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in Uruguayan Women**

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Attitudes towards partner violence and gender roles in Uruguayan women

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Abstract

According to World Health Organization (2013), 30% of even-partnered women have experienced either physical or/and sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) in the course of their lives.

The incidence of IPV in Latin America and Caribbean region is higher relative to other high income and middle-income countries. This problem is particularly relevant in Uruguay.

The empirical literature provides evidence that violence towards partners is more likely among individuals that justify, approve or favor this type of violence.

This paper explores the extent to which tolerant attitudes to violence against women are correlated with tolerance to violence against men, and the relation of these attitudes with three factors: a) having experienced violence when a child, b) attitudes to motherhood roles and, c) attitudes to gender roles in society.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence; women; attitudes; intergenerational transmission of violence; motherhood roles; gender roles.

JEL classification: D19, J16.

Resumen

De acuerdo a la World Health Organization (2013), 30 % de las mujeres que estuvieron en pareja habían experimentado violencia (física o sexual) por parte de la pareja (IPV) a lo largo de sus vidas.

La incidencia en Latinoamérica de la IPV es alta en relación a otros países de ingresos altos y medios. Este problema es particularmente relevante en Uruguay.

La literatura empírica muestra evidencia que la violencia hacia la pareja es más probable entre aquellos individuos que justifican este tipo de violencia.

Este trabajo explora la correlación entre las actitudes tolerantes hacia la violencia con experiencias de violencia en la niñez y ciertas actitudes sobre el rol de la mujer en la sociedad. En particular se investiga el grado en que las actitudes tolerantes hacia la violencia contra las mujeres están correlacionadas con la tolerancia a la violencia contra los hombres, y la relación de estas actitudes con tres factores: a) haber experimentado violencia cuando niño, b) actitudes hacia los roles de madre y c) actitudes hacia los roles de género en la sociedad.

Palabras claves: Violencia íntima de la pareja; mujeres; actitudes; intergeneracional; roles de madre; roles en la sociedad.

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1. Introduction

According to World Health Organization (2013), 30% of even-partnered women have experienced either physical or/and sexual intimate partner violence (IPV) in the course of their lives. This figure is similar to the average for the Latin America and Caribbean countries whereas higher figures are reported for South-East Asia (47.7%), Eastern Mediterranean (37.0%) and Africa (36.6%). Thus, the lifetime incidence of IPV in Latin America and Caribbean region is higher than in high income countries (23%), low and middle-income countries of Europe (25.4%) and the Western Pacific (24.6%). However, most of the studies on IPV focus on high income countries. Particularly the studies about domestic violence in Latin America societies are scarce in part due to the lack of data (we may cite Orpinas, 1999; Salas and Luz, 2005; Flake and Foster, 2006; Castro and Casique, 2009) to which we can add articles on Latino in US (such as Garcia et al., 2005). With the present work using data of Uruguay, we aim to contribute to this issue with an empirical work of attitudes of women to domestic violence.

The above-mentioned data for the Latin America and Caribbean region refers to the average of 15 countries among which Uruguay is not present. According to ECLAC, the incidence of women death caused by a partner in Uruguay is 0.71 per 100.000 women (average for 2009-2012), which makes the country to have a lower prevalence than three Caribbean countries but higher than the other Latin countries with available information, such as Nicaragua (0.49), Paraguay (0.43), Perú (0.38), Colombia (0.26) and Chile (0.25). Thus, Uruguay makes an interesting case of a high-level domestic violence Latin country. Empirical literature for several countries provides evidence that violence towards partners is more likely among individuals that justify, approve or favor this type of violence (Orpinas, 1999; Boyle et al. 2009). Attitudes are also relevant to explain the behavior when an individual is a witness of an IPV situation. Higher levels of tolerance with partner violence against women are associated with negative attitudes to report it (Gracia and Herrero, 2006), diminish the likelihood of intervening in IPV situations (Frye, 2007) and, mediated by “victim blame”, affect the reaction of potential informal helpers of victims (West and Andrei, 2002). Consequently, attitudes may be an obstacle to the attempt of the elimination of domestic violence besides their effect on its practice.

The role of attitudes is salient in different theoretical approaches such as the intergenerational transmission of violence, the cultural of violence and different branches of feminist theory. A review of these approaches is presented in Ali and Naylor (2013).

