



Masculinities and Violence Study in Nicaragua

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Puntos de Encuentro: is a non-profit Nicaraguan civil society organization, it is feminist, autonomous, diverse and has a regional scope. It fosters favorable social environments, individual and collective action for the transformation of unequal power relations, and the recognition, defense and exercise of young and adult women's rights in daily life. It is part of the broader women's movement, a reference for feminist thought and practice and recognized for sustained knowledge management and communication strategies that impact diverse aspects of daily life.

Centro Bartolomé de las Casas (CBC): is a Salvadoran non-profit social organization, focused on popular education and human development. It is a center for popular education that works in El Salvador and the Central American and Caribbean region. CBC bases its work on diverse understandings and in dialogue with colleagues from different countries, in order to reflect, share and influence the field of masculinities with a profeminist commitment. The Program proposes a methodology based on a comprehensive approach toward masculinities, emphasizing training and research among men from diverse backgrounds, and advocacy in partnership with national and international women's organizations.

Promundo: is a non-governmental organization that acts in various countries around the world, seeking to promote gender equality and violence prevention, with emphasis on the involvement of men and women in the transformation of masculinities. Working with men and boys to transform unequal power norms and dynamics is a strategic factor in achieving gender equity. Their research, programs and actions to influence public policies show that promoting positive ideas about what it means to be a man or a woman improves lives.

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MASCULINITIES AND VIOLENCE STUDY IN NICARAGUA

This document contains the main findings of two investigation processes conducted in Managua, Nicaragua.

- Personal and collective histories, visions and practices: a quantitative study with men in Managua.
- When they call you an “exemplary man”: a qualitative study on masculinities that challenge sexism

Both were conducted within the framework of the bi-national research project Promoting non-violent forms of masculine identities in Nicaragua and El Salvador, implemented by Puntos de Encuentro, Centro Bartolomé de las Casas and Promundo, with the support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

The research project addresses practices and attitudes, including different forms of violence within and outside the home; and analyzes personal, family and community variables for understanding the construction of masculinity and violence exercised by men, in order to create inputs that can guide actions contributing to preventing its multiple manifestations.

Part of understanding gender as a relational and structural category, seeks to understand how men socialize; how roles are socially constructed; and how these roles and power dynamics change throughout the life cycle and in different social contexts (Connell, 1995).

Men are involved at the base of most situations of violence, as a product of hegemonic masculinity construction processes (characteristics, values and behavior socially imposed as “must be”), as well as by factors related to social context (poverty, countries in conflict, among other aspects).

Young and adult men exercise violence in their families, affective relations and public spaces, as well as employing the rhetoric that legitimizes it. Violence acts as a mechanism of control and power, and sometimes

functions as a compensation for the disempowerment and devaluation experienced by men who hold hegemonic masculinity as their reference. Others have learned to give new meaning to their masculinity through `positive deviance in response to this model. That is, they do not exercise violence in their partner, parental and social relationships, not even in environments shared with others who do.

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (Images), developed by Promundo and the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), has identified factors that influence distancing from sexist¹ norms.

Other studies address the interconnections between different forms of violence and similar causal factors: sexist social norms, social acceptance of the use of violence, highly conflictive family relations, lack of social support, having been victims or witnesses of violence during childhood, association with delinquent peers, low educational levels, lack of social skills for non-violent conflict resolution, and substance abuse, among others (Wilkins, Tsao, Davis & Klevens, 2014). They have also shown probable links between violence during childhood and adolescence, social norms related to masculinity and violent behavior (Connell, 2000).

Violence in intimate relationships (of men against women) is associated with past experiences of violence during childhood. It also appears that women who experience intimate partner violence may treat their children harshly as a way to protect them from their father's violence (Fulu, McCook & Falb, 2017); a sample of the intersectionality of violences within families.

1 In Nicaragua the term "machista" is used rather than "sexista" to describe sexist men, attitudes, behavior and norms.

PERSONAL AND COLLECTIVE HISTORIES, VISIONS AND PRACTICES: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF MEN IN MANAGUA

The study developed in 2016 is cross-sectional, based on a survey of 1063 men from 40 neighborhoods of three municipalities of the capital of Nicaragua (Ciudad Sandino, Tipitapa and Managua). It adopts and adapts the instrument used in the Images study carried out in different contexts worldwide. The Center for Sociocultural Analysis (CASC in Spanish) from the Central American University (UCA) was in charge of its implementation.

Variables at personal, family and social-community levels and the relationships between them were explored. Regression analysis² of ordinary least square and logistic regression was used to study associations among socio-demographic, personal history and gender attitude variables, as well as other variables in the intimate, family and social sphere ($p < .05$). For the analysis, a Gender Attitude Scale and variables composed by violence and participation in domestic tasks, among others, were constructed.

Survey subjects are men 18 years or older (average age is 38 years). Just over half of these men have secondary or higher education levels; one in 10 has received no formal education. Six out of 10 report having jobs and two out of 10 participate in religious, political or social organizations. Two out of 10 fought in war.

Half of them declare themselves single, seven out of 10 have a partner (including courtship) and nine out of 10 have had at least one relationship in their life. Their families are predominantly nuclear and led by themselves. Two thirds are fathers and half of those already had children at 21 years of age. The majority lives with their children.

Three of every four practice a religion and more than half report the influence of religious organizations on their decisions. More than a third reports drunkenness at least once a month in the last year, and almost half, consuming five or more drinks on a single occasion.

2 Describes the relation between one or more predictor variables and the response variable.

PARENTING AND ENVIRONMENT IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

More than half of the sample reports that in their childhood and adolescence they were cared for mainly by women (43% by the mother). Almost the entire sample claims good family relations, although one in four reports having had aggressive arguments. The vast majority mentions friendships in relation to activities valued as positive (sports, for example); and one in four indicates friendships involved in robbery, litigation, drug or alcohol use.

