

Spanking of Young Children: Do Immigrant and U.S.-Born Hispanic Parents Differ?

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Abstract

Building on prior research showing fewer parenting risk behaviors and lower levels of harsh punishment among less acculturated Hispanic parents, we tested the hypothesis that foreign-born (FB; immigrant) Hispanic parents use less spanking toward children at 3 years and 5 years of age than U.S.-born Hispanic parents. We also examined whether other indicators of acculturation—endorsement of traditional gender norms and religiosity—showed any direct or indirect effects in explaining the hypothesized association. Path model analyses were conducted with a sample of Hispanic mothers ($n = 1,089$) and fathers ($n = 650$). Cross-sectional and time lagged path models controlling for a wide range of psychosocial and demographic confounds indicated that, when compared with U.S.-born Hispanic parents, FB Hispanic mothers and fathers used less spanking toward their young children. In cross-sectional analysis only, mothers' greater endorsement of traditional gender norms had small protective effects on spanking. Although fathers' endorsement of traditional gender norms was not a significant direct predictor of spanking, there was a significant indirect effect of nativity status on spanking mediated by endorsement of traditional gender norms. Religiosity showed no relation to spanking for either mothers or fathers. Immigrant status may be an important protective factor that is associated

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with lower levels of parenting aggression among Hispanic mothers and fathers living in the United States.

Keywords

child abuse, cultural contexts, physical abuse, etiology, family issues and mediators, cultural contexts

Physical discipline is defined as “the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain, but not injury, for the purpose of correcting or controlling the child’s behavior” (Donnelly & Straus, 2005, p. 3). Spanking children is widely used as a form of physical discipline in the United States. By age 5, up to 94% of parents say they have spanked their child at least once (Straus & Stewart, 1999). Despite the pervasive use of spanking by parents in the United States, and the widespread belief that spanking is both an effective and harmless way to discipline children (Taylor, Al-Hiyari, Lee, Priebe, & Guerrero, 2014), a growing literature indicates that spanking is associated with numerous detrimental child outcomes such as increased aggressive, antisocial, and delinquent behavior (Berlin et al., 2009; Gershoff, 2002; Grogan-Kaylor, 2005; Maguire-Jack, Gromoske, & Berger, 2012; Taylor, Manganello, Lee, & Rice, 2010). Prior research shows that the use of spanking and other forms of discipline differ among demographic and cultural groups (Burchinal, Skinner, & Reznick, 2010; Gershoff, Lansford, Sexton, Davis-Kean, & Sameroff, 2012; Lansford & Deater-Deckard, 2012; Lansford & Dodge, 2008), which suggests the presence of factors that may be related to differential reliance on use of spanking by parents.

In the current study, we examined the prevalence and predictors of spanking among U.S. native-born (NB) and foreign-born (FB) immigrant Hispanic mothers and fathers, and assessed whether measures of acculturation were associated with parental spanking of young children (ages 3-5). Studies using community samples of parents have suggested that, compared with Whites and African Americans, Hispanic mothers (Altschul & Lee, 2011; Berlin et al., 2009) and fathers (Lee, Guterman, & Lee, 2008) were generally less likely to use physical and psychological aggression against their young children, even when controlling for important demographic and psychosocial risk factors. In this study, we examined one of the most common forms of physical discipline used in American households—spanking—among both mothers and fathers because few prior studies have examined both parents’ use of discipline.

Nativity Status, Acculturation, and Parenting Aggression

There is reason to believe that factors associated with acculturation, including nativity status, may account for some of the differences observed in use of parenting aggression when comparing Hispanic with White and African American parents. For example, one study showed that less acculturated Mexican American mothers engaged in less verbal punishment toward their 2-year-olds and were less likely to spank their child at ages 2 to 3 than White and African American mothers (Berlin et al., 2009). Other studies have shown that FB Hispanic parents were less likely to use physical and psychological parenting aggression toward their young children (Altschul & Lee, 2011; Lee, Altschul, Shair, & Taylor, 2011). And, in another study that did not focus on Hispanic parents per se, FB nativity status was associated with lowered risk for maternal spanking (Taylor, Guterman, Lee, & Rathouz, 2009). Interestingly, there is also some evidence that Hispanic children may be underrepresented in the child welfare system (Drake et al., 2011). It may be that Hispanic parents view coercive parenting practices as less effective disciplinary techniques (Caughy & Franzini, 2005) and, therefore, are less likely to use harsh parenting practices that place children at greater risk for maltreatment.

