see Vaughn et al. 2015). This claim is supported despite the fact that factors such as unfamiliarity with laws against family violence and their legal status may make some individuals vulnerable to family violence (Zadnik et al. 2014). While these studies are impactful, they are few in number. Given that the definition and scholarly attention to family violence has evolved to include forms of abusive behaviors other than physical violence (Outlaw 2009), this study includes a number of adverse behaviors likely to occur in an abusive household (i.e., witnessing family violence) in order to tap into this growing array of possibilities. Moreover, this literature has only begun to assess potential explanations for a putative protective effect of immigration on family violence. Thus, there is much to learn about whether, and how, immigration may be associated with lower levels of family violence.

Based on primary data collected from a large random of individuals residing in El Paso County, Texas, which is a border city containing a sizable population of immigrants from Mexico, the present research seeks to expand this literature by testing hypotheses regarding direct and indirect associations between generational status and family violence. Thus, this study is designed to expand our understanding of the "immigrant paradox" by examining its applicability to family violence and to study if immigrant culture serves as a protector against family violence. Moreover, to address cultural deficiency perspectives concerning racial minorities and immigrants, we employ nuanced and theoretically updated measures of generational status and cultural attributes.

Immigration and Family Violence

Assessments of the scholarly literature typically conclude that immigrants do not engage in more crime than native-born populations (for a recent review see Bersani 2014). This holds true individually (Hagan and Palloni 1999) as well as collectively (Martinez et al. 2016), pertains to teen dating violence (Sabina et al. 2016) and adult crime (Sampson et al. 2005), and applies to a vast range of immigrant groups living in a host of different cities across the United States (Lee et al. 2001; Lee and Martinez 2002) as well as to victimization (Gibson and Miller 2010). These broad conclusions are extremely important given that much of the political rhetoric (Martinez and Lee 2000) as well as public opinion (Muste 2013) pertaining to immigration and crime is pejorative and misinformed.

Although the immigration-crime association demonstrates largely consistent findings, gaps in the literature remain and new information could serve to further clarify knowledge and understanding of this vital issue. One key area that remains under-studied is family violence, which is especially important because there are theoretical arguments positing opposing predictions. On one hand, immigration might be associated with higher levels of family violence because the process of adapting to a new country and culture may generate stress that could increase violence (Decker et al. 2007; Klevens 2007; Kim and Sung 2016). Immigrants may also strongly adhere to patriarchal notions of gender roles, particularly masculinity, that may promote violence in the home, especially toward women who may be subjected to violence if they do not fulfil what others may see as their familial obligations (Flake and Forste 2006; Klevens 2007; Sabina et al. 2013). Immigrants may also experience increased vulnerability to family violence due to their legal status and unfamiliarity with laws and police in the United States (Erez and Globokar 2009; Ingram 2007; Raj and Silverman 2002; Zadnik et al. 2014).

On the other hand, immigration may be associated with lower levels of family violence for several reasons. For example, Sabina et al. (2015) argue that cultural retention from the country-of-origin could be a protective factor against family violence for immigrants, enabling them to minimize stressors that are associated with family violence by holding on to cultural traditions, providing continuity and familiarity during the process of adapting to a different culture (see also Cuevas et al. 2012). Thus, remaining acculturated to the country-of-origin may buffer the impact of stressors associated with the immigration process. Adherence to traditional notions of the family, or familism, could lower family violence by strengthening social bonds and attachments among family members and increasing guardianship within the family. Moreover, given familism's emphasis on family unity, loyalty, and reliance upon family members for social support, family members may be less inclined to use violence in order to avoid disrupting these relationships (Kennedy and Ceballo 2013). The presence of immigrant communities may also work to minimize family violence by aiding the process of cultural retention as well as though creating strong social networks and social supports that serve as informal social controls – thereby reducing crime in general, including violence that occurs at home (Denham et al. 2007; Lown and Vega 2001).

The literature assessing the impact of immigration on family violence is sparse. The extant studies, however, tend to indicate that immigration is protective in regards to family violence. Direct comparisons of immigrant and non-immigrant groups tend to focus on Mexico as the source country. Using a random sample of Los Angeles households, an early study by Sorenson and Telles (1991) found that spousal violence was 2.4 times higher for non-Hispanic Whites and Mexican Americans compared to Mexican immigrants.

Similar results were obtained using random samples from Fresno County, CA (Lown and Vega 2001), Chicago (Wright and Benson 2010), as well as nationally (Hazen and Soriano 2007; Sabina et al. 2013, 2015). However, a recent study reported that intimate partner violence was higher for Latin American immigrants when compared to US born Americans, and immigrants from Africa, Europe, and Asia; however, closer inspection reveals that much of this difference stemmed from immigrants from the Caribbean, Mexico and Central America (Vaughn et al. 2015).

The present research extends the small immigration-family violence literature in a number of informative ways. First, we provide new information about the direct association between immigration and family violence using a random sample of adults living in El Paso County, Texas, a traditional immigration destination with a large population of immigrants from Mexico. Second, from a theoretical standpoint, we test whether intervening variables, such as acculturation, machismo and familism, might serve to explain relationships between immigration and family violence. Finally, methodologically, we employ measures of generational status, which might shed additional light on the broader immigration-family violence link. We discuss the importance of these issues in more detail below.

