Latina Exposure to Violence at School

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Abstract

As a result of the current immigration trend, Latinas are one of the fastest growing segments of the student population in the United States. Although exposure to school violence is known to be detrimental to many facets of girls' development, there is limited research that explores the prevalence of Latina school victimization. Thus, understanding girls' exposure to violence within schools, particularly for Latinas, is imperative. Analyses, which draw from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002, indeed suggest some important results. Most notably, Latina immigrant youth have reduced risks of getting hit and being threatened at school but not from strong-arm robbery or bullying. This article also discusses the importance of researching and addressing the violence that young Latinas endure.

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Introduction

Latinas are one of the fastest growing segments of the United States (US) population (US Census Bureau, 2007). Research suggests that the Latina student population is educationally "at-risk." Despite Latinas' high educational aspirations, the high school graduation rate for Latinas is lower than for girls in any other racial or ethnic group (Ginorio & Huston, 2001). Furthermore, when Latinas do leave school, they are not likely to return and complete school (AAUW, 2001). Only ten-percent of Latinas complete four or more years of college compared to twenty-three percent of White American women (AAUW, 2001; Ginorio & Huston, 2001). A recent study also finds that the Latina college graduation rate is consistently lower than the rate for White American females, across all different types of colleges (i.e., highly competitive, competitive, noncompetitive, etc.) (Kelly, Schneider, & Carey, 2010). Poor educational attainment may be brought on by a number of factors, including youth victimization, a direct form of exposure to violence (Finkelhor, 2008; Macmillan, 2001; Macmillan & Hagan, 2004). In a 1997 study, Madriz reports that Latina students are not taught by their parents to think of their schools as a potentially dangerous place. As the words of one student suggests, being victimized may result not only in an increase in violent and aggressive behavior, but also in increased isolation, "you better understand that you are on your own in this world…here in school people say that we hang out in gangas (gangs)…truth is that I only trust my girl friends" (Madriz, 1997, p. 51).

Since Latinas are one of the fastest growing segments of the youth population, as a result of the current immigration wave, it is not only important to explore their school experiences, but also how immigration may act as a risk or protective factor against victimization (Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Lopez, 2003; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Because schools are institutions of

education and socialization, understanding and addressing the violence that occurs in schools is essential for establishing a safe and healthy learning environment for all youth (Verdugo, 1999); however, the likelihood of victimization is stratified among the student population. A 2001 report released by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation (AAUW) finds that girls face a variety of harmful experiences within school such as bullying, sexual violence, and harassment which are detrimental to educational progress. In the same report, Latinas are portrayed as particularly at risk for becoming a victim of violence while at school. In comparison to White American girls, victimized Latinas cut more classes, stay home from school, avoid particular places within schools, and have increased difficulty of sleeping and studying (AAUW, 2001). Clearly, victimization is damaging for all students, but little is known about the victimization patterns for a growing Latina student population. Focusing on and addressing Latinas' victimization is particularly important because they are already marginalized within this nation's school system (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Williams, Alvarez, & Hauck, 2002; Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). This study extends the literature on youth victimization and Latina school experiences by examining Latina student victimization. This study also centers on exploring the role of immigration in the likelihood of victimization while in school for Latina girls.

The Detrimental Consequences of Victimization and the Role of Gender

The effects of the exposure to violence and victimization are incredibly damaging for youth development (Finkelhor, 2008; Macmillan, 2001; Macmillan & Hagan, 2004). Because children and youth have limited mental capacity (compared to adults) and are less able to defend and protect themselves than adults, all forms of exposure to violence, such as through direct victimization, may result in youth suffering emotional, mental, and physical injury (Finkelhor, 2008; Macmillan, 2001; Macmillan & Hagan, 2004). Growing media attention, social concern,

and educational policies focus on student safety in schools, and have underscored the need to address the issue of violence occurring in schools (Verdugo, 1999). It is also evident that racial and ethnic minority students, particularly Latina/os, are at risk of being victimized (DeVoe et al., 2004; Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009; Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Peguero, 2009). Brown and Benedict (2004) argue that the victimization of Latina/os high school students is particularly problematic and alarming because it is one of the many contributing factors towards Latina/o educational failure. Other important factors to consider may be discrimination within schools, poverty, school characteristics, and language difficulties, particularly for immigrant students. However, understanding and addressing the student victimization that occurs in schools is essential towards providing a safe and healthy learning environment for all youths (Verdugo, 1999).

