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Familism and Sexual Regulation Among Bisexual Latino Men

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Abstract As the AIDS epidemic continues to disproportionately affect the Latino and African American communities in the United States, little is still known about bisexual behavior and sexual risk of Latino and African American men. This article explores the construct of familism (i.e., the cultural value that weighs on the interdependence among nuclear and extended family members for support, emotional connectedness, familial honor, loyalty, and solidarity) as an analytical point of departure from which to conceptualize sexual risk for bisexual Latino men. Data collection methods involved detailed sexual histories of 18 bisexually-active Latino men in the metropolitan New York City area. The results of this study indicate that familism, as defined by familial support, emotional interconnectedness, and familial honor, shapes the sexual decisions of bisexual teenage and adult Latino men.

Keywords Familism · Bisexuality · Homosexuality · Latino · Hispanic · Masculinity

Introduction

Labels such as "men on the down low" or "DL" and the negative attention that these labels have received in the press (e.g., Villarosa, 2004) reflect our general lack of understanding of sexualities that operate outside the traditionally accepted binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality. Men who say that they are "on the DL" have sex with other men without self-identifying as gay, homosexual or bisexual, and strive to maintain a low profile of their sexual activities or attraction to same gender partners. Labeling this practice as the "down low" or "DL" has been observed over the past 7 years among circles of African American and Latino men in urban settings such as New York City (Mays, Cochran, & Zamudio, 2004).

Implicit in the notion of the "down low" is the idea of avoiding the cultural stigma attached to non-heterosexual identities and for this reason keeping non-heteronormative sexual matters private. This article focuses on Latino men who are bisexually active men with no open identification as bisexual or gay. Although I am not claiming that all Latinos who are bisexual are on "the down low," I do maintain that the notion of keeping a "low profile" characterizes Latino male bisexuality in the United States.

Familism, I will argue in this article, is one of the main reasons for bisexual Latino men to maintain a low profile with regard to their sexuality. Familism is the cultural value that weighs on the interdependence among nuclear and extended family members for support, emotional connectedness, familial honor, loyalty, and solidarity, i.e., the notion of *belonging* to a family (Magana, 1999). It includes the attitudes, behaviors, and family structures operating within an extended family system and is believed to be one of the most important factors influencing the health practices of Latinos in the United States (Coohey, 2001; Gil, Wagner, & Vega, 2000; Ramirez et al., 2004; Unger et al., 2002; Vega, 1995).

This article examines how familism impacts the sexual health of bisexual men, specifically, what is the relationship, if any, between familism and the ways that bisexual Latino men construct their sexual practices. Families have often been neglected in the content of sexual health programs with the exception of a few adolescent-targeted initiatives (e.g., Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus, & Bouris, 2006). Exploring the role of family within the sexual lives of men will allow us

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to begin conceptualizing the notion of family for sexual health programming for bisexual Latino men. Familism could serve as the point of departure for the study of bisexual practices, particularly among groups that place a high value on family, as is the case for bisexual Latino men.

Familism, Sexuality, and Health

The role and effects of family in the lives of individuals has been studied through the construct of "familism" from the 1950s to the present, particularly in the literature on immigrant health (e.g., Bardis, 1959a; Bell, 1956; Benson, 1955; John, Resendiz, & De Vargas, 1997; Luna et al., 1996; Steidel & Contreras, 2003; Wilkening, 1954). Familism is found to be a strong social factor in cultures characterized by the orientation toward the welfare of one's larger community or collectivism (as opposed to the orientation toward one's own welfare, i.e., individualism) (Gaines, Marelich, Bledsoe, & Steers, 1997).

Familism has an impact in the health of communities. Individuals who report higher levels of familism are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and less likely to practice risky ones. For example, the higher the level of familism, the lower the frequency of substance use among Latino adolescents and children (Gil et al., 2000; Ramirez et al., 2004; Unger et al., 2002). Higher levels of familism have been associated with higher self-esteem among Latino adolescents (Bush, Supple, & Lash, 2004) and higher self-efficacy with respect to negotiating sex and condom use among Latino and non-Latino college students (Rodriguez, 2002; Valenzuela & Dornbusch, 1994). In spite of the positive aspects of familism as a factor promoting healthy behavior and reducing risk practices, familism has been found to be a predictor of maladjustment (e.g., anxiety and depression) (Youn, Knight, Jeong, & Benton, 1999) or as a factor that creates social burden for care providers (John et al., 1997).