Foreign birth among Hispanic parents may serve a protective role with regard to stresses related to parenting. Both NB and FB Hispanic parents experience discrimination, poverty, and the stress of low-wage jobs (Parra-Cardona, Cordova, Holtrop, Villarruel, & Wieling, 2008). However, immigrant Hispanic families experience greater economic strain than nonimmigrant Hispanic or White families (Lubotsky, 2011), and economic strain may be especially pronounced in the context of immigration (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008; M. M. D. Rodríguez, Davis, Rodríguez, & Bates, 2006). Even so, study of an at-risk sample suggested that immigrant Hispanic parents had lower levels of family stress and greater parenting skills when compared with non-immigrant at-risk parents (Dettlaff, Earner, & Phillips, 2009). Building on this prior research, the current study examined whether Hispanic parents living in the United States may differ in their use of spanking based on nativity status.

Furthermore, there is evidence that broader cultural norms may influence family dynamics. A study of 186 cultural groups across the world found that high levels of societal violence, such as warfare, maltreatment, and spousal abuse, were associated with higher levels of violence against children, including greater use of spanking (Lansford & Dodge, 2008). Studies using large and culturally diverse samples indicated that spanking and other forms of

aggressive parenting vary in relation to cultural norms, either operationalized by race/ethnicity within the United States (Gershoff et al., 2012; Lansford et al., 2005) or by country (e.g., China, India, Italy) in international comparisons (Gershoff et al., 2010). Although parents (Taylor et al., 2014) and researchers (Benjet & Kazdin, 2003; Deater-Deckard, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1996) have invoked the notion that corporal punishment is not harmful within the confines of certain cultural traditions (Lansford, 2010), recent research suggests that even in contexts where spanking is more culturally normative, children who experience spanking and physical punishment are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems (Gershoff et al., 2010; Gershoff et al., 2012; Lansford et al., 2005).

Prior studies of the links between culture and spanking of young children have not examined the extent to which immigrants to the United States, who were born or raised in one cultural context and subsequently raised their own children in a different cultural context, may carry with them parenting norms from their country of origin or adapt their parenting practices to the norms of their host country (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). Furthermore, few studies have used self-reported information to examine the parenting and disciplinary behaviors of Hispanic fathers (Parra-Cardona, Wampler, & Sharp, 2006). In this study, we examined nativity status, as well as two other factors that may be associated with acculturation: traditional gender norms and religiosity. Research shows that regardless of race or ethnicity, fathers who endorsed high levels of *familism*, a construct that emphasizes the importance of family cohesiveness, support for family members, and self-sacrifice for the good of the family (Guilamo-Ramos et al., 2007; Yasui & Dishion, 2007), were less likely to use physical punishment (Ferrari, 2002). Traditional gender norms may reinforce family roles regarding the use of discipline, with fathers characterized as the breadwinner and disciplinarian, and mothers as nurturers who have primary responsibility for child care (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008). Endorsement of traditional gender roles is more common among FB and less acculturated Latinas, when compared with their U.S.-born and more acculturated counterparts (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008; Phinney & Flores, 2002).

Religiosity may also have protective benefits for immigrants. Recent immigrants are more likely to attend religious services, which has been shown to promote positive health among Hispanics (Arredondo, Elder, Ayala, Campbell, & Baquero, 2005). Yet, membership in a religious community may impact parenting practices through norms that validate use of spanking children (Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009; C. M. Rodriguez & Henderson, 2010). More frequent attendance at religious services and the belief that religion is very important in daily life are correlated with positive attitudes toward use of spanking (Taylor, Hamvas, Rice, Newman, & DeJong, 2011), and support

for conservative religious viewpoints has been associated with greater use of spanking (Ellison & Bradshaw, 2009).

The Current Study

In the current study, we compared the prevalence of spanking toward children at 3 and 5 years of age among FB and NB Hispanic mothers and fathers who participated in a large, community-based sample of families. In path model analyses, we examined if nativity status influences mothers' and fathers' spanking. We hypothesized that FB parents would be less likely to engage in spanking when compared with NB Hispanic parents. We examined potential mechanisms that may explain the hypothesized effect of nativity status by examining whether endorsement of traditional gender norms and religiosity play a role, either directly or indirectly, via influence on other factors such as parenting stress, in associations of nativity status with use of spanking. By examining potential direct and indirect effects of acculturation and other factors, in this study we attempted to better understand how nativity status may influence the disciplinary behaviors of Hispanic parents.