Although student victimization is a serious social problem that continues to receive well deserved research and resources, most of that attention focuses on exploring boys' victimization while leaving the knowledge of girls' victimization limited (AAUW, 2001; Madriz, 1997; Young, Boye, & Nelson, 2006). Research tends to focus attention and interventions on the physical aggression of boys and fail to consider the distinct social world of girls (Hand & Sanchez, 2000; Young et al., 2006). Girls face a variety of detrimental experiences through their school interactions including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse (AAUW, 2001). The lack of attention paid to girls' victimization may be detrimental to their educational development and outcomes (Hand & Sanchez, 2000; Young et al., 2006). The victimization of girls while in school may result in a higher incidence of depression, dropping out, substance abuse, early parenthood, delinquency, and criminal behavior (AAUW 2001; Madriz, 1997; Young et al., 2006). Furthermore, the interaction of race, ethnicity, and gender and their relation to victimization

warrants further research. Although the exposure to school violence and the victimization within schools are known to be stratified by race, ethnicity, and gender, it remains unclear in what ways and to what extent immigration is related to Latina victimization while in school.

Latina School Experiences

There are three significant ways in which the interaction of gender, race and ethnicity, and immigration shape Latinas' experiences within schools. First, in a broad sense, gender differentiates Latino and Latina educational experiences. Second, race and ethnicity also play a role in the distinct school experiences of Latinas in comparison to White American girls. Third, immigration is a significant aspect of Latinas' social and educational inclusion or exclusion.

Gender is a factor in the distinct school experiences of Latina/o youth (Lopez, 2003; Williams et al., 2002). The social and educational perception is one that views Latinos at "higher risk" and one of less relative concern for Latinas (Williams et al., 2002). Ginorio and Huston (2001) indicate that both within the family and schools, Latino boys receive much more research attention and policy direction about the importance of social, economic, and educational success in comparison to Latinas. Latinas fall behind all other racial and ethnic groups with regard to most indicators of academic success such as grades, test scores, and the like (Crosnoe, 2005; Kaufman, Alt, & Chapman, 2001). For example, Latinas represent the most at risk group of girls to dropout of high school (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002). Some researchers suggest that academic disparities between young Latinas and other girls begin as early as kindergarten and remain through adolescence and adulthood (Zambrana & Zoppi, 2002).

The race and ethnicity of the majority of contemporary immigrants sets them apart from the conventional historical trend of White European immigrants. For the current wave of immigrants, many of them have never experienced prejudice associated with a particular skin

color or racial type in their country of origin (Portes, 1995; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). Immigrants and their children, especially Latina/o youth, have confronted a reality in US schools, where there is a general societal belief and perception that the educational school system has a long history of racial and ethnic discrimination (Kozol, 1991, 2005). There is evidence indicating that race and ethnicity "segments" the schooling and education of the children of Latina/o immigrants (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001, 2006). In comparison to White American girls, Latinas have a higher rate of failure in educational achievement and attainment (AAUW, 2001; Ginorio & Huston, 2001).

Immigration matters towards understanding the inequities of Latinas within schools (Crosnoe, 2005; Feliciano & Rumbaut, 2005; Kao & Tienda, 1995). Crosnoe (2005) finds that Latina immigrant youth tend to outperform US born Latinas. On the other hand, Latina immigrant youth are often subjected to negative treatment such as discrimination, ridicule, harassment, and believe that their schools are unsafe (Olsen, 2008; Peguero, 2008, 2009). It is possible that a combination of factors increase the likelihood of immigrant girls being victimized. For example, immigrant language difficulties, lack of knowledge of how the American school system works, or adjustment issues related to being in a foreign country or new school may make Latina immigrant girls an easy target for victimization at school.