Familism seems to have an impact in regulating the sexuality of individuals. In cultures where collectivism is a predominant value, the sexual orientation of individuals is no longer an individual issue, but rather a struggle between placing an individual's orientation over apparent collective social order. Thus, it is important to view family as integral to the framework for understanding the behavior of individuals in collectivist societal groups. Moreover, familism has been rarely conceptualized in sexuality research or HIV/AIDS prevention with adult Latinos, with the exception of the work on marital satisfaction among Mexican Americans (Bardis, 1959b; Bean, Curtis, & Marcum, 1977; Benson, 1955).

Diaz (1998), one of the pioneers investigating the association between family and HIV risk, found that the strong ties within Latino families and the major role that families play in the care and support of Latino individuals can become a major source of conflict and tension for Latino gay and bisexual men:

> Familism values, as strong in Latino homosexuals as in any other members of the Latino culture, prevent homosexuals from denouncing the family's homophobia and demanding acceptance. Instead, for the sake of psychological connectedness and identification with the family, homophobia tends to be internalized in a self-punitive way. (p. 94)

Diaz's argument reflects that the protections of familism are contingent upon restrictions; that is, in order to receive the benefits of the network, individual members have to conform to the social norms and expectations of the network (Diaz, 1998; Diaz, Ayala, & Bein, 2004).

From the above analysis, one must conclude that familism is not intrinsically positive or negative. Drawing on this theoretical perspective, the aim of this study was to explore familism in the narratives of bisexual Latino men as a way of replicating Diaz's analysis with Latino gay men to understand the relationship between family and sexual behavior for bisexual Latino men. In order to achieve this aim, an ethnographic study was conducted with bisexually active Latino men in New York City.

Method

Participants

The target group for this study was bisexually active Latino men. We defined "bisexually-active" as a person who has a history of bisexual experiences and who have had a sexual encounter with both a woman and a man at least once in the 2 years prior to the study (definition adapted from Crawford, Kippax, & Prestage, 1996). The criteria of bisexual history assessed past sexual history with male and female partners according to the age of the research informant. For example, if a potential research participant was 18 years of old, he must have had experienced at least 8 sexual encounters (4 with male/s and 4 with female/s), but if the potential research participant was 30 years old, the minimum number of encounters for qualification was 20 (10 with male/s and 10 with female/s). In this study, historical sexual encounters could have been with the same partner.

To qualify for this study the men had to be of Latino ancestry. We defined "Latino" as an individual whose birthplace, or that of his parents or grandparents, was in any territory of Latin America or the Spanish Caribbean. Individuals were eligible to participate in this study whether they spoke English, Spanish or Portuguese (however, there were no Portuguese speakers in the sample). While "Latino" is in some ways a useful ethnic identity label, it is also a simplifying

construct, missing much of the complexity and variation among members of this group, with conceptual and empirical shortcomings that have been discussed by others (Asencio, 2002). The diversity within Latino groups is important to acknowledge in the analysis of familism because variations by ethnicity, generation, and kinship structure lead to different expressions of familism (Cortes, 1995; Luna et al., 1996). This alerts us from making broad generalizations about familism in a group as diverse as Latinos.

With these conceptual definitions in mind, I conducted a two-year ethnographic study with participants drawn from three predominantly Latino neighborhoods of New York City (Muñoz-Laboy, 2004; Muñoz-Laboy & Dodge, 2005). Within the spaces of these neighborhoods, ethnographic observations were conducted in male-centered social spaces. However this article is based on the research findings from the sexual history interviews.

Sexual History Interviews

Drawing from the literature on life history research (e.g., Plummer, 1983), a sexual history in this study refers to the construction of a chronological narrative of the events in the sexual life of an individual and the perceptions, reactions, meanings, feelings, thoughts, and life events that surround an individual's interpretations of those sexual experiences (Dowsett, 1996; Weeks, 1986). The sexual history consisted of an open-ended, in-depth interview of 90–120 min.