The data reflect family and community contexts. One out of four men reported having witnessed intimate partner violence against his mother and half of them experienced at least one expression of violence against them in the private sphere. One out of six grew up in homes where both they and their mothers experienced violence.

Approximately one out of four reports having experienced corporal punishment at school, and a similar proportion mentions teasing at school or in the neighborhood. Two out of five report experiencing violence both at school and in the neighborhood.

Six out of 10 men surveyed claim to have experienced violence (within or outside the home).

Of the total sample, one in four reports having experienced violence both within and outside the home.

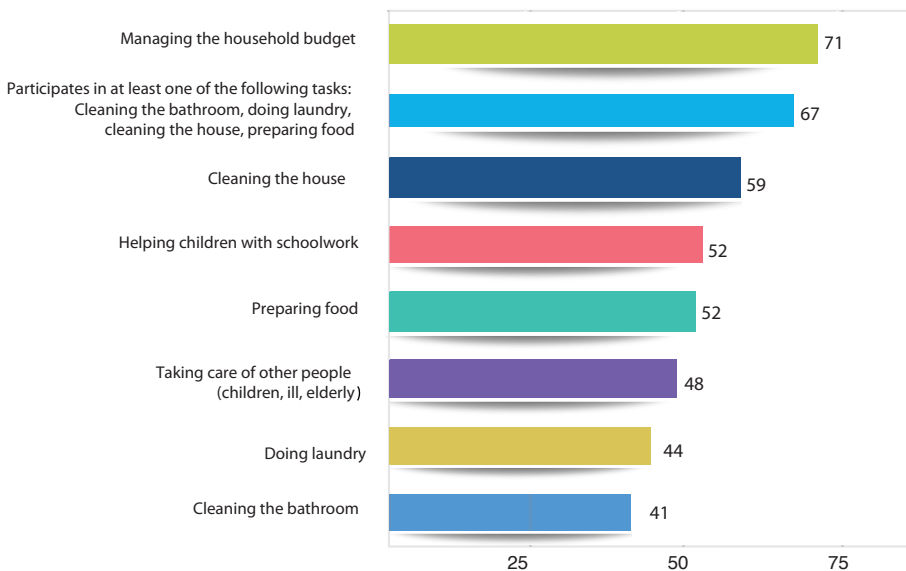
PARTICIPATION IN DOMESTIC TASKS

The distribution of domestic work and care is one of the main challenges to building equitable gender relations within families. 40% of men surveyed report that in their adolescence, their father or adult male referent participated in domestic activities, and 81% also admit having participated.

One third of men report that these male referents participated frequently in cooking, cleaning or assisting children with their schoolwork; and less often in doing laundry or taking care of children, ill or elderly people. Half expressed that, as adolescents, they participated more than adults in cleaning and doing laundry, although they also participated less in taking care of other people.

Currently, the majority report participating in at least one of the following tasks: doing laundry, cleaning the house, preparing food and cleaning the bathroom. The most frequently mentioned area of involvement (seven out of ten) is in managing the household budget, while fewer than half report taking care of other people, doing laundry, or even fewer, cleaning the bathroom.

Graphic 1 - Percentage of current participation of respondents in domestic tasks



Participation in at least one domestic task during adolescence increases the probability of participating as an adult, which is also associated with gender attitudes.

A regression analysis corroborates the previous and reveals that those who are employed are less involved in domestic tasks; and those who have primary or secondary education levels participate more than those who have received no formal education.

GENDER ATTITUDES

The survey in Nicaragua included 20 items on attitudes, taken in part from the Gender Equitable Men (GEM) Scale, which has been adapted and applied in different countries to study attitudes regarding gender dynamics and roles (Pulerwitz & Barker, 2008).

In general, most respondents disagree with the inequality reflected in the items on attitudes. However, opinions are practically divided in half when expressing that it is natural for men to be the head of family and that intimate partner violence is a private matter that “nobody should stick his nose in”. Also, there is a certain level of acceptance towards defending one’s reputation, even with the use of force (4 out of 10 men).

One in three men expresses agreement with norms that regulate women’s sexual life (virginity before marriage, considering a woman who has had several partners “easy”); and one in four believes women are responsible for acts of sexual violence. This opinion is prevalent among older men with less schooling.

Regarding women in the public sphere, almost 30% agree that they are too emotional for leadership and 17% think they cannot fulfill both political and domestic roles adequately and simultaneously. On the other hand, a third of interviewees holds that feminism has not helped to improve women’s rights and one in five considers that equality of rights implies loss of rights for men.

Furthermore, in addition to the previous topics, the survey looked into men’s positioning regarding homosexuality. Two thirds of respondents disagreed that they would be ashamed of a homosexual son and three

out of four, that they would feel uncomfortable close to a homosexual. However, half of them are against homosexual people working with children or having access to adoption or equal marriage, making the contradictions on this subject apparent.

Likewise, the survey inquired among the men interviewed, on their ideas about Law 779 (Comprehensive Law against Violence towards Women), with responses reflecting a certain level of acceptance. 56% of these men believe that Law 779 has contributed to the decrease in violence against women, although half believe that it has harmed men³. These positions are not mutually exclusive: one third of the interviewees agree with both statements.

GENDER ATTITUDES SCALE

With the help of a Principal Component Analysis (PCA⁴), a Gender Attitudes Scale similar to the GEM was defined, with a scale of 0 to 3 (higher scores show more egalitarian attitudes). The scale, composed of 14 items, was used to perform association analyses.