Pollack (2004) models the intergenerational transmission of violence as the result of three positive effects of violence while growing up: a) on the likelihood of a man to be violent towards his partner, b) on the likelihood of a woman to remain with a violent husband and, c) on the likelihood of both men and women to marry with a person who grew up in a violent home. Evidence about the association of experiencing violence during childhood and IPV, is documented by a wide number of empirical studies for developing and developed countries (Alexander et al., 1991; Pornari et al., 2013; Sahin et al. 2010, Salas and Luz, 2005).

Based on the social learning theory, we may say that attitudes and beliefs are mediators of this intergenerational cycling. As individuals who experience or witness violence during childhood learn to accept violence as a way of solving conflicts, they are more likely to accept violence in intimate relationships during adulthood (Bandura, 1969, 1973). Empirical work indicates that witness the father beating the mother is associated with tolerant wife-beating attitudes, and gives support for the attitude-mediation hypothesis (Ulbrich and Huber, 1981; Markowitz, 2001; Speizer, 2010).

The sociocultural perspective emphasizes the role of shared beliefs in a society that justifies and legitimates violence and consequently, helps to maintain IPV. Attitudes about violence towards partners belong to a wider group of norms and beliefs. In the case of violence against women, these beliefs and norms comprise a broad range of gender inequities. Feminist approaches also outline gender inequities, considering that they are part of an order in which men hold positions of power and dominance over society, including women.

Gender roles and inequities are highlighted when explaining differences in domestic violence between countries. In the Latin American case, IPV against women may be analyzed in the framework of a culture characterized by a male identity based on dominance and a female identity based on a mother-wife role. The term “machismo” refers to a masculine ideal that reminds archetypes related to aggressiveness, power and strength.

The ideal woman instead puts family ahead individual's interests, including rights, obligation and responsibilities. The combinations of these ideals may lead to a patriarchal system in which women fulfill obligations, increasing the risk of violence.

Several empirical works provide support to the relation between gender inequities and attitudes to IPV. Most of them analyze the gender empowerment at home. Approval to sex role stereotypes (in terms a male superordinate position in the decision-making) is positively correlated with approval to physical force by husbands against wife (Gracia and Herrero, 2006b; Ulthman et al., 2009; Flake and Forste, 2006; Castro and Casique, 2009). Flake and Forste (2006) interpret that men see women's decision power as a challenge which makes them to turn to violence as a mechanism to reestablish the culturally prescribed gender-domination.

This article draws on intergenerational transmission and cultural theories to study women's attitudes to domestic violence in Uruguay. Specifically, we explore the extent to which tolerant attitudes to violence against women are correlated with tolerance to violence against men, and the relation of these attitudes with three factors: a) having experienced violence when a child, b) attitudes to motherhood roles and, c) attitudes to gender roles in society.

2. Data and methods

We use the survey *Encuesta de Situaciones Familiares* carried out in 2007 by Universidad de la República, Innovation National Agency in Uruguay (ANII) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The main purpose of the survey was to gather information about marriage and divorce, work, fertility, child-rearing and children's welfare outcomes, including education, health, and psycho-social development. The database provides information of 1224 women aged 25 to 62, living in the metropolitan area of Montevideo. The survey was carried out through face-to-face interviews. Because of missing values, we use a sample of 1198 women.

The questions that capture the attitudes towards IPV are:

- "There are situations where it is justified that a man slaps his partner"
- "There are situations where it is justified that a woman slaps her partner"

The responses of each statement range are 1 - "strongly agree", 2 - "agree", 3 - "neither agree or disagree", 4 - "disagree" to 5 - "strongly disagree".

In Table 1 we present the frequency of responses. Few women justify that a man or a woman slaps his/her partner. Indeed, attitudes towards violence concentrate in options 4 and 5, that is, women report to not approve violence. However, as we show in our results, the difference between the choice of “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with violence appears to be relevant. We build a variable that takes three values: 0 when she chooses option 5, 1 when she chooses option 4, and 2 when she chooses options 1 to 3. Thus, the highest the value is, the most positive the attitude towards justification of violence is.

Table 1. Women attitudes towards partner violence. Percentage.