Eighteen bisexually-active Latino men participated in the sexual history interviews. Recruitment proved difficult. Only 33% (44/130) of the Latino men initially contacted participated in the screening interview, which could be considered a low rate of recruitment. These were contacted through ethnographic work in male homoerotic spaces identified from multiple sources (see Table 1).

There were no data collected on the reasons for refusal to participate in the screening interview. Stigma ascribed to research study participation (as described by Dugan & Meyer-Bahlburg, 2003), lack of time, and no desire to participate

were possible explanations for this. More than half of the men who were screened, 59% (26/44), reported a history of bisexual activities and current bisexual activities. Of those who qualified on the basis of both past and current bisexual activity, the majority, 69% (18/26), consented and participated in the sexual history interviews. In terms of demographic characteristics, participants had a relatively high level of educational attainment (61% reported at least 2 years of college education or higher). Most were first and second generation immigrants (66% were born in a Latin American country), representing a wide variety of national cultures, including Cuban, Colombian, Dominican, Ecuadorian, Peruvian, Puerto Rican, Venezuelan, and combinations of these. Most participants were low-income workers (78% with household annual incomes below or at the 2001 national poverty level as described by the Department of Health and Human Services, 2002). Thirty-three percent of the participants were between 18 and 25 years of age, and 67% were between 26 and 45.

Depending on the convenience of research participants, the interviews took place at community organizations, our university offices, or at the homes of research participants. The participants received a monetary compensation for their time. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, English, or both, depending on the participant's choice. The interviews were taped and transcribed within 2 weeks from the day of the interview. To protect informants' privacy and comply with human rights procedures, approval from the Columbia University Department of Psychiatry and the New York State Psychiatric Institute Institutional Review Board and a Federal Certificate of Confidentiality from the National Institutes of Health were obtained.

Data Analysis

The author, along with an independent coder and two senior researchers, coded and analyzed the transcripts of the sexual histories. The transcribed sexual histories were analyzed using the code of family, which referred to any statements that made references to family members (parents, siblings,

Table 1 Recruitment sources

Recruitment source	Total of initially contacted (n_1)	Number of screening interview participants n_2 (% = n_2/n_1)	Number did not meet eligibility criteria n_3 (% = n_3/n_2)	Number that qualified but refused to participate n_4 (% = n_4/n_2)	Number that qualified and consented to participate n_5 (% = n_5/n_2)
List of past participants who reported bisexual behavior	53	14 (26.4%)	8 (57.2%)	3 (21.4%)	3 (21.4%)
Ethnographic field work	54	16 (29.6%)	7 (43.7%)	0	9 (56.3%)
Gay pride: Queens/Manhattan	23	14 (60.9%)	3 (21.4%)	5 (35.7%)	6 (42.9%)
Total	130	44 (33.8%)	18 (40.9%)	8 (18.2%)	18 (40.9%)

relatives, and children); familial practices (parenting, impregnating, pregnancy, and raising children); notions of familial relations (fatherhood, motherhood) and literal iterations of the words "family" and "home." The two central analytical questions were:

(1) What elements of familism, as we defined it (the interdependence among nuclear and extended family members for support, emotional connectedness, familial honor, loyalty, and solidarity) were depicted in the narratives?

(2) How was familism connected to the sexual histories and sexual-decision making of the men in the study?

From this analysis, we found that all the research participants in the study expressed a connection between their sexual lives and their families. Rather than calculating the number of quotes that fell under each of the connections between familism and sexuality among the men in the study, it was decided to use case study analysis. We divided the narrative data according to two age periods: youth (18–25 years of age) and adulthood (26 years and older) periods as a way of comparing the role of familism during these two time periods. The case studies were selected through a series of steps: (1) all sexual histories that contained the greatest amount of recurrent themes within the two age groups were identified (15 out of 18); (2) it was clear that not one case study represented all the sexual histories within the age group; thus, we selected four cases within two age groups (4 out of 5 in the group 25 years of age and younger, and, 4 out of 10 in the 26 and older age group) that offered the greatest amount of insights into the stated research questions; (3) in the final step, a senior researcher and the author independently ranked the 4 case studies in each age group and, after discussion, we selected the final two case studies that are presented in this article, each one representing the two age groups in our study. For this analysis, we aimed to present the sexual histories that contained the most recurrent themes while at the same time we wanted to present nuances that are unique to the case studies. These two cases do not represent the total number of types of familial experiences among study participants that would require a different type of qualitative analysis than the one provided in this study.

