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“Why are Mami y Papi Fighting?” Latino Youth’s Perceptions of Why Parents Fight

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Abstract

Over 10 million teenagers are exposed to domestic violence each year and it is estimated that at least a third of American children have witnessed domestic violence (Straus, 1992). A child is a witness to domestic violence when an act that is defined as domestic violence is committed in his or her presence. Witnessing can be visual, auditory or inferred. In this study, the researchers will analyze children’s questionnaires from an existing database of Latino families affected by domestic violence. The main goal of the study is to find out what the youth believe are the reasons for their parents’ fights. The student researchers hope that the program’s work to eliminate domestic violence will be enhanced by the voices of the children.

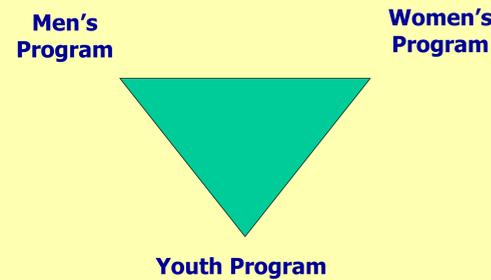
Participants

- Children* grades K-5 (n=76)
 - Adolescents* grades 6-12 (n=21)
- *They have witnessed violence in their home. They participate in a culture-specific comprehensive domestic violence intervention program for Latino families.

Procedure

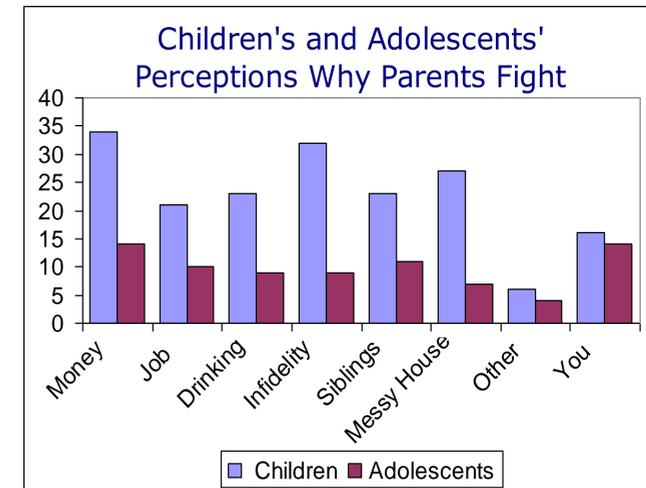
- The researchers analyzed the data from an existing database consisting of information obtained through questionnaires administered to Caminar Latino participants (N = 97).
 - The sample consisted of children (grades K-5) and adolescents (grades 6-12).
 - These 3 research questions were developed to address youth’s perceptions behind their parents’ fights.
- Research Questions:**
- Are there any variations in what young children and teenagers perceive as being the reasons for their parents’ fights?
 - Do children blame themselves for their parents’ fights?
 - Do teenagers and younger children agree on the main reasons for these fights?

Caminar Latino Structure



Results

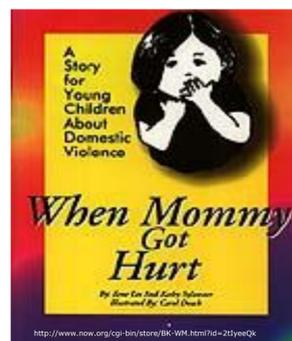
- Children (grades K-5) rated MONEY as the top reason for their parents’ fights.
- Adolescents (grades 6-12) rated MONEY and THEMSELVES (Self-blame) as equal top contributors to their parents’ fights.
- Children identified INFIDELITY as another strong reason for their parents’ fights however Adolescents rated INFIDELITY the third least important reason.
- Both children and adolescents identified ALCOHOL as a reason for their parents’ fights.



Introduction

Effects of Witnessing Domestic Violence

AGE	POTENTIAL EFFECTS
Infants	Needs for attachment disrupted Poor sleeping habits Eating problems Higher risk of physical injury
Preschoolers	Lack feelings of safety Separation/Stranger anxiety Regressive behaviors Insomnia Parasomnias
School-aged children	Self-blame Somatic complaints Aggressive behaviors Regressive behaviors
Adolescents	School truancy Delinquency Substance abuse Early sexual activity



Reasons for fights	Number of affirmative responses	
	Children	Adolescents
Money	34	14
Job	21	10
Drinking	23	9
Infidelity	32	9
Siblings	23	11
Messy House	27	7
Other	6	4
You	16	14

Discussion

There are variations between children’s and adolescents’ perceptions of why their parents fight. This is most evident in the categories of INFIDELITY and SELF-BLAME. Children stated INFIDELITY was a stronger reason for fights between their parents than Adolescents did. However, Adolescents blamed themselves more for their parents’ fights. This self-blaming phenomena is supported by literature on domestic violence (Stiles, 2002). Domestic violence literature also reports that alcohol abuse is related to an increased risk for spousal abuse (Murphy et al., 1999). Both children and adolescents in our sample named ALCOHOL as a factor. Children and adolescents identified money as an important reason for the fights. But this could be because the sample came from a low income population.

Acknowledgments

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