Generational Status & Acculturation

The present study employs generational status, which is a largely unexamined measure of immigration in family violence research. An exception is Kimber et al. (2015) who found lower levels of sexual and emotional abuse among first generation immigrants (foreign-born individuals), in contrast to third and later generations (U.S. citizens with U.S. citizen parents). Yet, Kimber et al. (2015) also found the first generation reported more incidences of physical neglect in contrast to third and later generations. Further insights come from DiPietro and Cwick's (2014) study on generational status and family conflict among youth. Specifically, among both male and female youth, first-generation immigrants reported lower levels of family conflict than third and later generations. Among males only, parents of 1.5 generation immigrants (foreign-born individuals who migrated as children) reported less reliance on harsh punishments (DiPietro and Cwick 2014) which may imply lower levels of family violence.

Generational differences in violence in general, however, have been more widely documented (Bui 2009; DiPietro and Cwick 2014; Morenoff and Astor 2006; Sampson et al. 2005). For example, immigration and crime research has found that while being first generation immigrant tends to be protective factor regarding criminal behavior, second and later generations may be more prone to engaging in criminal

behavior (Morenoff and Astor 2006). Similarly, Sampson et al. (2005) found that first generation immigrants had significantly lower odds (about 45% lower) of self-reported violence than third generation Americans, while second generation Americans' odds of self-reported violence were not as low as first generation immigrants but were still significantly lower (22% lower) than that of the third generation (see also Bersani 2014; Rumbaut et al. 2006; Zhou and Bankston 2006). Criminal behavior, including family violence, may be higher for second generation Americans in part because of the stress and tensions of being caught between the values and cultural expectations of their parents (first generation immigrants) and the culture of the U.S., creating what James Diego Vigil refers to as "a sense of cultural marginality and ambiguous ethnic identity," (Vigil 2010:44).

Generational status is intrinsically connected to acculturation. Early conceptualizations of acculturation referred to it as process by which retention of the heritage culture and acquisition of the receiving culture were on opposing sides of a single continuum (Gordon 1964). Over the years scholars have questioned this approach of unidirectional adaptations to the host society with arguments that immigrants can adopt attributes of the host society while retaining or enhancing their connection to their cultural of origin, a process referred to as enculturation (Yoshihama et al. 2014). Today, acculturation is described as a multidimensional process consisting of the confluence of heritage-culture and receiving-cultural practices, values, and identifications (Schwartz et al. 2013). Moreover, in the context of the border, where the present study takes place, most of the population is Mexican-origin and is in such close proximity to Mexico that it is difficult to make determinations as to whether Anglo, Mexican, or Mexican American is the dominant culture. Therefore, we capture elements of acculturation to both Mexico and to the US.

Levels of acculturation to the US are intimately linked to generational status, with first generation immigrants typically being the least acculturated, and the third and subsequent generations being most acculturated. But the process is not necessarily linear, and substantial variation may exist within a given immigrant generation. Higher levels of acculturation to the US are typically associated with higher levels of crime, including family violence (Kim and Sung 2016), while acculturation to the country-of-origin is predicted to reduce family violence. Thus, while predicted to be associated with each other, generational status and measures of acculturation are hypothesized to have independent effects on family violence.

In prior immigration and crime research, acculturation has been captured by using a language based scale capturing an affinity for, and proficiency in, a particular language, typically Spanish, and shows that acculturation to the US is positively associated with crime (Morenoff and Astor
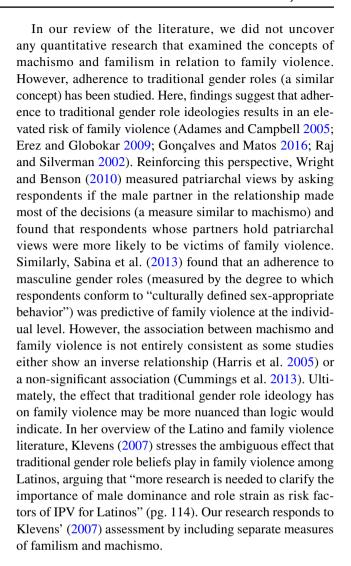
2006; see also; Alvarez-Rivera et al. 2014). Sabina et al. (2013) used a language-based scale indicating a preference for the Spanish language in their immigration and family violence study. Specifically, they used the ARSMA-II (Cuellar et al. 1995) acculturation to Mexico subscale (which is the same measure employed in the present study) to examine the effect of acculturation, and found that acculturation to Mexico was protective against family violence. Similarly, a national study of intimate partner violence by Lown and Vega (2001) examined the effect of acculturation (based on English language proficiency, U.S. tenure and birthplace) and found higher rates of self-reported victimization among those more acculturated to the US. Using national-level data examining Latinas in Latino/a neighborhoods, Sabina et al. (2015) found that immigrant Latinas were less likely than US born Latinas to experience intimate partner violence in part because they were more likely to possess a cultural "Latino orientation," which is conceptually similar to acculturation to the country-of-origin (see also Sabina et al. 2015). However, these studies did not assess whether acculturation mediated or explained the association between immigration and family violence – an important advancement addressed in our research.

Based on our assessment of these findings, we predict that acculturation to the US will increase family violence while acculturation to Mexico will decrease it. Furthermore, we hypothesize that acculturation to Mexico will serve as an intervening variable in the generational status—family violence relationship, and attenuate the strength of an initial inverse association between first generation immigrant and family violence, thereby explaining, at least in part, why first generation immigrants might have lower levels of family violence. In addition, we hypothesize that acculturation to the US will suppress an initial positive association between family violence and second and third generation or higher Americans, such that the relationship increases in strength.