Results

Case Study 1: Latino Bisexual Teenager

After talking about his initial sexual experiences, Fernando (research participant, pseudonym) expressed to the interviewer that he had a "late start" with regard to sex when compared to his friends. Fernando (second-generation Dominican, English/Spanish speaker) grew up with his mother and grandparents, in a poor working-class neighborhood of New York City.

Most of Fernando's friends started masturbating when they were 10 years of age. Neither masturbation nor having sexual intercourse with someone were on Fernando's mind: "I was still playing baseball and I was still out there having a good time and I wasn't even thinking about sex. […] My mother always kept us away from things like that." In fact, Fernando's mother was "very protective" (his term). "New York was very dangerous back then" was the phrase used by Fernando to characterize the neighborhood in which he was raised. Fernando became an adolescent between the late 1980s and early 1990s. From an external perspective, this period was characterized by the peaks of several social and public health issues: the highest crime rates in New York City over those two decades, the crack epidemic, the AIDS epidemic, and the epidemic of unintended teen pregnancies (e.g., Bourgois, 1996; Hamid, 1992; Reinarman & Levine, 1995; Ventura, Mathews, & Hamilton, 2001).

Fernando's first sexual experiences happened with friends from school and the neighborhood. Although his mother's main worry was that he would impregnate a girl, his first vaginal intercourse was in his mother's bed with his girlfriend without using a condom, while the "school kids" were having a small gathering and his mother was not in the house. He was 16 years old.

Fernando brought girlfriends and female friends to the space of his family without necessarily interacting directly with the family. One of the family rules was that he must "respect the family space;" in other words, "not have sex in the house and treat women with respect." If Fernando brought a girl to his room alone, he would be disrespecting the girl's honor because this was considered a sign of premarital sexual activity in his family. His family also did not accept any behaviors that they classified as "disrespectful" (e.g., teenagers drinking, smoking or swearing in the house). Fernando started having sexual interactions with other men (i.e., mutual masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse) near the end of high school. Although Fernando remembers having sexual attraction for boys and girls since very early on, he never acted on his attraction to men until he completed high school when he had a mutual masturbation encounter with a college student. That was the first sexual experience with other men which continue and transition from mutual masturbation to receptive and insertive anal intercourse.

The interactions with other men represented a high level of anxiety for Fernando, particularly the fear of being "out" in front of his family. "My mother will die if she knows" was Fernando's expression of his mother becoming aware of his interactions with other men. His father was also a concern. Although Fernando's father did not live with him, he lived nearby and both families kept close contact. Further contextualizing this relationship, he said,

My father is even worse than my mother. My father is very Dominican. And, people who are from New York know what I'm talking about as in a very Dominican father. […] Telling my father about my sexuality has never crossed my mind because my father…my father would actually go get a bat and try to beat the homosexuality out of me.

Fernando's social connections with his family during his adolescence were very close. "Everyone is into each other's business." Gossip and rumors move rapidly through the familial networks, not only within New York but also Florida, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico, where Fernando's relatives live. Gossip and rumors presented a threat for Fernando's sexual image. A couple of weeks before the interview Fernando was at a family barbecue and his cousins, as usual, were "teasing" him and this time they used the term "gay." Teenage boys have been documented to make fun of each other using terms that they see as derogatory of their masculinity, including terms such as "sissy" or "gay" (Connell, 2000; Renold, 2001). In response to his cousins teasing, he said: "I am not [gay], but what if I am?" That response turned into a familial rumor that went via phone to Florida and back to New York. He recounts,

My aunt was like: "Look, I know that it all came from a joke. I'm not going to say that it's true or false, but I want you to stop if this is true because your mother is not a strong woman. She can't handle it."