Our path analyses examined a comprehensive range of variables that may be associated with FB and NB Hispanic mothers' and fathers' use of spanking. For example, we controlled for child gender, because studies have shown that boys are spanked more frequently than girls (Gershoff, 2002). We controlled for the child's level of aggressive behavior, as rated by the child's mother, because children who are rated as more aggressive are more likely to be spanked by both their mothers and fathers (Lee, Taylor, Altschul, & Rice, 2013; Taylor, Manganello, et al., 2010). Importantly, we also controlled for each parent's self-report of psychological stressors because mother's parenting stress (Taylor, Manganello, et al., 2010), father's parenting stress (Lee et al., 2011), mother's depressive symptoms (Berlin et al., 2009), and mother's alcohol use (Miller, Smyth, & Mudar, 1999) have all been linked to greater use of spanking in prior research; in addition, as mentioned earlier, it is important to account for the possibility of differences in level of family stress when comparing immigrant and nonimmigrant families (Dettlaff et al., 2009). We controlled for intimate partner aggression or violence (IPAV), because children experience more spanking in homes where there is parental IPAV (Taylor, Lee, et al., 2010) and because immigrants who experience IPAV may be at greatest risk for maltreating their child (Taylor et al., 2009). We controlled for mothers' and fathers' involvement in daily activities with the child because mothers spend more time with young children than do fathers, and maternal involvement in daily caregiving may be even higher in families where there is strong endorsement of traditional gender norms.

Finally, we controlled for demographic variables, such as family income, parental age, parental relationship status, and parental education level.

Method

Data and Participants

This study uses data from self-identified Hispanic mothers and fathers who participated in the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (FFCWS) core interviews and the add-on “In-Home Longitudinal Study of Pre-School Aged Children.” FFCWS is a birth cohort study ($N = 4,898$) conducted in 20 U.S. cities with populations more than 200,000. Respondents were recruited at hospitals and over the phone at the time of the child’s birth. Verbal and written informed consent was obtained from participants at each interview, and respondents were informed of the interviewers’ obligation to report observations of child abuse. A detailed description of the sampling strategy is published elsewhere (Reichman, Teitler, Garfinkel, & McLanahan, 2001).

Mothers and fathers were interviewed at baseline (near the time of the target child’s birth) and at 1 year, 3 years, and 5 years following the target child’s birth. We included in this study all Hispanic parents who were interviewed at Wave 3 (fathers = 843; mothers = 1,103). To answer the key research questions with regard to spanking, parents had to also indicate that the child lived with them most or all of the time (fathers $n = 668$; mothers $n = 1,089$). Of the 668 fathers and 1,089 mothers who met the eligibility criteria for this study, 18 fathers and no mothers were excluded from analyses because their nativity status was indeterminate. Our final sample consisted of 650 Hispanic fathers and 1,089 Hispanic mothers who indicated their nativity status and said that they lived with the target child most or all of the time.

Each parent self-reported psychosocial and demographic variables, as well key independent and dependent variables (e.g., religious attendance, traditional gender norms, nativity status, spanking), with two exceptions. Mothers reported the child’s sex and child behavior problems.

Measures

Spanking child at 3 years and 5 years of age. Both parents separately self-reported when the child was 3 years (Wave 3) and 5 years (Wave 4) of age whether they had spanked the child in the past month when he or she was misbehaving or acting up and, if so, the frequency of spanking: never (coded 0), once or twice (coded 1), or more than 2 times (coded 2).

Acculturation and nativity status. In addition to nativity status denoted by country of birth (0 = *native U.S.-born*, 1 = *foreign-born*), two variables measured acculturation. Religious attendance was measured by frequency of religious service attendance in the past year (0 = *never or less than once yearly* to 4 = *a few times a week or every day*). Endorsement of traditional gender norms (Thornton, 1989) was measured (1 = *strongly disagree* to 4 = *strongly agree*) with six items such as “The important decisions in the family should be made by the man of the house” and “It is much better for everyone if the man earns the main living and the woman takes care of the home and family” ($\alpha = .67$ for mothers and $.66$ for fathers).

Psychosocial parenting risks

Parenting stress. Four items from the Parental Distress subscale of the Parenting Stress Index (Abidin, 1995) indicated agreement (1 = *strongly agree* to 4 = *strongly disagree*), with statements such as “Being a parent is harder than I thought it would be” ($\alpha = .67$ for mothers and $.66$ for fathers).

Parent involvement. A mean of 13 items in which each parent reported the number of days a week he or she engaged in caretaking activities with the child was used to assess parent involvement with child care. Items included activities such as playing with child, reading stories, assisting with eating, and putting child to bed ($\alpha = .69$ for mothers and $.76$ for fathers).

Major depression. The Composite International Diagnostic Interview–Short Form (CIDI-SF), Section A (Kessler, Andrews, Mroczek, Ustun, & Wittchen, 1998), was administered to both parents via self-report at the 3-year interview. The CIDI-SF is a standardized instrument that uses the criteria set forth in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV*; American Psychiatric Association, 1994) to determine the probability that the respondent would be diagnosed with major depression if given the full CIDI interview. Major depression was indicated by self-report of feelings of depression or anhedonia experienced for most of the day, every day, or for at least 2 weeks. In the current study, participants were classified as likely to have major depression if they endorsed the screening items and 3 or more depressive symptoms (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*).