Ginorio and Huston (2001) also suggest that Latina immigrants initially have high levels of motivation, determination, and belief in attaining educational success; however, they find that as Latinas "Americanize" their academic self-efficacy (i.e., belief in successfully completing academic tasks) rapidly diminishes. Because Latinas are the largest group of ethnic minority girls (Garcia-Reid, 2007; US Census Bureau, 2007), exploring the intersections of gender, race and ethnicity, and immigration in relationship to student victimization is warranted and imperative.

There are three central questions that emerge from the discussion thus far. Is the likelihood of victimization distinct between Latina and White American girls? Is immigration a factor in Latina victimization? If so, how is immigration related to the likelihood of victimization for Latinas?

Methods

Data

The data for the research are drawn from the Education Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002). The ELS data is a longitudinal survey administered by the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) for the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2004) of the US Department of Education. ELS is "designed to monitor the transition of a national sample of young people as they progress from tenth grade through high school and on to postsecondary education and/or the world of work"(pp. 7). These data include information about the experiences and backgrounds of students, parents, and teachers, and physical and administrative descriptions of the schools those students attend.

This research uses a subsample of the ELS:2002 consisting of 3,710 Latina and White American girls in public schools. In the ELS:2002 survey design, Latina students are over-sampled to obtain a sufficient representation for statistical analyses of this group. The sample weights in these analyses are calculated by NCES (2004) to compensate for the survey design and for non-response bias. All of the analyses in this study incorporated sample weights. The importance of weights is an essential factor in results that reflect a nationally representative population of Latina tenth grade students (see NCES 2004 for further detail). Data from students who only participated in the abbreviated survey (which did not include measurements from the parents' survey that indicated immigration related characteristics) are coded as missing and excluded from the analyses.

Measures

Exposure to violence at school. Students are asked if they had been exposed to four various forms of violence at school during the 2001-2002 academic year (0=never, 1=once or twice, and 2=more than twice) that are based on four items: (1) someone threatened to hurt me at school, (2) someone bullied me or picked on me, (3) someone hit me, and (4) someone used strong-arm or forceful methods to get money or things from me. Descriptive statistics for the outcome, as well as all measures, are reported in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables

Variable	Range	*M*	*SD*	*N*
Dependent Variables				
Exposure to Violence at School	0 – 8	.66	1.20	3,710
Strong-arm Robbery	0 – 2	.02	.15	3,710
Got Hit	0 – 2	.14	.40	3,710
Bullied or Picked On	0 – 2	.27	.56	3,710
Threatened	0 – 2	.24	.52	3,710
Immigration				
% Immigrant	0 – 1	11	28	380
% U.S. Native Born	0 – 1	89	28	3,330
Race and Ethnicity				
% Latina	0 – 1	23	42	860
% White American	0 – 1	77	42	2,850
Student Characteristics				
Achievement	23.11 – 78.38	50.93	9.51	3,710
Family SES	-1.97 – 1.98	-.04	.72	3,710
Misbehavior	0 – 1	.41	.49	1,520
Total of Male Friends	0 – 3	.50	.66	3,710
School Level Variables				
Size	52 – 4,631	1,411	839.90	580
Security	0 – 11	3.56	2.34	580
% Racial and Ethnic Minority	0 – 100	36.89	31.53	580
% Free or Reduced Lunch	0 – 96.20	24.93	18.63	580
Urban Locale	0 – 1	.28	.45	160

Race, ethnicity, and immigration. Student's race and ethnicity were self-reported. Two racial and ethnic groups are considered: White American (reference group) and Latina. Immigrant generational status is measured as a set of dummy variables indicating whether the student is an immigrant (students are children born outside the US) or US born.