Machismo and Familism

Two other cultural indicators considered in the present research are machismo and familism, which are closely related to views pertaining to traditional gender roles in the family. Familism (or familismo) is broadly used to describe a strong sense of commitment, dedication, and service to family among Latina/os (Hurtado 1995; Kim et al. 2009; Zambrana 2011). Early conceptualizations of machismo describe the term as an "exaggerated masculinity" (Baca Zinn 1994). In hyper-masculine cultures, males are depicted as being in control of important decisions in the household and being able to handle most situations on his own without assistance (Castro 2012).

In our review of the literature, we did not uncover any quantitative research that examined the concepts of machismo and familism in relation to family violence. However, adherence to traditional gender roles (a similar concept) has been studied. Here, findings suggest that adherence to traditional gender role ideologies results in an elevated risk of family violence (Adames and Campbell 2005; Erez and Globokar 2009; Gonçalves and Matos 2016; Raj and Silverman 2002). Reinforcing this perspective, Wright and Benson (2010) measured patriarchal views by asking respondents if the male partner in the relationship made most of the decisions (a measure similar to machismo) and found that respondents whose partners hold patriarchal views were more likely to be victims of family violence. Similarly, Sabina et al. (2013) found that an adherence to masculine gender roles (measured by the degree to which respondents conform to "culturally defined sex-appropriate behavior") was predictive of family violence at the individual level. However, the association between machismo and family violence is not entirely consistent as some studies either show an inverse relationship (Harris et al. 2005) or a non-significant association (Cummings et al. 2013). Ultimately, the effect that traditional gender role ideology has on family violence may be more nuanced than logic would indicate. In her overview of the Latino and family violence literature, Klevens (2007) stresses the ambiguous effect that traditional gender role beliefs play in family violence among Latinos, arguing that "more research is needed to clarify the importance of male dominance and role strain as risk factors of IPV for Latinos" (pg. 114). Our research responds to Klevens' (2007) assessment by including separate measures of familism and machismo.

Hypotheses

To summarize, we intend to test hypotheses pertaining to the direct effects of generational status and measures of culture on family violence, and whether the cultural measures intervene in the direct association between generational status and family violence. Specifically, in terms of direct effects, we predict that:

H1: First generation immigrants will have lower levels of family violence than second or third generation Americans.
H2: Acculturation to Mexico will be negatively associated with family violence.
H3: Acculturation to the US will show a positive association with family violence.
H4: Familism will be associated with less family violence.

H5: Machismo will be associated with higher levels of family violence.

In terms of intervening effects, our hypotheses predict in some cases that the relationship between our independent variable, generational status, and our dependent variable, family violence, will be *explained* by the intervening variable in question (or weaken in strength) while, in other cases, we predict that this relationship will be *suppressed* (or increase in strength) by a given intervening variable. Specifically, we hypothesize that:

H6: Acculturation to Mexico and familism will explain the association between generational status and family violence.

H7: Acculturation to the US and machismo will suppress the association between generational status and family violence.

Methods

Data

Data come from a large random sample of adults living in El Paso County, Texas during spring 2014 using a two-stage sampling design. First, based on El Paso County's 161 Census tracts, 92 neighborhood clusters were created by combining between one, two or three contiguous and socially similar census tracts determined by the local knowledge possessed by the researchers, preliminary analyses of the most recent Census data (United States Census Bureau 2014) regarding the distributions of the immigrant population, language use, and aspects of economic disadvantage as well as obvious boundaries (i.e., Interstates, major roads, mountains, and military installations). Then the neighborhood clusters were stratified into high, medium and low levels of immigration and 15 clusters were randomly selected from each stratum. Second, using *Coles Lists*, a company that provides consumer information for direct marketers, a list of all residential addresses in each sampled neighborhood cluster was created, and 30 residences were randomly selected from each cluster for inclusion in the sample. This sampling strategy is suitable for this paper in that our objectives are to examine the association between individual immigrant status, cultural attributes and family violence. Using Dillman's social exchange theory-based Tailored Design Method, randomly selected residences were first contacted by mail with an informational letter and then, a few days later, by a trained interviewer who come to their door (Dillman 2000). The Tailored Design Method is aimed at increasing response rates by creating respondent trust, increasing perceptions of rewards and decreasing perceptions of cost of participating by using multiple professional and courteous contacts, financial incentives, and other measures (Dillman 2000: 149). For residences that indicated a willingness to participate, an adult resident was randomly selected by most recent birthday to answer a series of survey questions that lasted about an hour. Face-to-face interviews were conducted in either Spanish or English, depending on the preference of each respondent. Participants were given a $20 incentive at the end of the survey interview. Slightly over a thousand respondents completed surveys. For analyses, we used only immigrants from Mexico, which excluded 31 cases, leaving a final sample size of 979 cases for analyses.

Measures

Family Violence

The perpetration of family violence is characterized by threats or the actual performance of physical violence or verbal abuse inflicted by one family member on another family member. Our measure is based on the Conflict Tactics Scale (Straus et al. 1996), but expands the range of behaviors to include sexual violence and verbal abuse, focuses on the household level rather than the individual or intimate partner dyad and pertains to both victimization and perpetration experiences. Specifically, respondents answered a series of yes or no questions asking if they are aware of any household member (including themselves) having done any of the following to another household member (including themselves) in an effort to hurt that person since they have lived in their current neighborhood: twisted the arm or pulled hair; kicked, punched or hit or hit with a weapon or object; threw something; slapped, pushed or shoved; choked; slammed against a wall; used threats or force to engage in sexual activity; or ridiculed or criticized values, beliefs, or appearance. Responses were dummy coded as 1 if they answered yes to at least one of these eight survey items, and 0 otherwise. In order to increase validity of our measure, this section of the survey was self-administered and respondents placed their answers in a separate sealed envelope upon completion.