Heavy alcohol use. A dichotomous variable indicated heavy alcohol use based on fathers’ or mothers’ self-report of having consumed 4 or more drinks in 1 day in the past 12 months (0 = *consumed 0-3 drinks in 1 day in the past year* or 1 = *consumed ≥ 4 drinks in 1 day in the past year*). This question is based on the CIDI-SF alcohol dependence items, which

indicate the likelihood that the respondent would receive a diagnosis of alcohol dependence had they answered the full CIDI. However, very few of the parents in this study met the CIDI-SF criteria indicating probable alcohol dependence. Although less stringent than the CIDI-SF criteria, our operationalization of heavy alcohol use approximates the definition of a heavy drinking day, indicated by ≥ 5 drinks in a single day for men and ≥ 4 drinks in a single day for women (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2005).

IPAV. Mothers and fathers self-reported whether their partner often, sometimes, or never engaged in psychological (e.g., “He/She tries to keep you from seeing or talking with your friends or family”; Lloyd, 1996; Weiss & Margolin, 1977) or physical aggression (e.g., “He slaps or kicks you”; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). For each parent, a dichotomous variable (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) was used to indicate any instance of IPAV.

Child variables. The Child Behavior Checklist 1½-5 (Achenbach & Rescorla, 2000) was administered to mothers during the Wave 3 In-Home interview. The Aggressive Behavior subscale consists of 19 items such as “(He/she) is defiant” and “(He/she) gets in many fights” ($\alpha = .87$). All questions were measured on an ordinal scale (0 = *not true*, 1 = *somewhat or sometimes true*, 2 = *very true or often true*). Child sex was indicated by (0 = *girl*, 1 = *boy*).

Demographic variables. *Demographics* at the time of the child’s birth included education level (1 = *less than high school*, 2 = *high school degree/General Education Development (GED)*, 3 = *some college/technical school*, 4 = *college degree or higher*), relationship status (1 = *married to baby’s father/mother*, 2 = *cohabiting with baby’s father/mother*, 3 = *not married or cohabiting with baby’s father/mother*), and household income.

Analysis Plan

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive statistics for all study variables, as well as bivariate results comparing NB and FB parents on all independent and dependent variables in the path models. Tables 3 and 4 present results of path analyses examining the associations between the three measures of acculturation and parental spanking at Waves 3 and 4, while controlling for psychosocial risk factors, demographic variables, and child characteristics. The path models simultaneously examined predictors of spanking within the same time point at Wave 3, and predictors of change in spanking between Waves 3 and 4 by regressing spanking at Wave 4 on spanking at Wave 3.

Table 1. Hispanic Mothers Sample Descriptive Statistics.

Variable (Range)	Hispanic Mothers	Foreign-Born	Native-Born	t(df) ^a or χ^2 (df)
	n = 1,089 (100%) % or M (SD)	n = 418 (38%) % or M (SD)	n = 671 (62%) % or M (SD)	
Maternal use of spanking				$\chi^2(2) = 41.38^{***}$
When child is 3 years old W3 (0-2) ^b				
No spanking in past month	57	69	50	
Once or twice in past month	26	21	29	
A few times to nearly every day	17	10	21	
When child is 5 years old W4 (0-2)^b				$\chi^2(2) = 37.63^{***}$
No spanking in past month	62	74	54	
Once or twice in past month	27	18	33	
A few times to nearly every day	11	8	13	
Acculturation indicators				
Years in the United States (0-34)		8.61 (6.98)		
Religious attendance W1 (0-4) ^b	2.11 (1.37)	2.54 (1.30)	1.84 (1.34)	t(1082) = 8.42 ^{***}
Traditional gender norms W1 (1-3.67) ^b	2.16 (0.43)	2.36 (0.40)	2.03 (0.40)	t(1081) = 13.17 ^{***}
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress W3 (1-4) ^b	2.13 (0.72)	2.23 (0.74)	2.26 (0.66)	t(807) = -0.80
Parent involvement W3 (1.77-7) ^b	4.88 (0.97)	4.56 (0.98)	5.08 (0.90)	t(828) = -8.66 ^{***}
Depression W3 (% yes)	17	14	19	$\chi^2(1) = 5.13^*$
Heavy alcohol use W3 (% yes)	12	5	16	$\chi^2(1) = 28.84^{***}$