Student and School Characteristics

There are a number of student and school characteristics that are associated with the likelihood of violence occurring within schools. Student achievement, family socioeconomic status, misbehavior, and the number of male friends have been related to the occurrence and the exposure to violence and victimization of girls (Graham, Bellmore, Nishina, & Juvonen, 2009; Graham & Juvonen, 2002; Hanish & Guerra, 2000; Juvonen & Graham, 2001; Madriz, 1997; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006; Schreck, Miller, & Gibson, 2003; Suárez -Orozco & Suárez -Orozco, 2001; Young & Sweeting, 2004). Student achievement is measured by using the standardized measure developed by RTI and NCES. ELS:2002 included a reading and math composite score based on standardized tests developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS). The composite score is the average of the math and reading standardized scores, re-standardized to a national mean of 50.0 and standard deviation of 10 (Range of score: 21.50 – 79.94). The NCES preconstructed measure of socioeconomic status is a standardized (z-score) variable based on five equally weighted, standardized components: father's/guardian's education, mother's/guardian's education, family income, father's/guardian's occupational prestige, and mother's/guardian's occupational prestige (range of family SES: -2.11–1.98). There are three misbehavior measures that construct the dichotomous variable to indicate whether or not the student misbehaved while in school or not: (1) cutting or skipping classes, (2) getting into a physical fight at school, and (3) getting into trouble for not following school rules. Students also indicate the gender of their 3

closest friends in school. This variable counts the number of male school friends the student reports having.

School factors such as size, security, racial and ethnic demographics, poverty, and locale have been linked to school violence and victimization (Gottfredson, 2001; Stewart, 2003; Welsh, 2001). School size is measured as the total student enrollment of the school. School administrators answered eleven items that indicate the number of the following security measures implemented in their schools: (1) control access to school buildings during school hours, (2) control access to school grounds during school hours, (3) require students to pass through metal detectors each day, (4) perform one or more random metal detector checks on students, (5) close the campus for most students during lunch, (6) use one or more random dog sniffs to check for drugs, (7) perform one or more random sweeps for contraband, (8) require clear book bags or ban book bags on school grounds, (9) require students to wear badges or picture IDs, (10) require faculty and staff to wear badges or picture IDs, and (11) use one or more security cameras to monitor the school. A count variable is constructed since each of these school level factors measure security implemented within the school. The proportion of racial and ethnic minority students measure the percentage of students of racial and ethnic minority enrolled at the school. School poverty is measured as the proportion of students within each school who were receiving free or reduce-priced lunches. School location represented whether the school is located in an urban or non-urban (reference category) area.

Analytic Strategy

Since the ELS:2002 data collection is designed as a cluster sample in which schools are sampled with unequal probability and then students are sampled or "nested" within these selected schools, the subsample of the ELS:2002 data violates the assumption of independent observations.

The nested structure of the ELS:2002 data set (i.e., students within schools) makes multilevel modeling an appropriate analytic tool (Raudenbush, Bryk, and Congdon, 2004). With count-dependent variables, Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM) poisson-based regression analysis is an appropriate approach.

The analyses proceed in several steps. Table 1 presents descriptive information for the variables in this study. Table 2 displays the HGLM results of the relationships and interactions between immigration and other pertinent student and school factors for Latina and White American girls' likelihood of victimization. In the baseline model of Table 2, violent school victimization is regressed on race and ethnicity, as well as other student and school characteristics. In model 2 of the same table, the interaction between race, ethnicity, and immigration are introduced into the analysis. Table 3 present the HGLM results for each category of violent school victimization for Latina and White American girls.

Results

Descriptives

Table 1 provides descriptive information about the variables in this study. In this study, the average level of exposure to violence at school is .66 for girls in the sample. As for the categories of exposure to violence at school, the average level of strong-arm robbery is .02, getting hit is .14, being bullied or picked on is .27, and being threatened is .24. About 11% of the sample reports being an immigrant and 23% are Latina.

School Victimization

Table 2 shows the HGLM results that examine the relationships between immigration, race, ethnicity, school victimization, and other pertinent factors. Model 1 of Table 2 displays the baseline findings of exposure to violence at school. While controlling for other variables, race and

ethnicity is linked to exposure to violence at school. Specifically, Latinas have relatively less experience with exposure to violence at school than their White American female student counterparts ($p \leq .05$).