Generational Status

Using information regarding respondents' and their mothers' country of birth, generational status is measured with a series of dummy variables with each respondent falling into one of the following categories: first generation immigrant, 1.5 generation immigrant, second generation American, and third generation or higher American. Specifically, if both the respondent and his/her mother were born in Mexico, and the respondent moved to the US after age 15, then the respondent is coded as a *first generation immigrant* (Morales and Saenz 2007). If both the respondent and his/her mother

were born in Mexico, but the respondent moved to the US before age 15, then the respondent is coded as a *1.5 generation immigrant*. These respondents are foreign-born like the first generation but have been raised and largely acculturated to U.S. norms similar to the second-generation. Following insights from DiPietro and Cwick (2014), the 1.5 generation is used as a distinctive immigrant category given that they have experienced some time in the native country of their parent(s) and may have a foothold in the traditions of their parent(s), yet they are in-between cultures in that they have also been raised in the US. Thus, research that does not capture the 1.5 generation may obscure important generational differences. If the respondent was born in the United States and his/her mother was born in Mexico, then the respondent is coded as a *second generation American*. If both the respondent and his/her mother were born in the United States then the respondent is a *third generation or higher American*.[2]

Acculturation to Mexico

Immigrants who come to the United States oftentimes have to choose (or sometimes the choice is made for them given their circumstances) whether or not and to what extent they will embrace mainstream American culture and ideals and suppress the same culture and ideals from their native country. In this study, items pertaining to acculturation to Mexico from the ARSMA II(r) scale (Cuellar et al. 1995) were employed. Specifically, using a Likert scale ranging from 1 ("not at all") to 5 ("extremely often or almost always"), participants indicated their responses to the following items (i.e., I speak Spanish; I enjoy speaking Spanish; I associate with Mexicans and/or Mexican Americans; I enjoy listening to Spanish language music; I enjoy Spanish language TV; I enjoy Spanish language movies; I enjoy reading in Spanish (e.g., books, magazines, and newspapers); I write in Spanish (e.g., letters, notes, emails, text messages); My thinking is done in the Spanish language; My contact with people in México has been…; My father identifies or identified himself as "Mexicano"; My mother identifies or identified herself as "Mexicana"; My friends, while I was growing up, were of Mexican origin; My family cooks Mexican foods; My friends now are of Mexican origin; I like to identify myself as a Mexican American; I like to identify myself as a Mexican. Cronbach's alpha for the 16 items measuring acculturation to Mexico is 0.95, indicating high reliability. While a principal components analysis (unrotated) produced two eigenvalues higher than 1.0 (9.48 and 1.58),

the percentage of explained variance in these factors (55.75 compared to 9.31), combined with the results of a scree test which showed one component above the "elbow," indicate the presence of unidimensionality in this measure. All items showed component loadings at or above 0.47. Scores on the individual items were summed for each respondent.

Acculturation to the US

The following items from ARSMA II(r) scale (Cuellar et al. 1995) were used to measure acculturation to the U.S.: I speak English; I associate with Anglos; I enjoy listening to English language music; I enjoy English language TV; I enjoy English language movies; I enjoy reading in English; I write in English; my thinking is done in the English language; my contact with people in the USA has been…; my friends when I was growing up were of Anglo origin; my friends now are of Anglo origin; I like to identify myself as an Anglo American; I like to identify myself as an American. Cronbach's alpha for these items is 0.91. An unrotated principal components analysis produced a two component solution, but the results of a scree plot indicates that a single component solution is present, as evidenced by a single component above the "elbow," with the lowest component loading being 0.38. All items were summed for each respondent.

Familism

The belief that the family and the family's name and reputation are of the utmost importance defines the essence of the concept of familism (Kim et al. 2009). Using a subset of the Latino/a Values Scale (Kim et al. 2009), familism is measured by summing respondents' level of agreement to the following five items using 5-point Likert scale (with higher scores indicating greater support for familism): A mother must keep the family unified; One's family is the main source of one's identity; One should never bring shame upon one's family; One's family is the main source of support; The needs of the family are more important than my own individual needs. Cronbach's alpha for these five items is 0.78, indicating acceptable reliability, and unrotated principal components analyses showed the presence of a single component with an eigenvalue of 2.68 and all component loadings at or above 0.67.

Machismo

We employ the Machismo Attitudes Scale (Castro 2012) to measure machismo. Here, respondents were asked to respond to the following statements, using a 5-point Likert scale, (with higher scores indicating greater support for machismo): A man can ask for help when he needs it; A good father will hug and kiss his children often; A man

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[2] The survey instrument included an item aimed at measuring undocumented immigrant status. However, less than 30% of respondents were willing to answer this question, precluding its use in analyses.

should always tell his wife and children how much he loves them; A man can follow orders as well as give them; A man can share his feelings. Cronbach's alpha for the machismo items is 0.83. Principal components analysis produced a single component solution with an eigenvalue of 3.02 with all component loadings above 0.70.

Statistical Controls

Deviant Lifestyles

An important correlate, shown by numerous prior studies (e.g., Gover 2004; Jensen and Brownfield 1986; Zhang et al. 2001) to be positively associated with family violence, is deviant lifestyles. To measure this key concept, respondents indicated level of agreement with the following 5-point Likert items which were then summed to produce an overall score for adherence to deviant lifestyles: Teenagers and young adults in your neighborhood must be willing to fight to gain respect among their peers; Parents in your neighborhood teach their kids to fight back if they are insulted or threatened; Young men in your neighborhood try to act tough; people in your neighborhood do not respect the young man who is afraid to fight physically; In your neighborhood it is important to show others that a person cannot be intimidated. Cronbach's alpha for these five items is 0.79 and a principal components analysis shows the presence of a single component with an eigenvalue of 2.72 and all component loadings at or above 0.69.