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Variable (Range)	Hispanic Mothers		Foreign-Born		Native-Born		t(df) ^a or χ^2 (df)
	n = 1,089 (100%)	% or M (SD)	n = 418 (38%)	% or M (SD)	n = 671 (62%)	% or M (SD)	
IPAV W3 (% yes)	34		40		30		$\chi^2(1) = 12.30^{***}$
Child variables							
Aggressive behavior W3 (0-1.95) ^b	0.61 (0.36)		0.56 (0.35)		0.65 (0.37)		t(847) = -3.66 ^{***}
Child sex W1 (% boy)	51		50		52		$\chi^2(1) = 0.55$
Demographic variables							
Household income W1 (0-133,750)	\$27,713 (26,559)		\$26,369 (24,912)		\$28,550 (27,520)		t(950) = -1.35
Education W1							$\chi^2(3) = 44.41^{***}$
Less than high school (%)	49		62		42		
High school degree or GED (%)	26		21		29		
Some college/technical school (%)	21		13		25		
College or higher (%)	4		4		4		
Relationship status W1							$\chi^2(2) = 38.35^{***}$
Married (%)	23		32		18		
Cohabiting (%)	46		45		47		
Not married or cohabiting (%)	31		23		36		
Age at child's birth W1 (15-47)	24.77 (5.83)		26.45 (5.94)		23.72 (5.51)		t(835) = 7.60 ^{***}

Note. W1 = baseline, at time of child's birth; W3 = Wave 3, child 3 years of age; W4 = Wave 4, child 5 years of age; IPAV = father-to-mother intimate partner aggression or violence.

^aEqual variances not assumed when Levene's test has been violated.

^bHigher scores indicate higher levels of the construct.

* $p \leq .05$, two-tailed. ** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed. *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed, denotes significant difference between foreign-born and native-born mothers.

Table 2. Hispanic Fathers Sample Descriptive Statistics.

Variable (Range)	Hispanic Fathers	Foreign-Born	Native-Born	t(df) ^a or χ^2 (df)
	n = 650 (100%) % or M (SD)	n = 300 (46%) % or M (SD)	n = 350 (54%) % or M (SD)	
Paternal spanking				
When child is 3 years old W3 (0-2) ^b				$\chi^2(2) = 48.90^{***}$
No spanking in past month	65	78	53	
Once or twice in past month	22	16	28	
A few times to nearly every day	13	5	19	
When child is 5 years old W4 (0-2) ^b				$\chi^2(2) = 29.80^{***}$
No spanking in past month	76	87	66	
Once or twice in past month	16	10	22	
A few times to nearly every day	8	4	12	
Acculturation indicators				
Years in the United States (0-44)		10.60 (6.58)		
Religious attendance W1 (0-4) ^b	2.03 (1.35)	2.25 (1.34)	1.85 (1.33)	t(613) = 3.73 ^{***}
Traditional gender norms W1 (1-3.83) ^b	2.26 (0.46)	2.42 (0.42)	2.13 (0.44)	t(614) = 8.54 ^{***}
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress W3 (1-4) ^b	2.04 (0.71)	2.08 (0.79)	2.01 (0.64)	t(577) = 1.23
Parent involvement W3 (0-7) ^b	4.45 (1.11)	4.19 (1.11)	4.67 (1.06)	t(648) = -5.64 ^{***}
Depression W3 (% yes)	9	7	11	$\chi^2(1) = 3.73$
Heavy alcohol use W3 (% yes)	31	27	34	$\chi^2(1) = 3.44$
IPAV W3 (% yes)	51	46	55	$\chi^2(1) = 5.74^*$

(continued)

Table 2. (continued)

Variable (Range)	Hispanic Fathers	Foreign-Born	Native-Born	t(df) ^a or χ^2 (df)
	n = 650 (100%) % or M (SD)	n = 300 (46%) % or M (SD)	n = 350 (54%) % or M (SD)	
Child variables				
Aggressive behavior W3 (0-1.80) ^b	0.60 (0.35) 51	0.56 (0.36) 51	0.64 (0.35) 51	t(517) = -2.39 $\chi^2(1) = 0.001$
Child sex W1 (% boy)				
Demographic variables				
Household income W1 (0-214,456)	\$32,604 (30,219)	\$27,931 (25,824)	\$36,422 (32,931)	t(613) = -3.50 ^{***} $\chi^2(3) = 66.81$ ^{***}
Education W1				
Less than high school (%)	51	68	36	
High school degree or GED (%)	27	17	36	
Some college/technical school (%)	17	12	22	
College or higher (%)	5	4	6	
Relationship status W1				
Married (%)	32	38	28	$\chi^2(2) = 8.76^*$
Cohabiting (%)	57	54	59	
Not married or cohabiting (%)	11	8	13	
Age at child's birth W1 (15-61)	27.12 (6.44)	28.61 (7.00)	25.86 (5.62)	t(565) = 5.46 ^{***}

Note. W1 = baseline, at time of child's birth; W3 = Wave 3, child 3 years of age; W4 = Wave 4, child 5 years of age; IPAV = father-to-mother intimate partner aggression or violence.

^aEqual variances not assumed when Levene's test has been violated.

^bHigher scores indicate higher levels of the construct.