After this event, Fernando became even more conscious and cautious about his public sexual image. However, Fernando viewed the above events as part of belonging to a family. For Fernando having a family and being part of a family was very important. He stated that:

In the future…I would want my family around me… my grandparents, my parents, whoever I am with and their family and my cousins, friends I consider to be family. Oh yes. I want about 25 children. Yes, of course, I want children. Whether they are mine or adopted or anything. I want children. I think it's important to carry on.

Fernando considered himself as bisexual. He would like to have both a wife and a husband. At the time of the interview, he was 22 years of age and was not married yet. He was a college student in a state university and worked two part-time jobs.

Growing Up Latino and Bisexual

Fernando's case illustrates the challenges of second generation Latino youth growing up within multiple cultural boundaries (Barth, 1969; Gelder & Thornton, 1997; Nagel, 1994): Dominican culture versus non-Dominican cultures;

parent-child culture versus urban youth culture; heterosexual culture versus New York City's gay culture. What we saw in Fernando's account goes beyond the often discussed path that youth go through to define their identity. Fernando's narrative indicated his family's active participation in attempting to situate Fernando in the acceptable cultural spaces of the family and protecting him from the dangers of crossing the boundaries to other cultural-social experiences. Fernando depicted his mother's role during upbringing as providing protection against the dangers of the perceived urban youth culture (including: gangs, violence, sex, teen pregnancy) or the city's openness toward gay culture (e.g., the familial openness in rejecting homosexuality). Rather than rebelling, Fernando's path was to keep his sexual development processes (i.e., sexual exploration, dating, seeking sexual information) outside of family networks. This was difficult, however, given the close proximity of the geographical and social context in which Fernando grew up and lived for most of his teenage years: the neighborhood of Washington Heights.

Washington Heights represented a highly interconnected social environment for Fernando. His immediate family and relatives lived in the same geographical spaces. Even among those who lived outside the neighborhood there was constant communication with relatives from other parts of the city, the United States or the Dominican Republic. Interconnectedness is a fundamental element of familism, where family members must keep both emotional and physical closeness with other family members (Bryant, 1997; Steidel & Contreras, 2003). Physical closeness is often the product of imposed situational factors: (1) families or individuals often migrate to the same geographical areas as their relatives or social networks; (2) first generation Latino couples tend to stay in the same neighborhood or city after marriage; (3) most children and youth live with their families with limited private spaces for themselves. Feeling connected to the familial circle is a predominant cultural value for Latino families, which is facilitated by physical closeness.

This level of familial interconnectedness provided two contradictory elements in the lives of teenagers like Fernando. On the one hand, the extended familial social network was a source of emotional and material support. On the other, the networks served to regulate and prescribe for Fernando what was acceptable social and sexual behavior. This was evident in the case where rumors led to familial turmoil and concern regarding Fernando's sexuality. Since family is something of value in Fernando's life, he actively monitored his behavior to protect his family (e.g., prevent his mother from dying of a heart attack that might be caused by the news of his coming out of the closet as bisexual or gay) but also to avoid disappointing his father (e.g., "my father would actually go get a bat and try to beat the homosexuality out of me") and protecting himself from violence.

What motivated the familial regulation of the sexuality of young men like Fernando? Although a sense of protecting vulnerable children as well as collective homophobia were suitable explanations, I would argue that the primary concern was to maintain a level of familial honor. This refers to the belief that it is an individual family member's duty to uphold the family name (Steidel & Contreras, 2003) or, in other words, the set of ideals, moral codes, and values against which social practice is judged (Freeman, 2005). Threats to familial honor imply threats to the prestige of the family because children's social behavior is a reflection of the parents and their parenting skills. For families like Fernando's, preserving familial honor and keeping their prestige (as defined by Bourdieu, 1984) within their social milieu (such as extended familial space, building, church or neighborhood) was a collective family aim of everyday practice.