Demographic Controls

A number of additional control variables that might influence family violence are also included in analyses. *Number living in household* refers to the number of people living in the household at the time of the interview. *Multigenerational or extended family household* is a dummy variable coded 1 if the household contains either grandparent(s), child(ren) and grandchild(ren); or parent(s), child(ren) and at least one aunt/uncle or niece/nephew). Respondent *age* (measured in years), sex (dummy variable coded 1 for *male*) and ethnicity (coded 1 for *Hispanic*) are also included. Unfortunately, 53% of respondents refused to provide information for income; therefore, this measure is not used in analyses. However, as a proxy for individual income, we employ *neighborhood poverty*, which refers to, for each individual, the percentage of families and people in their neighborhood cluster whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level[3] (United States Census Bureau 2014).

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[3] This data is obtained at the census tract level and thus is averaged across the number of census tracts in each neighborhood cluster.

Table 1 Descriptive results (n = 979)

	Min	Max	Mean/Percent	Std. Dev.
Family violence	0	1	0.190	–
First generation immigrant	0	1	0.183	–
1.5 generation immigrant	0	1	0.073	–
Second generation	0	1	0.273	–
Third + Generation	0	1	0.472	–
Acculturation to Mexico	18	85	59.363	17.585
Acculturation to US	13	65	47.538	11.055
Familism	10	25	21.331	3.212
Machismo	10	25	22.220	2.662
Deviant lifestyles	5	25	12.713	4.031
Extended/ Multigen family	0	1	0.197	0.398
Number living in home	1	8	3.642	1.623
Age	18	85	42.139	16.857
Male	0	1	0.441	–
Hispanic	0	1	0.829	–
Neighborhood poverty	3.60	62.67	23.675	14.816

Analytical Plan

After performing univariate statistics (Table 1) and bivariate correlations (Table 2), analyses will seek to evaluate hypotheses that pertain to the direct associations between generational status, cultural variables, and family violence, holding constant the statistical control variables. Assuming these hypotheses are supported, further analyses will test if cultural variables serve as intervening variables in the direct association between generational status and family violence. The method of accomplishing this goal will be guided the seminal paper on performing mediational analyses by Baron and Kenny (1986; see also Iacobucci 2008). First, because we have a number of hypothesized intervening relationships, we employ a table of partial correlation coefficients to determine if our dependent, independent, and intervening variables demonstrate predicted direct associations when the control variables are held constant in Table 3. Second, in Table 4 we will run a series of logistic regression equations that first establish a baseline coefficient regarding the effect of generational status on family violence to enable comparisons when intervening variables are added; we will then run equations that add in prospective intervening variables that demonstrated the necessary direct associations with family violence and generational status in Table 3. Mediation or explanation occurs if the magnitude of the coefficient for generational status in the baseline equation in Table 4 in the second equation diminishes in size when a hypothesized mediating variable is added; if generational status

Table 2 Bivariate correlations (n=979)

	Family violence	First Gen immigrant	1.5 Gen immigrant	Second Gen immigrant	Third+Gen immigrant	Accul to Mexico	Accul to US	Familism	Machismo	Deviant lifestyles	Extend/Multigen family	Number living in home	Age	Male	Hispanic
First generation immigrant	−0.121**														
1.5 Generation immigrant	0.065*	−0.132**													
Second generation	0.019	−0.290**	−0.171**												
Third+Generation	0.043	−0.447**	−0.264**	−0.579**											
Acculturation to Mexico	−0.098**	0.443**	0.158**	0.159**	−0.567**										
Acculturation to US	0.065*	−0.671**	−0.045	0.080*	0.472**	−0.535**									
Familism	−0.082**	0.106**	0.020	0.030	−0.119**	0.294**	−0.086**								
Machismo	−0.046	−0.004	0.018	0.041	−0.043	0.101**	0.068*	0.397**							
Deviant lifestyles	0.205**	0.061	−0.009	0.027	−0.066*	0.022	−0.072*	0.013	−0.071*						
Extend/Multigen family	0.041	0.011	−0.010	0.019	−0.021	0.073*	−0.066*	0.046	−0.057	−0.067*					
Number living in home	0.081*	0.050	0.011	0.056	−0.094**	0.145**	−0.112**	0.124**	0.073*	−0.054	0.430**				
Age	−0.127**	0.283**	0.037	−0.112**	−0.137**	0.047	−0.204**	0.006	−0.014	0.013	−0.153**	−0.315**			
Male	0.031	−0.112**	−0.034	−0.018	0.120**	−0.115**	0.147**	−0.091**	0.014	0.053	−0.058	−0.069*	−0.053		
Hispanic	−0.030	0.200**	0.127**	0.168**	−0.371**	0.668**	−0.346**	0.140**	0.053	0.033	0.075*	0.161**	−0.122**	−0.067*	
Neighborhood poverty	0.039	0.189**	0.077*	0.048	−0.231**	0.299**	−0.274**	0.082**	−0.093**	0.126**	0.002	−0.043	0.039	−0.099*	0.206*

*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01

Table 3 Partial correlations of dependent and independent variables, holding constant control variables (n = 979)