* $p \leq .05$, two-tailed. ** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed. *** $p \leq .001$, two-tailed, denotes significant difference between foreign-born and native-born mothers.

Table 3. Path Coefficients From Model Predicting Hispanic Mothers' Use of Spanking.

	B ^a	SE	β	p
Maternal use of spanking at age 3 regressed on				
Acculturation indicators				
Nativity (foreign-born)	-0.31	0.06	-.13	***
Religious attendance	0.04	0.03	.05	
Traditional gender norms	-0.24	0.10	.09	*
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress	0.14	0.06	.09	*
Parent involvement	-0.15	0.04	-.13	***
Depression	0.14	0.10	.12	
Heavy alcohol use	0.18	0.09	.18	*
IPAV	0.19	0.06	.17	**
Child factors				
Child sex (boy)	0.17	0.10	.08	
SES and demographic factors				
Household income ^b	0.02	0.02	.03	
Education	0.14	0.04	.14	***
Relationship status ^c	0.07	0.07	.06	
Age at child's birth	-0.02	0.01	-.10	***
% variance explained in outcome	23.1			
Maternal use of spanking at age 5 regressed on				
Maternal use of spanking at age 3				
	0.53	0.03	.49	***
Acculturation indicators				
Nativity (foreign-born) ^a	-0.26	0.12	-.10	*
Religious attendance	0.02	0.04	.03	
Traditional gender norms	0.06	0.19	.20	
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress	-0.05	0.08	-.03	
Parent involvement	-0.02	0.05	-.02	
Depression	0.01	0.06	.01	
Heavy alcohol use	0.01	0.06	.00	
IPAV	0.00	0.07	.00	
Child factors				
Child sex (boy)	-0.04	0.09	-.02	
Child's aggressive behavior	0.47	0.14	.14	**
SES and demographic factors				
Household income ^b	0.01	0.02	.02	
Education	0.03	0.04	.03	
Relationship status ^c	-0.06	0.04	-.05	
Age at child's birth	-0.01	0.01	-.06	**
% variance explained in outcome	33.5			

Note. IPAV = intimate partner aggression or violence; SES = socioeconomic status.

^aDirect effects are based on model estimation with standard errors adjusted for clustering by city.

^bHousehold income was square root transformed for analyses.

^cLower values for relationship status indicate marriage to child's father, while higher values reflect low contact with father.

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01. ***p ≤ .001.

Table 4. Path Coefficients From Model Predicting Hispanic Fathers' Use of Spanking.

	B ^a	SE	β	p
Paternal use of spanking at age 3 regressed on				
Acculturation indicators				
Nativity (foreign-born)	-0.47	0.15	-.20	***
Religious attendance	0.04	0.04	.04	
Traditional gender norms	-0.06	0.13	-.02	
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress	0.03	0.10	.02	
Parent involvement	-0.02	0.05	-.02	
Depression	-0.01	0.09	-.01	
Heavy alcohol use	0.17	0.08	.15	*
IPAV	0.24	0.04	.21	***
Child factors				
Child sex (boy)	0.25	0.08	.11	**
SES and demographic factors				
Household income ^b	-0.00	0.02	-.00	
Education	0.19	0.07	.18	**
Relationship status ^c	-0.01	0.07	-.01	
Age at child's birth	-0.03	0.01	-.18	***
% variance explained in outcome	26.6			
Paternal use of spanking at age 5 regressed on				
Paternal use of spanking at age 3				
	0.52	0.08	.50	***
Acculturation indicators				
Nativity (foreign-born)	-0.31	0.21	-.13	
Religious attendance	-0.01	0.05	-.01	
Traditional gender norms	-0.15	0.21	-.06	
Psychosocial parenting risks				
Parenting stress	0.09	0.09	.05	
Parent involvement	0.06	0.06	.06	
Depression	-0.13	0.10	-.11	
Heavy alcohol use	0.03	0.13	.02	
IPAV	-0.10	0.05	-.08	
Child factors				
Child sex (boy)	0.04	0.13	.01	
Child's aggressive behavior	0.06	0.20	.02	
SES and demographic factors				
Household income ^b	-0.02	0.03	-.03	
Education	0.06	0.10	.05	
Relationship status ^c	0.08	0.07	.07	
Age at child's birth	0.01	0.01	.04	
% variance explained in outcome	33.6			

Note. IPAV = intimate partner aggression or violence; SES = socioeconomic status.

^aDirect effects are based on model estimation with standard errors adjusted for clustering by city.

^bHousehold income was square root transformed for analyses.

^cLower values for relationship status indicate marriage to child's father, while higher values reflect low contact with father.

* $p \leq .05$. ** $p \leq .01$. *** $p \leq .001$.