As presented in model 2 of Table 2, while controlling for other variables, the interactions of immigration, race, and ethnicity are linked to exposure to violence at school. Immigrant and US born Latina youth have marginally less experience with exposure to violence at school than White American girls ($p \leq .1$).

Table 2. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM-Poisson) Effects and Standard Errors for School Victimization

	Model 1			Model 2		
	b		*SE*	*b*		*SE*
Within schools (*N*=3,710)						
Latina	-.195	*	.115	-.153	†	.118
*Immigrant				-.218	†	.156
Student Characteristics						
Achievement	-.026	***	.003	-.026	***	.004
Family SES	.011		.046	.006		.046
Misbehavior	.618	***	.060	.617	***	.061
Total of Male Friends	.240	***	.044	.237	***	.044
Between schools (*N*=580)						
Intercept	-.480	***	.037	-.482	***	.038
Size	-.001	†	.001	-.001	†	.001
Security	.007		.014	.007		.014
% Racial and ethnic minority	.001		.002	.001		.002
% Free or reduced lunch	.002		.002	.002		.002
Urban	-.150	*	.102	-.152	*	.102
Random effects	Variance		X^2	Variance		X^2
	.335	***	1431.787	.336	***	1432.442

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .1$

As for other student characteristics, misbehaving girls and girls with more male friends have increased exposure to violence at school. On the other hand, higher achieving girls have decreased exposure to violence at school. For school level characteristics, school size and locale

are associated with exposure to violence for Latina and White American girls while in school. For this sample, larger schools are marginally associated with fewer girls' reports of exposure to violence at school ($p \leq .1$). Urban schools also have fewer girls' reporting school victimization.

Categories of School Victimization

Table 3 shows the analysis results by different types of exposure to violence at school examined. US born Latinas have a decreased likelihood of experience with strong-arm robbery victimization than White American girls within their school. Latina immigrant girls, on the other hand, have no statistical difference in the exposure of strong-arm robbery victimization while in school than White American girls. In other words, Latina immigrant girls have similar experiences as White American girls, but more experience in comparison to US born Latinas, with strong-arm robbery victimization. As for other student characteristics, misbehaving girls indeed have increased incidents of strong-arm robbery school victimization, while higher achieving girls have relatively less exposure. For school level characteristics, schools with higher proportions of racial and ethnic minority youth are associated with more girls reporting strong-arm robbery school victimization, while urban schools have fewer girls' reporting strong-arm robbery school victimization.

US born Latina girls do not have a statistical difference in the exposure of getting hit while at school than White American girls. Latina immigrant girls have a marginally decreased likelihood of being hit while at school. This suggests that US born Latina students have similar experiences as White American female students, but more experience in comparison to Latina immigrant girls, with getting hit at school. As for other student characteristics, misbehaving girls and girls with more male friends are more likely to be hit at school, while higher achieving girls have relatively less exposure. For school level characteristics, larger schools and schools with

higher proportions of racial and ethnic minority youth are associated with more Latina and White American girls reporting getting hit at school. On the other hand, schools with higher proportions of students receiving free or reduced lunch have lower incidences of Latina and White American girls reporting getting hit at school.

Furthermore, while controlling for other variables, the interactions of immigration, race and ethnicity are linked to being bullied or picked on while at school. US born Latinas have a decreased likelihood of experience with being bullied or picked on than White American girls within their school. Latina immigrant girls, on the other hand, have no statistical difference in school bullying victimization while in school than White American girls. In other words, Latina immigrant girls have similar experiences as White American girls, but more experience in comparison to US born Latinas, with being a victim of school bullying. As for other student characteristics, misbehaving girls and girls with more male friends are more likely to be bullied or picked on, while higher achieving girls have relatively lower odds. For school level characteristics, urban schools and schools with higher proportions of racial and ethnic minority youth are associated with fewer Latina and White American girls being a victim of school bullying.