The desire to preserve the familial honor and to contribute to the collective good of the family was juxtaposed with the desire to have bisexual ties; that is, dating or having emotional or sexual relationships with both male and female partners. Fernando, as is the case for many youth, managed to have an active sexual life maintaining his sexuality outside the scope of his family. Was this a sacrifice for Fernando? Was he positioning the good of his family over his individual interest? From his comments, it was clear that Fernando saw an "ideal" future and yet he was also conscious of the limitations of having an open bisexual life while maintaining his family closeness and forming a family of his own. The next case study examines bisexuality and familism during early adulthood from the perspective of a recent immigrant to New York City.

Case Study 2: Early Adulthood

Danny was born and raised in Peru. He moved to the United States almost 2 years ago when he was 28 years of age. Danny remembered playing "la maestrita, la comidita, papa y mama" (the little teacher, the little food, dad and mom) with boys and girls since he was 12 years old and he remembered being sexually excited by that. He had a particular male friend, Ricky (14 years old), with whom each masturbated the other to ejaculation. Danny felt uncomfortable doing "things" with Ricky because he "knew it wasn't accepted socially."

When Danny turned 15, he had vaginal intercourse with a woman for the first time. He went with a group of friends to a brothel, paid at the entrance, and went to a room with a female sex worker. In the room, "she kissed me in the neck, she began to suck me, and then I penetrated her...I was nervous, at first I could not get it hard." That time he did not ejaculate. Later that week, he returned to the brothel and had sex with her. This time he ejaculated inside her vagina. That year he also had his first anal sex experience:

> We were in the bathroom of the school […] I was urinating and he put his hand there. I was making him believe that I didn't care. […] Next day I went to his home […] We began kissing, touching each other and then I penetrated him.

A few months before this event, Danny began dating the future mother of his children, Marta, who was also 15. After dating for a year, they had vaginal intercourse for first time: "We were in her house, it was on my birthday. We were talking, we got excited, and I penetrated her." It was Marta's first time. They have been together as sexual-romantic partners since that first occasion. However, Danny has had a long history of affairs and relationships with other sexual partners. After the first year of his relationship with Marta, Danny met Victor while hanging out with a group of friends. Victor was the first man who penetrated Danny. They did not use a condom on that first occasion. Danny did not see Victor again until 2 years later.

Neither relationship with Marta nor Victor represented real love to him. His neighbor Juanita (18 years old) was his "first love." Danny was also 18. Four months into the relationship they had sex: "I thought that she was experienced in sex since she had other boyfriends, but as I was penetrating her I discovered that she was a virgin. Right after we finished she told me that before me she was a virgin." The relationship with Juanita ended because of Danny's jealousy and distrust. That year, Danny met Victor again in a public park and got syphilis from that sexual encounter.

During the next 6 years (between ages 19 and 25), while maintaining relationships with two regular partners–Marta and Alberto (his longest boyfriend)–Danny also had several occasional affairs with both men and women. Soon after breaking up with Alberto, Danny impregnated Marta (he was 25).

Living with his wife in a close community in Lima made it difficult for Danny to hide sexual encounters or relationships with other men and women. On one occasion, he was "almost" discovered making out with a man in the living room of his house, when there was not supposed to be anybody there. Because of this, Danny was careful to modify his behavior around his family. One way was to maintain a heterosexual image: " […] if I'm near my family or some kind of environment like that I would find myself only dancing with women or, you know, flirting with women […]." Another way for him was to be with masculine men: "Look, I like a masculine guy. I prefer to be with a woman rather than to be with a boy who is so flamboyant that his arms swing like butterfly wings because he is so delicate, for that. […] At least, if you are going out with a [masculine]

guy, you can bring this person to your family and you are calmer. Even if the family knows something, they will never know for sure." Yet, his family suspected that he was bisexual: "Marta and my parents are a little bit suspicious. When I was with Alberto, they asked me about him. If I have female friends, they [his family] fucked with me and bothered me. If I have male friends, they also fucked with me and bothered me. So, I cannot have friends. I tell them to fuck off and leave me alone."