All analyses were conducted in Mplus 7.11. The χ^2 test, the comparative fit index (CFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) were used to evaluate fit between the hypothesized models and observed data, with cutoff values of .95 for CFI and .06 for RMSEA establishing good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The cluster option within Mplus was used to account for the sampling design in which respondents were clustered in cities. Indirect effects were calculated using the indirect model option in Mplus.

Across all parent control variables, data were missing in 0% to 0.55% of cases for mothers and 0% to 5.4% of cases for fathers. The Wave 3 child aggression variable was missing in 22.0% of cases for mothers and 20.2% of cases for fathers; the higher level of missing data for this variable is due to it being drawn from the In-Home interview, which was not administered to all families. The outcome variables of spanking at Waves 3 and 4 were missing in 0% and 10.7% of cases for mothers, and in 0.15% and 18.5% of cases for fathers, respectively. To maximize sample size we estimated all models using full information maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus. An advantage of using full information maximum likelihood estimation is to avoid biasing the sample by removing cases with missing data. Other studies have found that FFCWS longitudinal subsamples with data available on all variables differ from subsamples with some missing data in terms of immigrant status as well as other covariates of interest (Cooper, McLanahan, Meadows, & Brooks-Gunn, 2009).

Results

Descriptive Results

Tables 1 and 2 present descriptive statistics for study variables and denote significant differences between NB and FB mothers and fathers. As hypothesized, FB Hispanic parents were less likely to use spanking than NB parents. FB parents were also more likely to endorse traditional gender norms and attend religious services more frequently than NB parents. FB and NB Hispanic parents also differed significantly on many of the control variables included in analyses. Tables 3 and 4 present path coefficients in each of the models predicting use of spanking by mothers and fathers, described in detail below. Due to space limitations, the correlation matrix is available upon request from the study authors.

Path Model Results Examining Acculturation Predictors of Parental Spanking

Path models predicting maternal and paternal spanking when children were 3 years of age and change in spanking by the time children were 5

years of age fit the data well for both mothers and fathers ($\chi^2 = 12.06$, $df = 10$, CFI = .997, RMSEA = .014; and $\chi^2 = 9.48$, $df = 10$, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, respectively). The models account for 23.1% of the variance in maternal spanking and 26.6% of the variance in paternal spanking when children were 3 years of age, and 33.5% of the variance in maternal spanking and 33.6% of the variance in paternal spanking when children were 5 years of age.

When examining predictors of spanking within the same time point at Wave 3, of the three acculturation indicators, nativity status was the most significant predictor of spanking among both mothers and fathers ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .001$, and $\beta = -.20$, $p < .001$, respectively), indicating that after controlling for the wide range of psychosocial and demographic confounds, FB Hispanic parents were less likely to spank their children than NB Hispanic parents. Of the other two indicators of acculturation, greater endorsement of traditional gender norms was found to be negatively associated with spanking among mothers ($\beta = -.13$, $p < .001$). In addition, among mothers there was a significant indirect effect of nativity status on spanking mediated by endorsement of traditional gender norms ($\beta = -.05$, $p \leq .001$). Although endorsement of traditional gender norms was not a significant direct predictor of spanking at Wave 3 among fathers, there was a significant indirect effect of nativity status on spanking mediated by endorsement of traditional gender norms ($\beta = -.02$, $p < .05$). Religious attendance was not a significant direct predictor of spanking or mediator of the effects of foreign birth on spanking for either mothers or fathers. Other significant predictors of spanking at Wave 3 among both mothers and fathers were heavy alcohol use, intimate partner aggression, education, and age; among mothers, only parent involvement and parenting stress were also significant predictors, while among fathers, only whether the child was a boy was predictive of greater use of spanking.

When examining predictors of change in spanking between Waves 3 and 4, among fathers, the only significant predictor of spanking when children were 5 years old was fathers' level of spanking when children were 3 years old. In other words, of the variables included in our model, none predicted change in levels of fathers' spanking; the variables that predicted level of spanking at Wave 3 also predicted level of spanking at Wave 4 indirectly via spanking at Wave 3. Among mothers, nativity status predicted change in level of spanking from Wave 3 to Wave 4, indicating that FB mothers were likely to decrease their levels of spanking even further as children reached 5 years of age ($\beta = -.10$, $p < .05$). In addition, maternal age and child aggressive behavior were predictive of changes in spanking between Waves 3 and 4.

Discussion

The current study builds on earlier work demonstrating that Hispanic parents in the United States were less likely to use physical and psychological aggression toward their young children (Berlin et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2008) by identifying foreign birth among Latinos as a key protective factor associated with lesser reliance on spanking as a disciplinary strategy with young children. Our study is strengthened by the fact that we control for important family contextual factors that may confound the association between nativity status and spanking. We also controlled for the child's level of aggressive behavior, an important factor to consider because children with higher levels of aggression may elicit more harsh punishment from their parents (Lee, Taylor, et al., 2013; Taylor, Manganello, et al., 2010). Our study results demonstrated that FB Hispanic mothers and fathers were less likely to use spanking with young children than NB Hispanic parents, despite the contextual and economic challenges faced by many FB parents, such as lower incomes, lower education levels, residence in more dangerous neighborhoods, and greater discrimination (Lubotsky, 2011).