	Justification of men's violence		Justification of women's violence	
	Distribution	Confidence interval at 95%	Distribution	Confidence interval at 95%
Strongly agree	0.3	(0,09 ; 1,11)	0.5	(0,22 ; 1,26)
Agree	0.8	(0,37 ; 1,57)	2.5	(1,68 ; 3,64)
Neither agree or disagree	1.0	(0,57 ; 1,8)	2.6	(1,76 ; 3,68)
Disagree	35.2	(32,37 ; 38,14)	34.4	(31,61 ; 37,35)
Strongly disagree	62.7	(59,73 ; 65,58)	60.0	(57,02 ; 62,94)
Total	100.0		100.0	

In order to analyze the responses we estimate an ordered logit model. The independent variables of the model are the following.

Home-centered preferences. We follow the spirit of the proposal by Hakim (2003) that defines that women's preferences are home-centered when “family life and children are the main priorities throughout life”. The survey inquires the agreement with three statements:

- "A woman can have a fully satisfactory life without having children"
- "A woman can have a fully satisfactory life if she only dedicates herself to taking care of the home and her children"
- "In case of the dissolution of the couple, the best for children is to live with their mother"

The responses of each statement are 1 - "strongly agree", 2 - "agree", 3 - "neither agree or disagree", 4 - "disagree" and 5 - "strongly disagree". For each statement we generate a dummy variable that takes value 1 or 0. For the first statement, it takes value 1 if the woman chooses options 4 or 5; for the second and third statements, it takes value 1 when the woman chooses options 1 or 2. Thus, we interpret that when the three dummy variables take value 1, the preferences of women are home-centered. On the contrary, three values 0 indicate that her family life-style is far away from the home-centered ideal. The explanatory variable used in the estimation is an index equal to the sum of the three dummy variables normalized by its mean value.

Political and business abilities. We attempt to capture the opinion about the abilities of women to perform activities that have traditionally been the preserve of men. We build a variable based on the agreement with two statements:

- "Men have better abilities to be politicians than women"
- "Men have better abilities for doing business than women"

As in the above statements, the responses range from 1 to 5. We define two dummy variables, where 1 refers to the responses "agree" and "strongly agree" for each statement. The index is constructed by summing up the two dummy variables and dividing the sum by the mean. Thus, the lowest the confidence in women abilities to politics and business is, the highest the value of the index is.

Never beaten when a child. We build a variable to assess the relevance of the intergenerational transmission of violence. The survey asks "How often were you beaten as a child to be disciplined?" The possible answers were "never", "rarely", "frequently", "almost always", "always". We build a variable with value 1 if the respondent was never beaten and 0 in other case.

Other controls. We control for age and education (years of schooling) of the respondent.

3. Results

More than 60% of women strongly disagree with the justification of men's and women's violence against partners whereas more than one third report to disagree. Thus, the incidence of agreement or indifference is rather small: 2.1% when inquired about men's violence and 5.6% when inquired about women's violence. Although this difference is statistical significant at 95%, there is a strong positive correlation between both attitudes: the correlation coefficient is 0.69 when using the five reported options and 0.79 when using the build three-level variable.

In Table 2 we show the results of the estimation of the two models: justification of men's violence and justification of women's violence.

Let's focus first on the socio-demographic variables. Several empirical works study difference in attitudes between socio-demographic groups and find some similar patterns across countries. Evidence for African countries indicate that in most countries, the likelihood of tolerating IPV against women increases with low education and is higher for the young, the poor and rural population (Uthman et al., 2009, 2009b, Lawoko, 2006). Markowitz (2001) finds that in US, the approval of violence towards spouse is higher for young and low socio-economic status. In our study we only control age and years of schooling. Unlike the international evidence, we find that age is not significant at the usual statistical levels. But like in the quoted studies, education is negatively correlated with the justification of violence (both men's and women's violence).

Table 2. Ordered logit results (Standard errors in parentheses)

	Justification of men's violence	Justification of women's violence
Age	-0.001 (0.007)	0.000 (0.006)
Years of schooling	-0.043*** (0.016)	-0.047*** (0.015)
Home-centered preferences	0.227** (0.112)	0.245** (0.110)
Political and business abilities	0.077*** (0.027)	0.051* (0.026)
Never beaten when a child	-0.338** (0.134)	-0.365*** (0.129)
cut1	0.222 (0.382)	0.072 (0.363)
cut2	3.592*** (0.446)	2.538*** (0.379)
Observations	1198	1198
F(5, 1193)	5.55	5.51

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

The variables of interest are the ones that capture gender stereotypes and to have been beaten when a child.