Table 3. Hierarchical Generalized Linear Model (HGLM-Poisson) Effects and Standard Errors for Different Categories of School Victimization

	Strong-arm Robbery			Got Hit			Bullied or Picked On			Threatened		
	b		*SE*	*b*		*SE*	*b*		*SE*	*b*		*SE*
Within schools (*N*=3,710)												
Latina	-1.022	*	.505	-.036		.194	-.256	*	.155	-.194		.152
*Immigrant youth	-.375		.416	-.257	†	.251	-.041		.195	-.337	*	.207
Student Characteristics												
Achievement	-.064	***	.014	-.043	***	.005	-.015	**	.004	-.029	***	.004
Family SES	.005		.171	-.014		.071	.037		.062	-.030		.061
Misbehavior	1.486	***	.223	.775	***	.101	.364	***	.075	.753	***	.076
Total of Male Friends	.201		.132	.246	***	.061	.246	***	.057	.227	***	.053
Between schools (*N*=580)												
Intercept	-4.303	***	.127	-2.132	***	.059	-1.387	***	.040	-1.553	***	.045
Size	-.001		.001	-.001	***	.001	-.001		.001	.001	*	.001
Security	.016		.037	.006		.021	.014		.016	-.001		.017
% Racial and ethnic minority	.017	***	.004	.006	*	.002	-.003	*	.002	-.003		.002
% Free or reduced lunch	-.007		.005	-.006	*	.003	.003		.003	.008	**	.002
Urban	-.557	*	.277	.090		.154	-.256	*	.114	-.164	*	.114
Random effects	Variance		X^2	Variance		X^2	Variance		X^2	Variance		X^2
	1.655	***	327.368	.396	***	681.132	.120	***	685.261	.146	***	691.367

*** $p \leq .001$; ** $p \leq .01$; * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .1$

As presented in Table 3, the interactions of immigration, race and ethnicity are related to girls getting threatened at school. US born Latina girls do not have a statistical difference in being threatened at school than White American girls. Latina immigrant girls have a decreased likelihood of being threatened at school. This suggests that US born Latina students have similar experiences as White American girls, but more experience in comparison to Latina immigrant girls, with being threatened at school. As for other student characteristics, larger schools and schools with higher proportions of students who receive free or reduced lunches are associated with more Latina and White American girls' reports of being threatened at school. On the other hand, urban schools have lower levels of Latina and White American girls reporting being threatened.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study set out to examine the exposure to school violence that Latinas endure, as well as the role of immigration on that violence, within this nation's schools. Consequently, this study yielded two important results. First and foremost, Latina exposure to violence and the pertinent aspect of immigration is complex and certainly warrants further investigations. Second, the evident variation of school victimization for Latinas highlights the importance of not treating Latinas as a homogenous group but rather explore their unique and diverse experiences, particularly within schools.

The debate over immigration is a complex social issue often discussed with biased views as well as conflicting information. Much of this debate is centered on an immigration and crime link (Hagan, Levi, & Dinovitzer, 2008; Martinez, 2006; Sampson, 2008; Stowell & Martinez, 2007). Even though there is a ubiquitous depiction of immigrants being deviant and criminal (Stowell & Martinez, 2007), research reveals evidence to the contrary. Immigrant youth are less

likely to be involved in crime, substance use, and general deviance (Desmond & Kubrin, 2009; Greenman & Xie, 2009). Nevertheless, the myth of the criminal immigrant and the associated "threat of immigration" have resulted in implicit violent rhetoric and tensions directed towards immigrants in this nation (Sampson, 2008). Indeed, findings suggest that immigrant youth have increased susceptibilities towards being exposed to violence. This trend of increased harassment and victimization of Latina immigrants within communities may also be, unfortunately, reflected within this nation's school and impacting a growing Latina immigrant youth population.