The following items were included in this scale:

1. Changing diapers, bathing and feeding children are all the mother's responsibility
2. It is natural for a man to be the head of family
3. When there are boys and girls, only the girls should help with domestic tasks
4. Sometimes a woman deserves to be beaten
5. Intimate partner violence is a private matter and others should stay out of it

3 52% of women consider that the Law 779 helps women that experience violence, and 55% thinks that it protects women rights, according to a recent study in Nicaragua (Ellsberg, Quintanilla, Molina & Zelaya, 2017).

4 Multivariate statistical technique of information synthesis or reduction of the number of variables.

-
6. When a women is raped, she generally did something to provoke this situation
 7. To be a man, one needs to be tough
 8. If another man in my neighborhood offends me, I will defend my reputation by force if necessary
 9. A man that cannot have children is not a real man
 10. Women who have a partner should not have friendships with other men
 11. Women like it when a man harasses them
 12. Even if a man is happy with his partner, he needs to be with other women
 13. It is important that women stay virgin until marriage
 14. A woman that has had many partners is an “easy” woman

On average, the interviewees recorded a value of 1.846 on the scale from 0 to 3. Young men revealed more egalitarian attitudes (especially when compared to those over 50), as well as men with a higher level of formal education. Those who are in a domestic partnership reflect less equitable attitudes than married and single men⁵.

The association between more egalitarian attitudes and higher levels of education was corroborated with a multivariate model controlling for other demographic variables; the same goes for having been raised by someone with higher education and with having participated in domestic tasks during adolescence. However, the most notable association is that men who perceive egalitarian attitudes among their family members show themselves more inclined towards equity (67% more likely than when they perceive non-egalitarian attitudes within their family).

5 This association has been found in almost every country where Images and / or the GEM scale have been used.

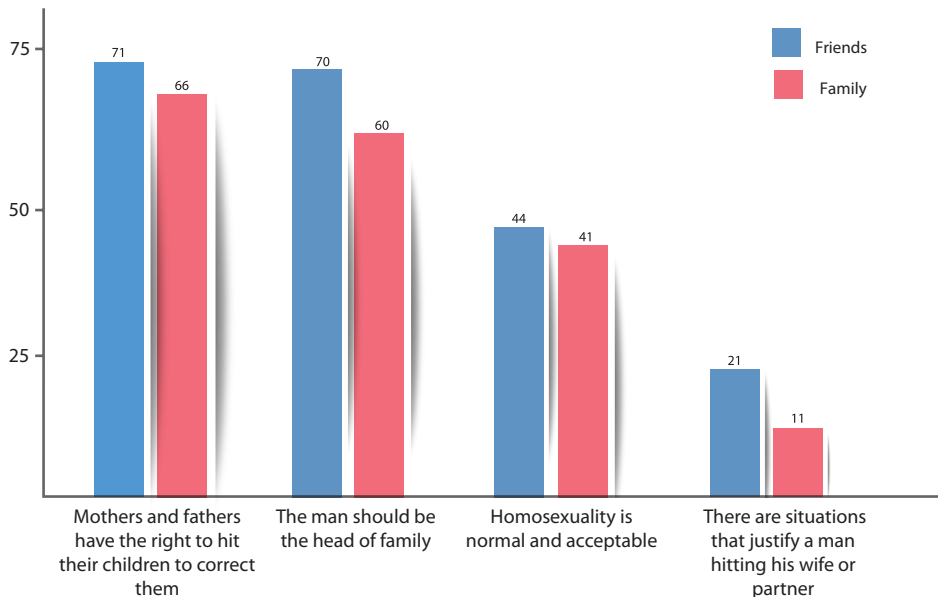
SOCIAL NORMS AND THE SOCIAL-COMMUNITY SPHERE

Inquiries were also made regarding perceptions of what happens in their environments, what their referents think (particularly relatives and close friends), and on some issues key to the construction of masculinities: family headship, violence against intimate partners, violence against children and homosexuality.

Three of every five interviewees mention living in neighborhoods or communities where expressions of physical violence within the family are common. More than half perceived violence against sons and daughters as common, and one out of four thought the same regarding intimate partner violence.

Half of respondents perceive that their friends and family support the right to exercise violence against their children for educational purposes, and that in both cases there is less justification regarding intimate partner violence. On the other hand, the majority perceives that these referents consider that the head of family should be a man and that they question homosexuality.

Graphic 2 • Percentage of interviewees that (strongly) agree with the following questions regarding social norms



Reporting that their families and / or friends accept these non-egalitarian norms is associated with their own positioning on these issues. The Gender Attitudes Scale average is significantly higher (indicating more egalitarian attitudes) among men who perceive egalitarian positions among their close referents, as compared to those who perceive that their referents adopt non-egalitarian positions. This is an important association since it allows for the identification of a significant association between the Scale and the exercise of violence.

Furthermore, family seems to wield greater influence than friends with respect to norms on family headship, physical punishment and intimate partner violence.

PARTNERSHIPS: DECISIONS, CONTROL AND VIOLENCE

Regarding current or most recent partners, nine out of 10 men report that the women participate in decision making to some degree. However, just 43% state that their female partner is the only one who decides on contraception and use of her time or work outside the home (in at least one of these items), and only 9% assure that the woman makes both these decisions totally independent.

75% of those who have had a partner refer to at least one behavior that limits her autonomy, such as always being informed on where she is (66%), not letting her dress in certain ways (41%), being bothered when she talks to another man (22%) or deciding when she can leave the home (13%).