With “Home-centered preferences” we attempt to measure the degree of identification with an archetype of motherhood. This archetype means to move away from self-fulfillment to children’s welfare. Children are seen as one of the most precious assets and a precondition for living a meaningful-life. As our variable increases with the proximity to this ideal, the estimated positive coefficient reported in Table 2 means that the stronger the home-centered preferences are, the stronger the justification with IPV violence.

Recall that the variable takes four values that reflect if the woman positively assesses none, one, two or three of the statements that give support to the home-centered preferences. We calculate the predicted probability of the three outcomes for each position in the preference scale. The results are depicted in Figure 1a and 1d. The likelihood of indifference/agreement rises as the woman gets closer to the archetype. However, the predicted probabilities are low and their confidence intervals overlap. Most important is that there is a clear distinction between strongly disagree or just disagree with justifying

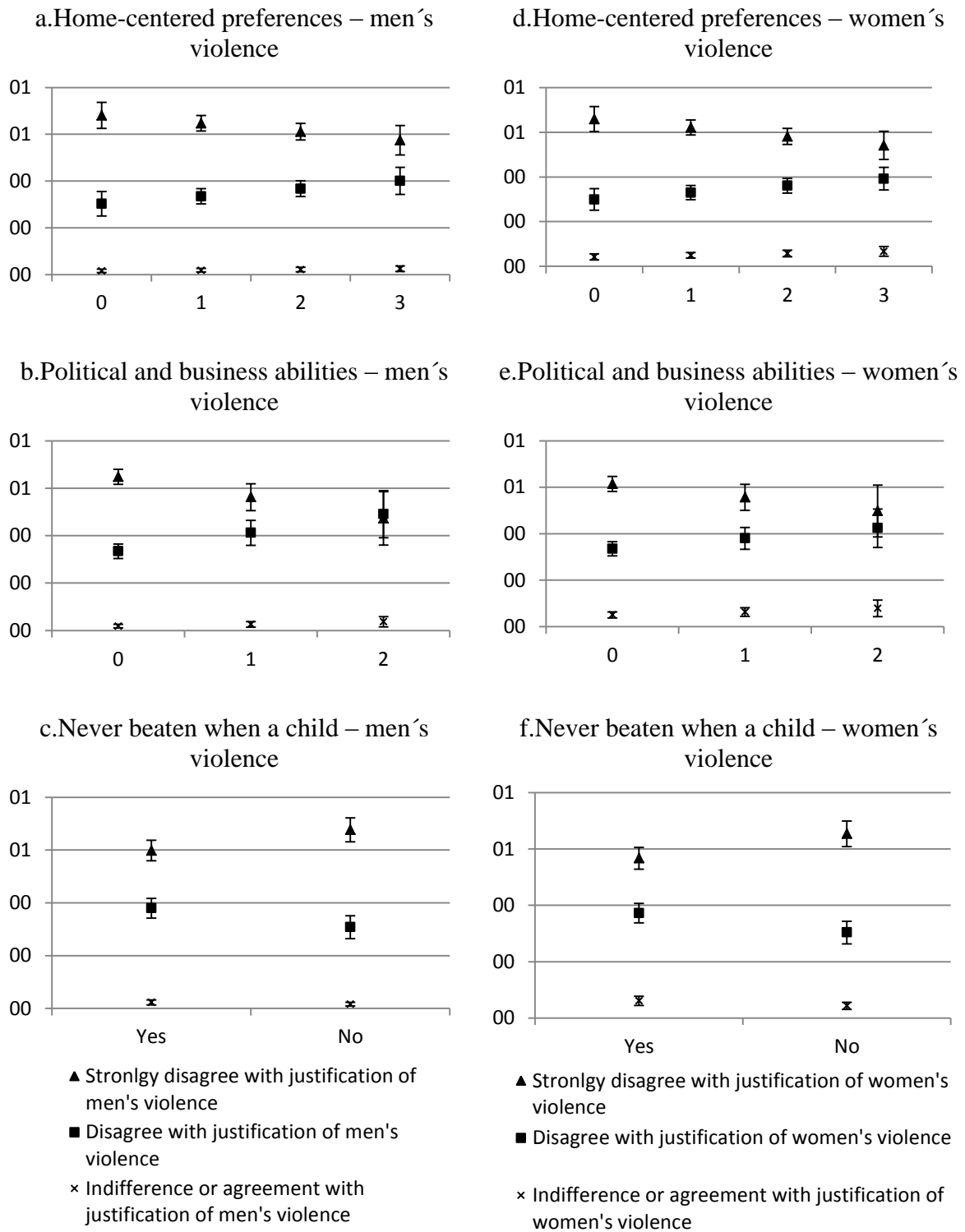
violence. The predicted probability of strongly disagreement decreases as preferences get closer to home-centered family life style (around 11 pp. between 0 to 3 statements in both models). On the contrary, just disagreement increases (around 9 pp).