	Family violence	First generation immigrant	Acculturation to Mexico	Acculturation to US	Familism
First generation immigrant	− 0.103**				
Acculturation to Mexico	− 0.093**	0.383**			
Acculturation to US	0.048	− 0.613**	− 0.396**		
Familism	− 0.087**	0.057	0.259**	− 0.009	
Machismo	− 0.034	− 0.017	0.090**	0.096**	0.396**

*p ≤ .05 ** p ≤ .01

Table 4 Logistic regression of family violence on immigrant generational status, mediating variables, and control variables (n = 979)

	Equation 1						Equation 2					
	B	S.E	p	Odds ratio	95% C.I		B	S.E	p	Odds ratio	95% C.I	
					Lower	Upper					Lower	Upper
First generation immigrant	− 0.953	0.298	0.001	0.386	0.215	0.691	− 0.748	0.315	0.017	0.473	0.255	0.877
Acculturation to Mexico							− 0.015	0.007	0.044	0.986	0.972	1.000
Deviant lifestyles	0.129	0.022	0.000	1.138	1.091	1.187	0.130	0.022	0.000	1.139	1.091	1.188
Extend/ Multigen family	0.033	0.233	0.889	1.033	0.654	1.631	0.070	0.234	0.766	1.072	0.678	1.697
Number living in home	0.140	0.059	0.018	1.150	1.024	1.292	0.145	0.060	0.016	1.156	1.028	1.301
Age	− 0.011	0.006	0.057	0.989	0.978	1.000	− 0.010	0.006	0.075	0.990	0.978	1.001
Male	0.109	0.174	0.530	1.115	0.794	1.567	0.084	0.176	0.632	1.088	0.770	1.536
Hispanic	− 0.305	0.234	0.191	0.737	0.466	1.165	0.120	0.308	0.697	1.127	0.616	2.063
Neighborhood poverty	0.010	0.006	0.113	1.010	0.998	1.022	0.011	0.006	0.072	1.011	0.999	1.024
Constant	− 3.165	0.521	0.000	0.042			− 2.790	0.563	0.000	0.061		
Chi square	73.326		0.000				77.052		0.000			
− 2 log likelihood	866.165						848.666					
Cox & Snell R square	0.073						0.077					
Nagelkerke R square	0.117						0.125					

loses significance then perfect mediation will have occurred (Baron and Kenny 1986). Suppression occurs if the baseline coefficient for generational status in Table 4 increases in size when a hypothesized suppressor variable is added to the regression equation (MacKinnon et al. 2000).

Results

Descriptive Analysis

Univariate statistics (Table 1) show that about 19% of residences experienced at least one instance of family violence. This is somewhat below what is typically found in nationally representative samples. One such study, for example, reported that about 25% of individuals reported at least one act of violence perpetrated against them in the previous year (Melander et al. 2010). In terms of generational status, about 18% of respondents are first generation immigrant, 7% are 1.5 generation immigrant, 27% are second generation American, and 47% are third or higher generation American. These results correspond quite closely with 2014 data from the American Community survey for El Paso County, Texas which show that 25.9% of individuals are foreign-born (either first or 1.5 generation immigrant) (United States Census Bureau 2014). As expected, given the context of the El Paso County region, respondents reported moderately high levels of both acculturation to Mexico and to the U.S., given that mean scores were slightly above the 50th percentile of possible scores for both of these measures. Adherence to familism and machismo showed high average levels of support in that mean scores for these variables were close to their maximum possible scores. Moderate levels of deviant lifestyles were found given that this variable's mean score was slightly below the 50th percentile of possible scores. The typical household had about 3.64 residents and about 20% of residences were either multigenerational or extended family households. The typical respondent was 42.14 years

old and approximately 44% of respondents were male. About 23% of the sample lived in a poor neighborhood. And about 83% of respondents identified as Hispanic. This last result shows close correspondence with 2014 American Community data for El Paso County, which show that about 81.4% of residents are Hispanic (United States Census Bureau 2014).

Bivariate or zero-order correlations in Table 2 show some initial support for hypotheses while, in some cases, failing to support predictions. Importantly, preliminary analyses showed no association between measures of generational status and family violence. However, based on findings from DiPietro and Cwick (2014) that 1.5 generation immigrants may differ from first generation immigrants in important ways, we created separate dummy variables for 1.5 generation and first generation immigrants and re-ran the correlational analyses. The results indicate a crucial difference between the two immigrant groups: first generation immigrants are inversely associated with family violence while 1.5 generation immigrants are positively associated with family violence. Failing to separate first generation and 1.5 generation immigrants into distinct measures masked key differences between the groups in their relationship to family violence and would have led to the erroneous conclusion that generational status was unrelated to family violence in these data. Thus, for hypothesis 1, support is found in that first generation immigrants have lower levels of family violence while 1.5 generation immigrants have higher levels. However, failing to support hypothesis 1, correlations for second generation Americans and third or more generation Americans and family violence are not significant.

In support of hypotheses 2 and 3, acculturation to Mexico shows the predicted inverse relationship to family violence while acculturation to the U.S shows the expected positive relationship, but these associations are quite small in magnitude. Supporting hypothesis 4, familism shows a small inverse relationship with family violence while machismo, failing to support hypothesis 5, shows no significant association. In terms of control variables, adherence to deviant lifestyles is positively associated with family violence, as is number living in home. Respondent age is inversely associated with family violence, while the gender and Hispanic dummy variables and the neighborhood poverty measure show no significant associations with family violence.