Danny loved Marta and his daughters. Having a family was very important for him. Moving to New York has been very hard because he missed his family. In Peru he completed 2 years of graduate school and was working in a hospital. He had a tourist visa and was working illegally doing small jobs "here and there." Danny lived in very poor conditions in the outskirts of the city.

Reputation Control

Danny was concerned with projecting a heterosexual image and keeping his bisexuality hidden from his family. This was accomplished through public display of behaviors that were cues of heterosexuality. In his case, not bringing male friends who were "effeminate" to the familial or community environment, not expressing any verbal or non-verbal indications of homosexual or bisexual desire, and actively hiding any bisexual interactions were strategies used to maintain his image as a heterosexual man. These strategies were difficult to implement in his neighborhood in Lima, where there was a high level of interconnectedness among family members, relatives, and friends.

Danny distanced himself from his wife and parents in order for him to be able to have sexual affairs with women and men. He did this by drawing a boundary between himself and his familial circle and enforcing this boundary through facilitating familial quarrels every time the boundary was crossed. How shall we interpret Danny's conflict between family and his sex life? Were Danny's actions ways of placing his self interests aside for the greater collective good of the family? Or, were the above strategies simply ways of achieving self-centered desires with little consideration for familial well-being? I would argue that his actions reflect how familial reputation as an underlying factor shapes the sexuality of bisexual men like Danny.

The notion of reputation refers to the qualities by which a man achieves a place in the world of the others (Wilson, 1969). I use the concept of familial reputation as an indicator of familial honor and, for this purpose, it is defined as the ability to preserve the name of the family by not behaving outside the social norms of their larger social network. Thus, behaving outside of social norms lowers men's position within their social milieu. By compartmentalizing his sexual life from his familial life, Danny's actions expressed his own concern with maintaining his personal reputation in his family. In other words, Danny's deployment of a strong boundary not only symbolized his desire in privacy and autonomy but its existence was also critical to his bisexual life.

The familial exercise of monitoring Danny's behavior also demonstrated the social concern of maintaining a familial reputation. Danny's familial circle did not accept extramarital affairs. Yet, the "naturalization" of men's sexuality (that is, it is natural and expected that men cannot control their sexual urges) created a level of familial tolerance for extramarital affairs with women; however, the same tolerance was not observed with regard to extramarital affairs with other men.

Even if we move closer to the relationship between Danny and his primary female partner, we observe a reluctance and fear of expressing indications of bisexual desire. Disclosing his bisexuality was not an option. The risks included familial rejection, losing his daughters, or his reputation within and outside the family. Even after migrating to the United States, the physical distance did not make Danny less worried about maintaining his reputation. Nonetheless, the anonymity of urban settings like New York City and the strong presence of identifiable sexual spaces and sexual communities facilitated sexual encounters with both male and female partners.

Danny maintained a clear public image of heterosexuality. One of the ways to preserve this image was through becoming a father. Danny impregnated his primary female partner twice but had taken precautions of not impregnating other women. It is possible that his female partner wanted to get pregnant or that both pregnancies were fully unintended. Yet, all the men in the study who did not have children expressed their desire to become fathers at some point in the near future. From masculinity studies in Latin America, we know that fatherhood is the most efficient way of constructing a public heterosexual masculine image (De Moya, 2003; Fuller, 2001; Olavarría, 2001; Olavarría & Valdés, 1998).

Danny's sexual trajectory and familial life exemplified the histories of recent migrant Latino bisexual men in the study. The cases of recent migrants were far from being the same but their strategies to maintain a sense of balancing their reputation and their bisexual lives were similar. In the rare cases of disclosure of bisexual interest, strategic one-to-one disclosure was the pattern observed across the narratives mostly in cases where a relative was openly gay. However, the familial uncovering of bisexuality was perceived by family members (mothers, fathers, and sisters were cited in the narratives) as a better option than homosexuality because of the familial hope that the bisexual man will procreate (e.g., one of the research participants' mother told him: "I know that someday you will get married and have kids…and just move on"), have a family, and bring grandchildren.
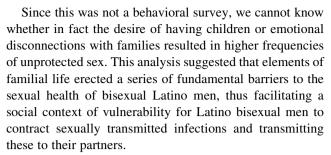
Discussion