First and foremost, understanding and addressing the victimization of all youth is imperative because victimization has long lasting detrimental effects for the emotional, psychological, physical, and educational development of youth (Finkelhor, 2008; Macmillan 2001; Macmillan & Hagan 2004; Young & Sweeting, 2004). It is also evident that girls, particularly Latinas, are clearly marginalized within an educational system fraught with gender, racial, and ethnic inequities (Buchmann, DiPrete, & McDaniel, 2008; Kozol, 1991, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, with the current heated debate over immigration policy within the US, as well as the pervasive anti-immigration and immigrant sentiment within the country and school system (Chavez, 2008; Mora, 2002; Valenzuela, 1999), expanding the limited knowledge about Latina victimization is certainly warranted. The current study set out to contribute to the research on Latina victimization and found some results that also warrant future research. For example, the results found both White American girls and US born Latinas to have similar experiences regarding getting hit and being threatened at school. In contrast, immigrant Latinas are more similar to White American girls in regards to being a victim of strong-arm robbery and being bullied or picked on. Future research should aim to explain why immigrant Latinas are at higher risk for certain types of victimization compared to their US born Latina

counterparts, as well as why they are less likely to be victims of other types of victimization. For example, the current study found that Latina immigrant girls have a decreased likelihood of being threatened at school compared to their US born and White American counterparts.

The difference found among US born and immigrant Latinas highlights the diversity that exists within Latinas as a group. One limitation of this study, however, is that the data did not permit the examination of multiple generations of Latinas, not just immigrant versus US born Latinas. For example, US born Latinas may be second or third generation, indicating that their parents are foreign born or US born, respectively. Examining these generational differences may shed more light on why and how victimization varies across Latina students.

As with all research studies, findings often create more research questions and this study is no exception. For instance, having more male friends increases the likelihood of victimization. Is this attributable to the nature of boy-girl relationships? Are the boys the victimizers? Are girls victimizing other girls because of the victims' associations with certain boys? In the case of US born Latinas, do White American girls feel threatened by Latinas who become friends with White American boys? Does the race/ethnicity of a male friend affect the likelihood of victimization for girls? How are the changing friendships evident with Americanization related to victimization? Additionally, it appears that location does matter for Latina victimization. As suggested by previous researchers, understanding the family, social, economic, and political context is vital towards understanding the immigration and victimization link (Martinez, Lee, Nielsen, 2004; Nielsen, Lee, & Martinez, 2005; Sampson, 2008). Future research should explore if these aforementioned factors are linked to Latina victimization.

Latinas continue to be overrepresented among those at risk for poor behavioral and general physical and mental well-being, particularly U.S. born Latinayouth (Greenman & Xie,

2009). Furthermore, Latinas are dramatically underachieving in education in comparison to their White American counterparts (Suarez-Orozco & Suarez-Orozco, 2001; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Davalos, Chavez, & Guardiola, 1999; Kaufman et al., 2001). In a recent report by the National Women's Law Center (2009), there are a number of factors that impede educational success for Latinas despite their high educational aspirations, such as: low enrollment in early childhood education programs; and having family members who are undocumented thus increasing their experience with anxiety, uncertainty about their futures, and added financial barriers to higher education opportunities. Also, many Latinas' parents, due to a number of factors, including their own low levels of formal education, lack of familiarity with the American school system, and feeling unwelcome at their children's schools, contribute to the impediment of educational attainment for their children. Even though these findings are well supported in previous research noted in this study, this recent report indeed highlights that Latinas' educational challenges remain significant despite the growing number of Latinas in the US educational system. In relation to violence and victimization, Morenoff and Astor (2006) report that as immigrant youth spend more time and have longer residence in the US, they have an increased exposure and involvement to crime and violence, which in turn only exacerbates the inequities Latinas experience.

The findings of this study suggest that school policies need to consider the complicated situation of Latina/o youth in the US public school system. Perhaps school administrators and counselors should investigate the specific barriers that face Latina/o youth in their schools, so that school specific policies are implemented to keep this group safe from violence. Also, school specific policies that include educating all students about other cultures or anti-violence

initiatives may need to be developed to ensure not only the physical safety of students, but also the educational success of all students.

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