Turning to associations with generational status, results show strong associations with the acculturation measures. Acculturation to Mexico is highest among first generation immigrants and that this association weakens in strength for the 1.5 generation and second generation and becomes inverse among the third plus generation. Acculturation to the U.S. works in the opposite direction, being inversely associated with first generation immigrant, not associated with 1.5 generation immigrant, slightly positively associated with second generation American and strongly positively associated with third plus generation American. Familism shows a small positive association with first generation immigrant and a small negative association with third plus generation American, but is not significantly associated with any of the other generational status measures. Machismo is not associated with any of the generational status dummy variables, although it is associated with familism. In summary, at the bivariate level, some of our hypothesized relationships are supported, but in several cases the correlations are rather weak in magnitude.

Multivariate Analysis

Table 3 shows the results for partial correlation coefficients between family violence, first generation immigrant, and the hypothesized intervening cultural variables. Results here are used to determine which, if any, of the cultural variables are significantly associated with both family violence and first generation immigrant – necessary conditions in order to serve as an intervening variable in the relationship between first generation immigrant and family violence. The findings here support only one cultural variable, acculturation to Mexico, as attaining these necessary relationships. Acculturation to the US is inversely associated with first generation immigrant, but not associated with family violence. Familism is associated with inversely family violence, but is not related to first generation immigrant. Machismo is not associated with either family violence or first generation immigrant. Finally, as predicted, first generation immigrant and family violence are inversely correlated.

Based on the results in Table 3, the only variable in these data that can potentially serve as an intervening variable is acculturation to Mexico. But before this possibility can be assessed it is necessary to establish a baseline relationship in a logistic regression equation using family violence as the dependent variable and first generation immigrant as the independent variable (along with controls). The results in Eq. 1 show that family violence decreases among first generation immigrants (odds ratio = 0.386, p = .001). Equation two adds acculturation to Mexico to the analyses and, first of all, shows that this variable retains its significant inverse association with family violence (odds ratio = 0.986, p = .044). In addition, when compared to Eq. 1, the degree of mediation can be assessed in that the coefficient for first generation immigrant drops from an odds ratio of 0.386 to 0.473 (getting weaker in magnitude or closer to an odds ratio of 1.0, which is no effect). These results thus indicate that acculturation to Mexico partially mediates, or explains, the inverse association between first generation immigrant and family violence. Put another way, greater levels of acculturation to Mexico partially accounts for why family violence is lower for first generation immigrants. In terms of control

variables, in both equations deviant lifestyles demonstrates a positive association with family violence as does the number living in the home, while none of the other control variables has a significant relationship with family violence.

Discussion

The goal of this research is to more deeply explore the relationship between family violence and Mexican immigrants through the utilization of measures of generational status and cultural factors. Specifically, this research sought to assess whether family violence was lower among immigrants and, if so, whether acculturation, familism, and machismo might help to account for such a relationship. Data come from a large representative survey of adults living in El Paso County, Texas, in 2014. El Paso is a traditional destination for Mexican immigrants, and about 25% of residents are immigrants, making this setting ideal for assessing our hypotheses.

Major findings from multivariate logistic regression show that being first generation immigrant is strongly protective toward family violence compared to 1.5 generation immigrants, second generation Americans and third or higher generation Americans. Thus, our findings support previous findings that family violence is lower among immigrants, particularly those from Mexico (Hazen and Soriano 2007; Lown and Vega 2001; Sabina et al. 2013, 2015; Sorenson and Telles 1991; Wright and Benson 2010; but see; Vaughn et al. 2015). In addition, our results support the Latino or Immigrant Paradox, which posits that the protective buffer that being an immigrant provides diminishes the propensity to experience family violence, similar to patterns found among other types of crime (e.g., Alvarez et al. 2014; Bersani 2014; Morenoff and Astor 2006; Rumbaut et al. 2006; Sampson et al. 2005; Zhou and Bankston 2006). Therefore, our study provides evidence that measuring a respondent's generational status when understanding family violence in immigrant families is important, but rarely examined or captured by past studies (i.e., Vaughn et al. 2015; Wright and Benson 2010). Such an omission would fail to distinguish specific individuals more likely to engage in family violence.

In addition to the direct immigration—family violence relationship, the present study also assessed the impact of measures of immigrant culture suggested by the literature to help explain the trend in findings that immigrants experience lower family violence. Specifically, we examined acculturation to Mexico, acculturation to the US, familism, and machismo. Supporting hypotheses, our findings show that acculturation to Mexico partially explains the finding that family violence is lowest among first generation immigrants. However, failing to support predictions, acculturation to the US, familism and machismo do not help account for why

family violence is higher among 1.5 generation immigrants, second generation Americas or third or higher generation Americans. These results lend support to prior findings that acculturation to country-of-origin is protective toward family violence (Lown and Vega 2001; Sabina et al. 2013, 2015), but extend these findings with results showing that acculturation to Mexico partially explains *why* first generation Mexican immigrants experience lower levels of family violence. This is one of the first studies to document the importance of examining the role of acculturation and its role in explaining levels of family violence among Mexican immigrants. We encourage future data collection to collect this type of information to better help understand the correlates of this social issue in one of the fastest growing segments of the population.

Additional factors that separate first generation immigrants from their generational descendants may include what Sampson (2008: 30) terms immigrant selection effects whereby "immigrants, and Mexicans in particular, selectively migrate to the United States on characteristics that predispose them to low crime, such as motivation to work, ambition, and a desire not to be deported" as well as immigrant culture where "immigrants may also come from cultures where violence isn't rewarded as a strategy for establishing reputation." Such features of personality and culture, possessed by the immigrants themselves, might be less apparent in their children and grandchildren who have to balance the American cultural code of conspicuous consumption and capitalism with their family's distinct cultural values (Rumbaut et al. 2006).