The variable “Political and business abilities” seeks to measure the attitude towards an archetype that reflects an ideology of male dominance in which men are the natural responsible of the political and economic system. This archetype means the lack of female autonomy in the society, barriers to the female participation in the public sphere and low involvement in the arts and the academic life, among others. Our variable is built only on attitudes towards political and business ability. As reported in Table 2, the positive coefficient of the variable indicates that when men are seen as more able than women in those areas, the justification of violence is more likely. The positive sign hold for the two models.

In Figure 1b and 1e we show the predicted probabilities. In this case, the explanatory variable takes three values that reflect if the woman positively assesses none, one or two of the statements that give support to the male dominance ideology. Tolerance of violence increases with the support to these statements but the likelihood is always low. Like with the variable “Home-centered preferences”, the relevant difference appears when comparing the model of strongly disagreement and the just disagreement model. As the support of male dominance ideology increases, the probability of strongly disagreement diminishes. But the likelihood of reporting just disagreement increases with the support of the dominant male archetype. In the model of justification of women’s violence, the magnitude of the effect is rather similar to “Home-centered preferences”: around 11 pp in the outcome “strongly disagreement” and 9 pp in “disagreement”. The effect is stronger on the justification of men’s violence: 17 pp and 16 pp for each outcome, respectively.

Finally, the variable “never beaten as a child” reflects the effect of having experienced violence in early stages of life. The negative effect (see Table 2) indicates that the experience of violence is associated with higher tolerance to IPV, giving support to intergenerational transmission of violence and social learning theory. Past violence experience decreases the likelihood of strongly disagreement with IPV violence in 8 pp and increases just disagreement in 7 pp (Figures 1c and 1f).

Figure 1. Predicted probabilities and confidence interval at 95%



4. Conclusions

The overall picture indicates that attitudes towards violence justification of men and women are similar. The models also show similar estimates. Experience of violence in childhood increases tolerance towards IPV giving support to social learning theory. Besides, variables that capture sociocultural dimensions and attitudes to gender roles appear to be important in the justification of IPV. On one hand, women with home-centered preferences are more likely to justify men's and women's violence. On the other hand, confidence in women abilities in politics and business decrease the justification of violence.

The effect of the variable about confidence in abilities is higher in the model of men's violence than women's violence. Self-confident women would challenge the male dominant ideology and are probably more prone to challenge men's authority at home. Consequently, they are more likely at risk of violence at home. Thus, the strong effect of beliefs in abilities on the attitude against men's violence may be due to the fact that confidence increases the likelihood of men to exert IPV and so, self-confident women would exhibit a strong rejection.

The agreement or indifference towards justification of violence has a very low incidence. However, the tolerance is higher when it is a woman who is violent than when it is a man. One interpretation is that the attitudes respond to group identity so women are less tolerant with men's violence than with women's violence. Other explanation is that self-defense could be more associated with women's violence than men's violence, and violence is usually legitimated as a self-defense action.

The effects of experience violence when a child and the sociocultural variables on just disagree have the same sign on tolerance and just disagreement. Thus, the degree of intolerance that separate strong disagreement with violence and just disagreement of violence is important. An optimistic interpretation indicates that the difference between categories respond to a marginal tolerance that make some women to choose just disagreement. A more pessimist point of view suggests that because of social pressure in a face-to-face interview, agreement is not a politically correct option so the real options were

strong disagreement or just disagreement. Thus, interventions that attempt to modify attitudes may be important.

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