37% of those who have had a partner declare exercising emotional violence against their current or most recent partner, such as insulting her, deliberately making her feel bad and threatening her, among other aspects; and 13% admit to acts of economic violence, such as throwing her out of the house or prohibiting her from seeking employment or income. 18% report physical and/or sexual violence: 13% admit to at least one form of physical violence (among slaps, pushes, punches, use of weapons) and 2.5% to sexual violence⁶.

6 4% if interviewed by a man, less than 2% if interviewed by a woman.

Although these data are indicative of the quality of relationships, the vast majority affirms that their relationships are good or very good, which may imply a vision that normalizes these forms of relating and/or a positive valuation of other elements in the relationship.

Multiple risk factors are related to the use of physical and sexual violence by men towards their partners: personal history, experiences of violence inside and outside the home, participation in war, having friendships involved in robberies, fights and other such acts; and frequent use of drugs or alcohol.

Reports of controlling behavior and aggressive arguments are associated with greater occurrence of acts of physical or sexual violence, a relevant fact due to the frequency with which men mention these types of situations. The probability of physical or sexual violence increases by a factor of nearly five among those who report engaging in three to five controlling behaviors, compared to those who do not report any such behaviors (ratio 4.57 to 1).

Multivariate analysis reveals that having witnessed violence against their mothers, having themselves been victims of violence during their childhood and adolescence, experiencing stress or depression due to not having a job or enough income, and controlling behavior, increase the probability of using physical or sexual violence between 60% and 388% according to a model adjusted by age, education, marital status, employment and gender attitudes.

Controlling for violence experienced as a witness or victim and socio-demographic variables, holding more equitable gender attitudes is strongly related to positive deviance regarding the use of violence (OR = 2.196, $p < .01$). In addition, when socio-demographic variables, experiences of violence and gender attitudes are controlled for, a positive, marginally significant association was found between the non-use of violence and the perception of mutual support within the community.

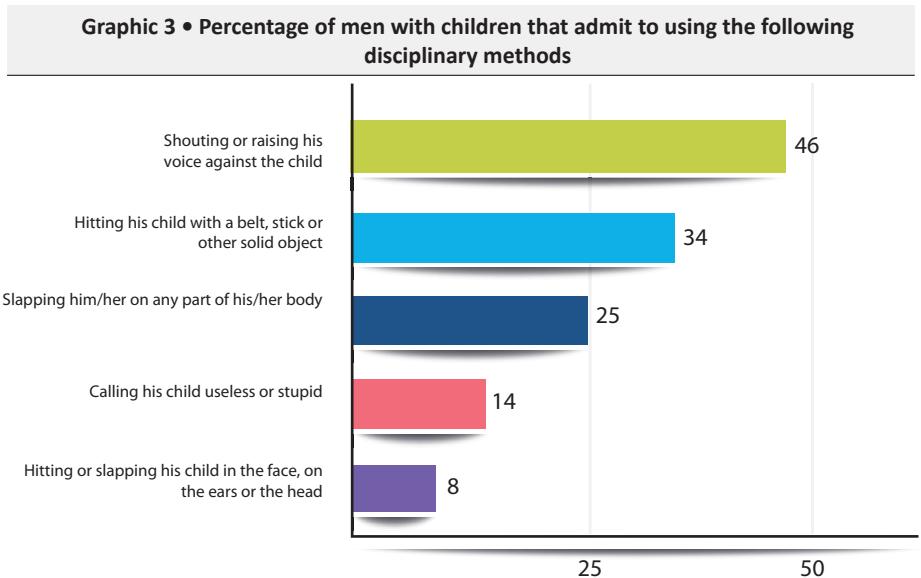
The opposite effect is caused by having suffered physical violence in the home (the probability of non-use of violence is reduced by 4% compared to those who did not suffer violence in the home, $p < .01$) and having had friends involved in negative activities such as robberies, fights, etc. (reductions of 43% in the use of violence compared to those who did not have such friendships, $p < .01$).

The same analysis model reveals that favorable attitudes towards gender equity decrease the probability of exercising violence (30% less for each point on the scale). Also, men perceiving that intimate partner violence is not justified among family and friends has been identified as a protective factor. However, very little evidence was found regarding other factors that could contribute to reducing these violent behaviors.

RELATION TO SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Three out of four fathers report being regularly involved in daily and routine child care activities, although an equally significant proportion says they are not involved in some of the particular tasks (or only in extraordinary circumstances). For example, 47% said they rarely or never help their children with homework. Involvement is associated with gender attitudes: each point on the scale implies 48% more participation in childrearing.

The survey inquired about the forms of violence considered acceptable as an educational (disciplinary) method and referred to behaviors regarding their sons and daughters. The vast majority of fathers state that they



explain to their children why their behavior was wrong, and two thirds report prohibitions or removing privileges as a way to discipline them. However, they also mention the use of harsher methods.

Associations were identified between the use of violence and having witnessed violence against their mothers, having experienced violence inside and/or outside the home and having participated in war. Protective factors include the perception of friendships that question using physical violence to educate children and participation in organizations of different types.

Multivariate regression analysis reveals that having had friendships in childhood and adolescence involved in sports, cultural and community activities doubles the probability of non-violent behavior towards daughters and sons. On the contrary, violent behavior is more likely among those who have experienced violence outside the home in comparison to those who have not, and when friends approve of the parents' right to use violence in disciplining their children. Also, at an older age, men are more likely to admit to exerting violence against their daughters and sons.

COMMUNITY AND VIOLENCE

Many of the interviewees perceive support in their community environment: six out of 10 believe that in their neighborhood and/or community people support each other, and a similar proportion says they have someone to talk with about their problems or to find solutions.