Limitations

Despite the contributions and implications this study has for the family violence literature, it is not without its limitations. As previously mentioned, we were unable to measure household income as a consequence of missing data. In order to minimize this issue we gauge household socioeconomic status with a measure of poverty at the neighborhood-level. Due to economic residential segregation in the US low income households tend to be located in poor neighborhoods. As such, neighborhood-level socioeconomic status can help us gauge individual-level SES. Additionally, it should be noted that the sample for this study comes from a single county, albeit a traditional immigrant destination. Scholars should also take heed of studies which distinguish between traditional and new immigrant destinations (Shihadeh & Barranco, 2012) and continue conducting research in both research settings in order to attain a clearer and more complete understanding of the immigration and crime relationship.

Another limitation is lacking data on citizenship status. To date, most of the research on the immigration and crime
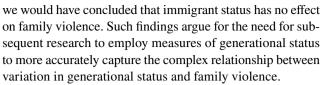
relationship does not capture citizenship status and instead focuses on nativity, particularly whether individuals are foreign-born, regardless of documentation status. This is in large part due to the marginalization of undocumented individuals that place them in need of protections from human subject review boards and the reluctance of discussing it with researchers. Lacking data on undocumented status could influence our results because of the trepidation that immigrants feel attempting to report a crime to the authorities (Menjívar and Salcido 2002; Raj and Silverman 2002) and fear of deportation (Zatz and Smith 2012; Erez and Globokar 2009). Specifically when looking at family violence there may be reluctance on the part of immigrants to report a crime due to fear of deportation for victim, perpetrator, or other family member and the subsequent possibility of having their family split up (Raj and Silverman 2002; Erez and Globokar 2009). These factors might make undocumented immigrants and those with mixed-status families (households where members hold a variety of citizenship statuses) wary of reporting abuse not only to the authorities, but also to researchers – which might be a significant factor related to the lack of research of family violence and immigration in general.

The results of some studies, however, lessen the concern that immigrants may be more reluctant to report family violence. For example, Kimber et al. (2015) found that among those with a history of child maltreatment, first-generation are more likely to report if they are the perpetrators of intimate partner violence than third-generation respondents. Moreover, the studies on the reluctance of immigrant reporting crime have largely concerned reporting it to the police, as such, considerate and discrete survey methods in terms of data collection and confidentiality (such as the ones employed in the present research) could help mediate these concerns.

Another limitation to the study is that it is cross sectional, thus there is no way to measure cause and effect, or to assess relationships over long periods of time. This has typically been the case for previous immigration and family violence studies (Gonçalves and Matos 2016). Efforts should be made to follow in the footsteps of Martinez and colleagues in conducting longitudinal studies examining the immigration and crime relationship, including family violence (Martinez et al. 2016).

Directions for Future Research

Future research should further investigate family violence, as well as crime more broadly, among 1.5 generation immigrants. As mentioned previously we found a strong relationship between generational status and family violence. This result warrants further explanation. Indeed, had we not divided immigrants into first generation and 1.5 generation,

we would have concluded that immigrant status has no effect on family violence. Such findings argue for the need for subsequent research to employ measures of generational status to more accurately capture the complex relationship between variation in generational status and family violence.

We also encourage future research to expand upon our findings regarding how first-generation individuals who are acculturated to Mexico are less subjected to family violence by examining neighborhood effects. For instance, do first-generation migrants who live in ethnic enclaves have a lower propensity to family violence? In doing such analysis, it is best to operationalize neighborhood context in a comprehensive manner rather than a single measure such as place of residence. Therefore, one approach can be to use structural equation models (SEM) to uncover the shared covariance of various neighborhood indicators and use them to derive a latent construct underlying the measure. Alternatively, multilevel models also allow for latent constructs and provide a useful strategy for improving neighborhood contextual-effect analyses on family violence.

Lastly, future studies should consider applying victimization theories to this study population. One such theory is target congruence theory as articulated by Finkelhor and Asdigian (1996). To better understand why some people are more likely than others to experience victimization, including that of family violence, Finkelhor and Asdigian (1996) highlighted the importance of identifying elements that draw offenders to the victim. That is, the characteristics of a victim that can be used by the offender to judge whether they are vulnerable to victimization. Three factors that can increase the chances of a person's victimization are target vulnerability (i.e., depression, anxiety, etc.), target gratifiability (i.e., lacking legal status), and target antagonism (i.e., being disobedient in the case of child abuse). In immigrant families, these elements may be prevalent and make interpersonal aggression more likely to occur. Due to data limitations, we were not able to test these assumptions, but such an endeavor will surely shed light into the risk factors for family violence in immigrant families.

Conclusion

The present study contributes to the immigration and family violence literature by highlighting the effects that generational status and cultural variables have in this relationship. Specifically, we tested if cultural variables intervened in an initial relationship between generational status and family violence. To this end we found a strong relationship between generational status and family violence among immigrants from Mexico, such that family violence was lowest among first generation immigrants and highest among 1.5 generation immigrants, and higher but tapering off for second

generation and third generation or higher Americans. We also found evidence that acculturation to Mexico was negatively associated with family violence and, furthermore, that this variable mediated, or helped explain why family violence was lowest among first generation Mexican immigrants. Additional results showed that machismo and acculturation to the US were not associated with higher levels of family violence and that familism and machismo were not associated with first generation immigrants. Future research should seek to further elucidate mediating factors in the immigration-crime relationship as well as why first generation Mexican immigrants experience lower levels of family violence.

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