These study results are consistent with a limited number of prior studies suggesting that Hispanic fathers' disciplinary practices may indeed differ from other fathers. Hispanic fathers were less likely to engage in very frequent spanking (Lee, Perron, Taylor, & Guterman, 2011) and other forms of harsh parenting aggression (Lee et al., 2008) than White and African American fathers. In the current study, we see a strong effect of nativity status on use of spanking both within time and longitudinally, even after accounting for fathers' level of involvement with their children. In this regard, results of this study contribute to this growing body of research by examining a specific dimension of fathering, that is, discipline of young children (e.g., Lee, Altschul, et al., 2011). Results of this study are strengthened by the fact that we use fathers' self-report of spanking, rather than relying on maternal reports of fathers' behaviors.

Although the main finding that FB Hispanic parents were less likely to spank than NB Hispanic parents was consistent with our initial hypothesis, our results examining potential mechanisms by which parental immigrant status is linked to lower levels of spanking indicated only weak effects of other aspects of acculturation besides nativity status. Religious attendance was not a significant predictor of spanking for either the mothers or fathers in this study. Although endorsement of traditional gender norms by mothers was a protective factor that was associated with less maternal spanking in cross-sectional analysis, this effect was weak and was not significant in longitudinal models predicting change in use of maternal spanking. Perhaps

assessment using a different measure of traditional gender norms, or assessment of other aspects of family relationships, would produce different results. It is possible that other aspects of traditional values rather than gender norms per se may have better explanatory power. For example, immigrant parents—and mothers in particular—have a strong commitment to cultural values, including the importance of closeness and harmony within the family, also called *familismo* (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008), which may be protective against use of spanking. However, in the current study, we did not measure cultural concepts such as *familismo*. A direction for future research may be to examine how other cultural values that emphasize family harmony may encourage parents to seek out alternative methods of disciplining young children.

Results of this study lend some support to research indicating potential cultural differences in parenting approaches to young children in particular. In one study where at least one parent was an immigrant, Latino parents described themselves as high in parenting warmth and most frequently used the term “protective” to characterize their parenting style (Rodríguez, Donovan, & Crowley, 2009). When taken in the context of prior research, it may be that parenting styles (e.g., permissive, authoritarian, authoritative, and neglectful) as conceptualized by Baumrind do not translate well to immigrant Latino families living in the United States, whose protective or warm parenting style may be one reason why they are less likely to spank young children in particular.

The findings of the current study may also shed light on recent evidence from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System showing that Hispanic children are slightly underrepresented in the child welfare system (Drake et al., 2011) with Hispanic children accounting for 19.4% of all children in the United States but 17.0% of all maltreated children (Zhai & Gao, 2009). Another estimate based on the National Survey of Child and Adolescent Well-being indicated that Hispanic children comprise 14.4% of those who come to the attention of child welfare agencies (Dettlaff et al., 2009). Perhaps one reason for the slightly lower rates of child welfare involvement among Latino parents in the United States is related to the fact that immigrant Hispanic parents are less likely to spank (as in the current study) or use other forms of physical and psychological aggression (Altschul & Lee, 2011; Lee, Altschul, Shair, & Taylor, 2011) that may increase risk for child abuse. The use of spanking has been linked to increased risk for physical child maltreatment and Child Protective Services involvement (e.g., Lee, Grogan-Kaylor, & Berger, 2013; Zolotor, Theodore, Chang, Berkoff, & Runyan, 2008).

Study Limitations

We used a subsample of biological parents who had contact with their children. All the parents in this study were living in urban areas when their children were born. Therefore, the results presented herein may not be generalizable to families with stepparents or families living in nonurban areas, nor to members of other racial/ethnic groups. Furthermore, we examine only one dimension of discipline (spanking), and we do not examine how NB and FB parents may differ with regard to other forms of discipline. Although we controlled for family contextual factors (e.g., IPAV), we did not assess other contextual factors such as community violence exposure.

Conclusion

In sum, this study adds to our understanding of parenting practices among the largest minority group in the United States. Hispanics account for more than 15% of the U.S. population and 47% of the U.S. FB population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) with regard to Hispanic fathers' use of discipline toward young children in particular. In general, there is great need for a strengths-based perspective (Parra-Cardona et al., 2008) that shows how cultural values help immigrant parents maintain positive parenting practices and strong parent-child relationships, despite financial pressures and other contextual factors that are often associated with greater use of spanking.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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