Almost half (46%) report at least one of the types of community violence surveyed in this study (physical aggression, threats, use of weapons). Apart from wartime, two out of five men admit to having assaulted someone and one in four admits having engaged in gunfights. In both cases, more than half have done so several times.

Exerting violence towards other people in their environment is associated with having suffered violence in childhood and adolescence inside and/or outside the home; and having had friends involved in acts such as fights and quarrels, robberies, or drug and alcohol use. Other associations were identified related to having been hurt or hurting someone under the

influence of alcohol or drugs, perceiving that family and friends justify violence in the home, and the presence of violence in their community; all of which points to an environment and referents characterized by the normalization of violence.

Regression analysis detects that the perception of living in a mutually supportive community makes non-violent behavior towards other community members more likely. The analysis also corroborates that the probability of not being violent is lower among those who experienced violence in the home during childhood and adolescence and those who have hurt themselves or someone else under the effects of substances; in addition to having friends involved in robberies, fights, etc.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Associations were identified between exercising violence against family members (partner, sons, daughters) and the interviewees' environment (other people). 51% of men report that report engaging in physical or sexual violence against their partner also admit to violent behavior against their children; and 61%, against other people.

Experiencing violence during childhood and adolescence is a factor that is strongly linked to exercising various forms of violence in adult life. Having been a victim and/or witness of violence during childhood is linked to expressions of violence in adulthood, against both partners and children, as well as towards other people. It is also associated with having experienced violence inside and/or outside the home.

Analyzing the divergent (non-violent) behavior towards these different individuals, it is more likely that those who have a job do not exercise violence, compared to those who do not; that those who have not suffered violence in their families do not commit it, compared to those who did; and that those with more favorable attitudes to equity do not exercise violence (each point on the attitude scale increases probability by 69%).

However, some differences were also found according to relationship:

- More gender equitable attitudes did not imply a greater likelihood of non-violent relationships with sons and daughters.
- Having a job is linked to a lower probability of exerting physical abuse toward children, while it is a risk factor for violence against the partner and other people.
- Being or having been married turns out to be a condition that increases the likelihood of exerting violence against sons and daughters.
- Men that have not been a witness of violence against their mothers are less likely to exercise violence in their intimate relations (in comparison to those who did witness this violence).

Finally, perceiving a supportive community is associated with greater probability of not exercising violence, particularly against people in their surroundings, a topic to explore in greater depth.

CONCLUSIONS

Multiple expressions of violence within families and communities: there are relationships characterized by violence toward different subjects in their immediate surroundings and a pattern has been observed of using physical violence in relations, both in intimate family spaces and with other relationships. Even without this being a prevalence study, self-referenced and with possible underreporting, the proportion of men that admit to have exercised violence is significant (18% physical or sexual violence against the partner; 34% hitting children with objects; 46% threats and/or physical aggression towards other people). Also, half of men report having experienced violence in their families of origin.

An ecological analysis applied to the construction of violent masculine identities: the study contributes to verifying the transversality of conditions and factors that explain violent masculine practices. The findings are consistent with studies in other regions. In addition to its multi-causal nature, the precedents or risk factors in relation to violent practices are multilevel. The history of violence in childhood and adolescence is an element to consider; however, there are also elements on the interpersonal and social-community level associated with the use of violence during adult life.

Risk factors for the use of different types of violence: violence at early stages is a common antecedent to physical violence exerted inside and outside the family. Witnessing physical abuse against their mother is particularly significant in the case of violence against partners in adult life. This does not mean that having experienced violence inevitably leads to perpetrating violence; rather, among those who exercise violence, it is more likely to find men who were victims themselves, than among those who do not exercise violence.

Men's attitudes to gender equity are associated with the use (or not) of violence, with the exception of violence towards children, probably because this form of violence is based on beliefs that are not totally or directly related to the construction of gender identities and relations. Controlling attitudes and behaviors, as well as aggressive arguments with the partner, appear to be strongly related to physical violence against women. This could indicate a kind of continuum and a greater risk of

physical violence in relationships marked by other forms of exercise of power and control.

Violent practices in the immediate environment, together with norms that justify and legitimize intrafamily violence, contribute to the exercise of physical violence against the partner and children. Friendships involved in fights, theft or consumption of drugs and alcohol, personal consumption and stress associated with employment, appear to be associated with intimate partner violence.

Protective factors and resilience: the probability that men will not indicate forms of physical violence against their partner, their children or other people is lower among those who experienced violence during childhood and adolescence.

Other associations arise depending on the specific relationship. Men who have jobs are more likely not to exercise physical violence against their sons and daughters. Protective factors include participating in an organization and having friendships that do not accept the “right” to physically punish children. Not to have witnessed violence against their mothers and showing attitudes favorable to gender equity, are associated with a lower probability of exercising violence against their intimate partners. In the immediate environment a protective factor appears to be the perception of having family and friends who do not justify intimate partner violence.

Perceiving that there is mutual support in one’s community is a factor related to the absence of violent behaviors in interactions with other community members. In addition, associations were found – with marginal statistical significance – between this perception of mutual support and the absence of other forms of violence.

Continued analysis on the link between variables of the social-community sphere and behavior of men inside and outside the home is warranted. It is also relevant for any interventions to include actions aimed at questioning social expectations regarding gender identities and relationships, questioning inequalities and subordinations and making changes in favor of gender equity visible.

Non-violent and supportive relationships with family members, friends and other groups in the environment can act as a protective factor. A topic for further investigation in the design of intervention strategies

would be to identify the individuals and/or groups of reference for men and their standpoint on relevant issues key to addressing and preventing violence.