This was a small-scale study, limited in scope and generalizability. Furthermore, the selection criteria and sampling strategy for the study yielded findings that are relevant to urban Latino men who are bisexually active and with a bisexual history. In other words, the perspectives of those who were self-identified bisexual but who were not currently bisexually active were not included in this study, a subgroup of bisexual men who may be markedly different from non-bisexually identified men (Muñoz-Laboy & Dodge, 2007). This is not only simply a limitation of representation but it impacts our ability to examine the relationship between familism and bisexuality. For example, it is possible that a self-identified bisexual Latino man, who had a bisexual history, was not currently bisexually active for reasons that might include familism (e.g., fear of family rejection). This is something that will be examined in future research studies. Taking the above into consideration, the results from this analysis suggest that familism plays an important role in the sexuality of bisexual Latino men.

While procreating is of tangible importance, familism operates at the societal level to control public imagery of sexuality and gender conformity. At the level of private sexual acts and expressions, familism primarily imposes codes in the ways individuals organize, practice, and interpret their bisexuality.

First, wanting to procreate and have a family and protecting familial honor (by keeping their bisexualities outside the realm of their families) were elements strongly expressed in the narratives of bisexual men. Second, familism promotes a compartmentalization between the familial life and the sexual-erotic-romantic life that is not necessarily imposed on the heterosexual counterparts of bisexual Latino men. The strategy of compartmentalization precipitates emotional disconnectedness among those who desire to share with their families the emotional aspects of their bisexualities. Lastly, familism imparts a deep notion of shame and guilt on non-heterosexual sexual expressions. For example, when confronted with the reality of not being able to have a bisexual life, other research participants expressed their desire to stop having sex with men altogether. One even said: "…my idea is not to have them [relationships with men]…because of the moral, because of my family, my son, I just want to have a normal life." The desire to express sexuality is challenged by the perceived inability to have "a normal life." This situation is coupled with feelings of shame and guilt, altogether limiting the individual's ability to talk and negotiate core relational issues (such as monogamy versus open relations) that are central to the communication and intimacy with regular sexual partners.

Since this was not a behavioral survey, we cannot know whether in fact the desire of having children or emotional disconnections with families resulted in higher frequencies of unprotected sex. This analysis suggested that elements of familial life erected a series of fundamental barriers to the sexual health of bisexual Latino men, thus facilitating a social context of vulnerability for Latino bisexual men to contract sexually transmitted infections and transmitting these to their partners.

Familism in the form of familial support, emotional interconnectedness, and familial honor are not given; they can be deconstructed and reconfigured. Further research is needed in order to identify positive elements in the relationship between familism and bisexuality. But first, we must take as point of departure that most of the topics that emerged throughout the narratives on the connections between bisexuality and familism reflect a negative rhetoric. Can familism serve as a protective mechanism as it is for heterosexual adolescent health (Gil et al., 2000; Ramirez et al., 2004; Unger et al., 2002)? Or is familism a cultural operator of larger heterosexist norms about normalcy and family values? If that is the case, familism is a construct that will not be able to be integrated within sexual health programming for bisexually active men as well as non-heterosexual sexualities. How can this challenge be overcome?

In order to answer this question, we need to highlight current gaps in the relationship between familism and bisexuality. The first task is to examine whether, in fact, there is an empirical relationship between familism and sexual risk. Bisexually-active Latino men, as with most people in places like New York, have a basic knowledge of HIV/AIDS modes of infection and transmission. What we do not know is how elements of familism play specific roles in decreasing or increasing the likelihood of high-risk sexual behavior among bisexual men.

Familism is a complex construct that has a strong potential for providing insights into sexuality research and sexual health programming. In the face of an epidemic that disproportionately affects Latino communities, exploring innovative ways to approach sexual health is essential to the control of the epidemic. Similarly, the study of bisexuality within research on Latino families offers the potential to re-examine the roles of gender, social norms, sexual desire and power within family dynamics. With these two goals in mind, this article has been an introduction to the development of research on the intersections of family relationships and Latino male bisexuality.

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