Respectable, disreputable, or rightful? Young Nicaraguan women’s discourses on femininity, intimate partner violence, and sexual abuse: a grounded theory situational analysis

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Men’s IPV and sexual abuse towards women common forms of VAW worldwide and in Nicaragua.

Violence against women is shaped by many factors in which gendered social norms play a decisive role.

Extensive research on masculinities and VAW but less on femininities and VAW.

The need for studies exploring the discourses, actions, and norms allowing femininities to exist, resist, or comply to men’s hegemony are important.
Mapping current femininities is crucial since it has been highlighted that key societal changes such as the emergence of civil right movements, the feminist movement, and change in the socioeconomic status of women have spurred a significant change in the way femininities are constructed.

Social constructions of femininities and masculinities are represented in our everyday discourses.

Understanding how social actors construct their notions of femininities and masculinities is paramount to comprehend how different forms of VAW are enacted in a given setting.

Important because gender constructions are fluid, open to contestation, and thus change over time.
# Nicaragua

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>5,142,098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Women</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy</td>
<td>69.5 y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extreme poverty</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Fertility rate</td>
<td>2.9 children per woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contraception among partnered women</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undernutrition among children below 5 years of age</td>
<td>25% stunted, 5% underweight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: INIDE, 2005, 2008

Source:

Source:
# IPV Prevalence, León municipality

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<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>13.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Milestones in prevention of gender based violence in Nicaragua

1992
Reform Law 150. Severe punishment of sexual offenders

1994
Women and Children Police Stations. Special entity to handle family violence and child abuse

1996
Passing of Family Violence Law. To protect victims and punish offenders

2012
Law 779. New VAW types (economic, patrimonial, femicide), increased scope sex. violence, eliminate mediation.

2013. Law 779 contested and reformed to include mediation

2006.
Therapeutic abortion banned
Women’s and Children’s Police Stations

- Lack of human and material resources

Public sector health care

- No abuse inquire at health services
Aim

- To explore and position the discourses that young Nicaraguan women use in their understanding of IPV and SA in their current social context.
León municipality

Source: CIDS, UNAN León
Methods

✔ Eight FGDs with 59 urban and rural women (15-31 y)

✔ Theoretical sampling

✔ Analysis done using situational analysis as developed by Clarke.

✔ Discourses positioned in relationship to two axis of variation.
RUNNING HEAD: RESPECTABLE, DISREPUTABLE, OR RIGHTFUL? YOUNG WOMEN DISCOURSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibility for physical IPV</th>
<th>Men partially responsible for physical IPV</th>
<th>Full women's responsibility for physical IPV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missing in data</td>
<td>Missing in data</td>
<td>Missing in data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have rights to nonviolence and full autonomy; thus IPV is unjustified (Pro-women’s rights resistant discourse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women have rights to nonviolence and full autonomy; yet some women are masochist (Ambivalent modern femininity discourse)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s failure to handle partner ends in IPV; IPV and controlling behavior by partner are sometimes justified (Contested traditional femininity discourse)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embracing unequal gender power relations and women’s lack of autonomy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ambiguous stance on gender power equality and women’s autonomy</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Striving for gender power equality and women’s autonomy</td>
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</table>

GENDER POWER RELATIONS AND WOMEN’S SUBBORDINATION CONTINUUM
MEN’S RESPONSIBILITY FOR SEXUAL ABUSE CONTINUUM
Conclusions

- Our findings indicate possible changes in the discursive construction of women femininities in Latin America.
- The dominant discourse shows that among young women, the socially accepted femininity is portrayed as enacting attributes habitually bestowed to men, such as independence and agency, while still upholding key patriarchal conceptions (respectability) limiting women’s agency.
Tolerance to IPV and SA by non-partners varies depending on women’s perceived respectability and how they enact the agency that the dominant discourse bestows to them. A pro-women’s right resistance discourse that constructs femininity and advocates non-violence from a human rights perspective.

Interventions challenging patriarchy in this setting must aim to strengthen the positive aspects of the progressive feminist discourses identified in this paper and discourage the social construction of women as respectable, since this concept hinders women’s claims for nonviolence and autonomy.