Issues for multi-actor collaboration: the study reveals complex relationships among personal and family history, attitudes, normative processes at the social-community level, and men's practices. To address these issues with men, framed around their role as parents and educators, should be considered a priority, particularly taking into account the identified pathways of generational transmission of dynamics that reproduce intrafamily and social violence.

One way to make progress is to become aware of, visualize and analyze the implications that this form of education can have for men and their relationships in adult life. It may also be opportune to identify reference groups that make non-violent ways of educating and relating to an intimate partner or other people a legitimate alternative. The majority expresses disagreement with unfair social norms, but positions are divided regarding more intimate relations and spaces (headship of the family, violence as a private issue).

The results point to the need for a systemic approach, as well as for processes that highlight the association between behaviors that control women's lives and bodies and the exercise of violence; and that question the normalization of different forms of violence in daily family and community life. New visions and proposals that question models of paternity based on the patterns of hegemonic masculinities and adultism are required, so that parenting, protection and education can contribute to equity and non-violence in intergenerational relationships.

The family appears to be a central area for promoting change towards more equitable relationships in different spheres. It is important to design proposals with a psychosocial approach that promotes a sense of community and support networks, including assessing mental health care for male witnesses to or victims of violence.

The study allows for the identification of other valuable key aspects to promote the divergence from norms that sustain the use of violence, including: referents that do not permit violence, support within communities, elimination of physical punishment and humiliation in childrearing, and promoting attitudes favorable to gender equity.

WHEN THEY CALL YOU AN “EXEMPLARY MAN”: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MASCULINITIES THAT CHALLENGE SEXISM

The qualitative component in Nicaragua is focused precisely on studying those men identified as “non-violent” or equitable. To refer to these men, the terms “non-sexist”, “non-violent” or “equitable” are used interchangeably. They are also called “exemplary men” in the title of this study, taking into account that the women interviewed use the term “exemplary” to name and describe them.

The **objectives of the study** are to describe the daily practices and decisions of these non-violent men, as well as to identify and further analyze the factors that contribute to these practices.

The **subjects of the study** are men between 19 and 46 years old who live in low-income urban communities of Managua, Ciudad Sandino and Tipitapa and who were identified as neither sexist nor violent by neighborhood leaders. The three cities mentioned were selected to match the same places as those where the quantitative study sample was taken.

To identify and select the men who were interviewed, four focus groups were conducted where men and women leaders from the selected neighborhoods were consulted. In these focus groups, the following criteria were agreed upon:

- Being in or having been in a relationship with a woman
- Non-exercise of physical and emotional violence against women or children in the last 3 years
- Active involvement in caretaking and domestic work

The agreement was to interview 12 men and 12 women, since for each man interviewed, his partner or another woman close to him and suggested by him had to be interviewed. The interviews with the women sought to corroborate the information provided by the men, as well as to appreciate their stories from both perspectives.

For ethical management of the interviews and the information, each of the interviews was previously agreed to on a voluntary basis and permission was requested to record and transcribe the interviews. Given that the men and women interviewed lived in the same house, the interviews were conducted simultaneously so as to avoid mutual influencing. A male investigator interviewed the man and a female one the woman. To guarantee confidentiality of the people interviewed, the names in this report have been changed.

NOTES FROM THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the context of Nicaragua and in the rest of the world, a predominant and normative model of masculinity exists in the collective imagination, a way of being a man that has been established as the norm (hegemonic masculinity). In this view, the man must be heterosexual, a provider, head of household, strong, a womanizer and violent. There are numerous studies that account for this hegemonic model of masculinity, but there are few that have focused on those men who behave differently. Nevertheless, these few studies provide clues to the factors that have made it easier for some men to assume non-violent identities.

The studies reviewed identify six factors associated with the emergence of non-violent or equitable men: capacity for self-criticism and foresight, the birth of sons or daughters, a good example set by the father and other men, influence of the mother and other women, rejection of violence exerted by the father, and the existence of spaces that support and validate alternative masculinities.

1. The ability to reflect upon what happened and to identify the consequences of what happened, as well as expressing grief or remorse, appear as explanatory factors of a more equitable masculinity (Barker, 2000). In addition to reflections on past events, the ability to think about possible consequences of one's actions ("what happens if...") is also found to be an explanatory factor (Barker, Greene, Nascimento, Segundo, Ricardo, Taylor, Aguayo, Sadler, Das, Singh, Figueroa, Franzoni, Flores, Jewkes, Morrell & Kato, 2012).

2. The very fact of the birth of a child can be motivation for more equitable behavior in men. The empathic bond that is established with children can contribute to avoiding violent behavior in men and to increase their participation in domestic tasks (Levtov, van der Gaag, Greene, Kaufman & Barker, 2015).

3. In the qualitative study *Men who Care* (Barker, et al., 2012) the men interviewed, characterized by their commitment to their children, often mention the fact of having had a good example set by the father or another man. Similarly, the study *Nadando contra corriente*⁷ in Nicaragua, identifies the fact of having had non-violent male models during childhood as a factor associated with the construction of non-violent masculinities (Montoya, 1998).

4. Mothers and grandmothers who reject violence exercised by the father or any other man, constitute an important example for young men (Barker, 2000). Similar conclusions are made in *Images and Men who Care*.

5. For some men, the very fact of having experienced violence during childhood can be a factor that favors their commitment to non-violence. The *Men who Care* study shows Brazilian men telling how their experiences of violence spurred them to be a different type of man.

6. The existence of a space that validates alternative masculinities allows non-sexist young people to affirm their ideas of gender equality (Barker, 2000). In this sense, whether it is a group of friends or workshops facilitated by local organizations, if in these spaces an equitable vision of gender relations is reinforced, conditions are created for these young people to assume that identity.

7 Swimming against the current.

MAIN RESULTS OF THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

Drawn from analysis of the interviews, a summary is presented of the way in which men describe themselves and how their partners/mothers describe them. Following, the non-patriarchal practices that characterize these men and the patriarchal practices that persist are detailed, according to the informants. Also, those factors that have intervened in the formation of non-violent or equitable men are outlined.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GENDER-EQUITABLE MEN

Both the men and their partners or mothers put forth a description that confirms that these are non-violent men. The men interviewed describe themselves as non-sexist (“macho” in Spanish), not pugnacious (“buscapleitos” in Spanish), respectful, serious, without bad temper, non-violent, with a good sense of humor, solitary, silent, respectful and understanding.

The wives or mothers of the interviewees agree with the description the men made of themselves. They confirm that these men are exemplary, ideal companions, respectful, supportive, educated, friendly, calm, understanding, and sincere; they are not obnoxious or arrogant, they do not have vices, they do not hang around on the street and are not womanizers.

PRACTICES THAT DEVIATE FROM PATRIARCHAL NORMS

Men and women say that in their cohabitation with their partner and family, they have practices that coincide with their way of describing themselves as men, diverging from patriarchal norms.

These practices include: they share caretaking and domestic tasks, respect women and avoid violence, acknowledge errors and apologize for them, resolve disagreements and conflicts through dialogue, manage their anger without violence, make decisions in a shared way, dedicate time to their family, and they avoid conflicts with the neighborhood. Several of these practices coincide with similar characteristics and practices that are reported in the study *Nadando contra corriente* (Montoya, 1998).

PATRIARCHAL PRACTICES THAT STILL PERSIST

In the study *Nadando contra corriente*, researcher Oswaldo Montoya relates that the interviewed men are not completely equitable; they sometimes get carried away by the patriarchal current. For example, several of the interviewees continue to assume a role for themselves as “heads of the family”. This type of contradiction may be related to the fact that the patriarchy offers privileges difficult for men to refuse.

They may also be exposed to pressures from other men or women who demand dominant or traditional behavior. The patriarchal practices that continue to persist among interviewees of the present study are the following: not expressing emotions that show vulnerability or sufficient affection towards their partners, handling stress with arguments and shouts, not giving enough attention to their children, taking on domestic tasks as “helping”, not taking initiative for dialogue, and not bathing or changing diapers of their own young daughters.

FACTORS IN THE CREATION OF NON-VIOLENT MEN

Based on the results of the interviews and the bibliographic review, the study proposes a classification of these factors into protective and resilience factors. A protective factor is an attribute or exposure that reduces the chances of a disease appearing or other consequences (UN Women, 2015). In this case, it refers to a factor associated with a lower probability for men to engage in violent behavior.

The resilience factor is the capacity that people have to resume their lives after a traumatic or adverse experience (Cyrulnik, 2005). For example, such is the case for sons of violent fathers that aim to be different.

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Birth of sons or daughters

In the reviewed bibliography and in the interviews carried out, it was found that the birth of sons or daughters can be a source of motivation for men to change and to take responsibility for their upbringing, and even for them to become more equitable (Levtov, et al., 2015). In the following quote, the interviewee states that facing fatherhood, he is forced to “mature”:

“I consider myself a man that, just like every guy here in Managua, starts off with his problems according to his age, and when one grows he acquires obligations.... For example, I was not the same guy when I just had my firstborn son. Now that I have a little girl, the change is dramatic, one has to become serious. Life forces you, you cannot be lazy hanging around playing football all day. Before I played football, and whenever there was a party, I would go. With just one child and being young, one does not feel like he has problems....but when three children have been born it is not the same anymore” (**Rodrigo, 38 years old, Managua**).

Good example from their fathers

The informants affirm that these men had fathers who were not violent, who respected their mothers and did domestic tasks. So they grew up with the good example set by their fathers, and now, as adult men, it seems logical to them to do the same. In the reviewed bibliography we also find data that account for this experience (Levtov, et al., 2015).

“The love of his father who was quite protective, with his father he learned all about sensitivity and how to relate to his mother; the father washes and does chores in the house”, (*Silvia, 31 years old, Vidal’s companion, Ciudad Sandino*).

Other men that exercise a positive influence

Some of the interviewees’ stories identify other men within their family or community who exerted a positive influence on them during their adolescence or youth. Similar examples are found in the studies Men Who Care (Barker, et al., 2012) and No son cuentos: historias de vida de padres jóvenes⁸ (Fundación Puntos de Encuentro – Asociación Quincho Barrilete – Comunidades Eclesiales de Base. Proyecto Samaritanas – Centro Cultural Batahola Norte – Movimiento para el Autodesarrollo, el Intercambio y la Solidaridad (MAIS) – CIET International – and Centro de Estudios y Promoción Social, 2012).

“I have to admit that on my own I wasn’t able to do anything and luckily I found help. There was a life change influenced by the advice, the reflections, and the preaching of a pastor named Alejandro; a very exemplary person. When I met him he told me: Continue studying, if you cannot pay for transportation, don’t feel embarrassed, you can ask me for help and we will find a way. That motivated me”, (*Pablo, 38 years old, Managua*).

Resistance of women to the domination and privileges of men

Taking into account that being an equitable or non-violent man is a continuous learning process, the fact that these man have relationships with women who resist being dominated or who demand greater equity, is a fundamental factor for them to continue to advance in this process.

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In English: “No tales: life stories of young fathers”

“Sometimes religion comes up, that the man is the one that has to be in charge: Do this for me, bring me that...while he is sitting down and I respond: There is that thing you want, get it yourself, I am not your ‘nanny’, we already talked about this; if I am your employee, then pay me. One has to point these things out. Sometimes I use a sense of humor, but these are our quarrels. I feel that sometimes he has this expectation, to tell me what to do”, (*Lola, Reynaldo’s wife, 34 years old, Tipitapa*).

The religious factor

In the previous quote, the woman interviewed identifies religion as a source that motivates the man to act in a dominant way; however, in the experience of some of the interviewees, religion is identified as a protective factor, a key element in their process of learning to become non-violent men.

“Motivated by his passion, humanism, Christianity, solidarity, I said to myself: I need that thing that Pastor Alejandro has. I wanted to have a taste of his religion and started to attend the church where he preached. There was something that made me change. I did not let myself be influenced anymore by other guys, instead I started to be different, I stopped hanging around on the street, I quit drinking,” (*Pablo, 38, Managua*).

RESILIENCE FACTORS

Resistance in the face of abandonment by their fathers

Despite the fact that many of these men were abandoned by their fathers during childhood, counting on the support of their mothers has been a fundamental factor for their healthy development.

“I think my mother was the one who was always motivating me to study, study, study. She taught me the values that we build upon in this family to continue in this journey of life”, (**Cairo, 24 years old, Managua**).

Resistance to the violence that their mothers received from their fathers

In these cases, the capacity for resilience seems to be related to the fact that witnessing the father’s violence towards the mother became a source of suffering for the child. For this reason, these men intend not to use violence as a father to ensure they avoid repeating the same history.

“No, I have no relationship with my dad. One of the reasons why they separated was because she suffered mistreatment from him, and he was an alcoholic, a drunkard, he used to beat her, which is why my mom decided to separate from him. So, that marks your life. As a child I used to see all that and that’s why I promised myself that I would never be like that: I would never drink alcohol, I would never hit a woman and I would never abandon my child. These were the three things I proposed for myself since I was little”, (**Reynaldo, 28, Tipitapa**).

Resistance against violence and alcoholism in the family

Some men relate to having lived episodes of violence related to their relatives’ alcoholism. They explain that these experiences marked them and that they aimed not to repeat this type of life.

“My brother’s alcoholism, violence from my brother who told me that I was not his brother, that his brother was my other brother”, (**Vidal, 26 years old, Ciudad Sandino**).

Resistance against sexual abuse

One of the interviewees reports having lived an attempt of sexual abuse during childhood, and that, based on this experience, he actively opposes and intervenes in any situation where one person violates another.

“An attempted sexual abuse that is the reason today I am opposed all types of violent people, sexual abusers and wrong-thinking people”, (Vidal, 26 years old, Ciudad Sandino).

Loss of children in their families

It is not clear how the loss of children in their families becomes a resilience factor for those men to be non-violent or equitable today, but some informants mention this as experiences that had affected them and generated a special sensitivity within them.

“With the death of a niece he learned about pain”, (Silvia, Vidal’s companion, 31 years old, Ciudad Sandino).

“The death of one of our girls influenced him”, (Yahoska, Nando’s wife, 27 years old, Managua).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. This study enables the identification of men characterized by not being violent in their homes and neighborhoods, assuming domestic chores and caretaking with relative equity. By learning from their experiences and practices, strategies can be proposed to promote non-violent and equitable ways of being men.
2. There do not seem to be determining factors in the conformation of equitable or non-violent men, but it is possible to identify the conjunction of personal, protective and resilience factors in the history of the interviewed men.
3. The learning process or the transformation of equitable or non-violent men is an inconclusive process. Thanks to the help and challenges that their partners give them in their daily coexistence, these men continue to discover aspects in which they can be more equitable partners and more committed parents.
4. Although these men do not currently relate much to their neighborhood, and are more inclined to helping other people, rather than asking for help, it is likely that these men would benefit from reflection spaces and support groups to reinforce their will to live in a non-violent and equitable way.
5. Conversion and religious participation as a protective factor for non-violent or equitable men coincide with other investigations. On the other hand, there are also studies that have identified religion as a risk factor, given that the Bible is a source often cited to justify the domination of men over women in relationships. More studies are required to better understand this factor.
6. Having a mother or another person in the family that provides and gives emotional support is a fundamental protective factor for those children and adolescents that do not have a father.

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7. Other men in the family or the community, such as uncles, grandfathers, male teachers, and others, can play a key role in becoming positive role models of masculinity.
 8. Several of the men describe themselves as hard workers and caretakers, related to meeting the needs of their families not to lack anything, as well as taking care of family security. This description coincides with traditional descriptions of being a man, such as being protectors and providers. In an egalitarian relationship there is no reason why only men should provide and protect, but this should rather be taken on as a shared responsibility between men and women. However, in this study, men assuming these characteristics has a positive connotation, since it constitutes a fundamental element in the women's descriptions, when they described these men as good or exemplary as opposed to violent and irresponsible men. That is, despite the fact that these men are not completely equitable, the interviewed women are happy that they are at least non-violent partners/husbands and responsible fathers.
 9. Despite the fact that these men have a considerably high level of participation in domestic work and caretaking, it is apparent that their partners continue to bear the greater part of the burden. Several of the women interviewed are clear on this imbalance and demand more participation from their partners. When men respond positively to that demand they can advance to higher levels of equity. So it is essential for the couple to be able to dialogue and negotiate on the equitable distribution of domestic tasks and caretaking.
 10. Difficulty in expressing affection, feelings and emotions within intimate relationships is recognized by the majority of men and expressed by the women interviewed. The mandates for male socialization inhibit the expression of affection and all feelings associated with vulnerability. For men to learn to shed the emotional shell, expressing their feelings of vulnerability in a supportive environment, is a factor that can contribute to the prevention of violence.

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