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# Help-Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence and the Programs That Serve Them in New York City

Yolanda Ortiz-Rodriguez

*The Graduate Center, City University of New York*

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HELP-SEEKING LATINA VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE PROGRAMS  
THAT SERVE THEM IN NEW YORK CITY

By

Yolanda Ortiz- Rodríguez

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Criminal Justice in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2016

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Dissertation Title: Help-Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence and the Programs that  
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Author: Yolanda Ortiz- Rodríguez

This manuscript has been read and accepted by the Graduate Faculty of Criminal Justice in  
satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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## Abstract

# HELP-SEEKING LATINA VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE PROGRAMS THAT SERVE THEM IN NEW YORK CITY

By

Yolanda Ortiz- Rodríguez

Advisor: Jayne Mooney, PhD.

Domestic violence has impacted, and continues to impact the lives of many women. Although impacted by domestic violence, all women may not experience domestic violence in the same way.

The purpose of this research was to explore differences that may exist between help-seeking foreign-born Latina and help-seeking U.S-born Latina victims of domestic violence. Using a purposeful sample of 32 help-seeking Latinas who were actively receiving services in one of the many domestic violence programs in New York City, the researcher set out to explore differences in use of services, experiences with domestic violence, perceptions of domestic violence, and satisfaction with program services.

Feminist standpoint theory was used as the conceptual framework and intersectionality theory as a lens to facilitate the identification of differences that may exist between the study groups. The results of this study include consequences associated with help-seeking, the need for improving the criminal justice response to domestic violence, and more importantly, the stated needs of help-seekers. In addition, coercive control, effects of domestic violence, the need for accessible and adequate services, and implications for future research are also discussed.

## Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support and assistance of the following individuals. To the women who shared and trusted me with their stories, thank you. Your courage and strength both inspired and humbled me. Your words have enlightened me and I truly hope that I have given you the voice you desire. To the agencies that welcomed me and trusted me with their clients, thank you for placing your trust in me and believing in this project.

To my husband, thank you for being patient and supportive during this journey. I can't thank you enough for 'having my back' when things became rough, for having faith in me during times when I lost mine, and for the sacrifices you also made so that I could finish this project.

I owe a great deal of gratitude to my children for their support and patience throughout the completion of this project. Carlos and Jessica, thank you for being my cheerleaders and for always having faith in me. Taylor and Laura, you have had to deal with a "very busy Mommy", but always managed to smile and tell me that it was okay. I love you dearly and look forward to making up for lost time with you.

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always pushing me harder (even when I resisted) and instilling in me the desire to advance my education. Dr. Dombrowski and Dr. Shonna Trinch, thank you for your guidance during the initial stages of this project. Dr. Deborah Koetzle, thank you for your support and for affording me the opportunity to complete this project. Dr. Fred Kramer, thank you for your kind words and continued encouragement; I will be calling you for that drink! Dr. Barry Spunt, thank you for sharing tidbits of your dissertation journey with me and being the little voice in my head that shouts “just get it done!” To my friend and former classmate, Dr. Aviva Twersky Glasner, thank you for being my friend and for your continued encouragement throughout the years. A special thank you to my friend, Dr. Christopher Herrmann, who has been my “go to guy” when things got rough and my sounding board when I was frustrated; thank you for sharing your time with me and for your unwavering support and encouragement throughout my dissertation journey.

Lastly, I want to thank my mother. Mom, I hope you are looking down at me with pride. Ultimately, it was your story and your struggles that were the impetus for this project. Thank you for modeling strength and resilience. I only wish that you were here to celebrate this work and accomplishment with me.

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my granddaughters, Eden Jaelynn and Sophia Isabella. I love you dearly and hope that you will grow up to embrace the beauty and strength of being who you choose to be. Always remember that you are the authors of your stories and the architects of your lives; live life on your own terms.



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## CHAPTER ONE

“Intimate partner violence affects women across ages, cultures, racial and ethnic backgrounds, sexual orientations, and income levels, *although not necessarily equally*” [emphasis added].

(Basile & Black, 2011, p. 111)

### **Introduction**

The above quotation captures the specific aims of this study, which were to explore the differences that exist in the experiences of help-seeking Latinas born in the United States (U.S. born) and help-seeking foreign born Latinas in New York City.

Using a mixed methods approach, this exploratory and advocacy based research project utilized feminist standpoint theory as the conceptual framework to explore to what extent help-seeking U.S. born and foreign-born Latinas differ on their perception of services being provided to them for their victimization, types of abuse, and decisions to seek help.

In light of the number of policies that have been created and programs that have been developed to address the issue of domestic violence, some researchers have rightly discussed how the intended beneficiaries of these policies and programs should have a say in their development, dissemination, and implementation. As stated by Kulkarni, Bell & Rhodes (2012), “...survivors’ voices and experiences are crucial in developing and implementing woman- or survivor- focused services.” (87). The aforementioned is echoed by other researchers, some of whom also discuss the need to elicit the input of victims/survivors when exploring help-seeking behaviors and decisions, as well as, in the development of services to meet their short and long-term needs (Hague & Mullender, 2006; Liang, Goodman, Tummal-Narra & Weintraub, 2005;



Moe, 2007; Reina, 2010; Simmons, Farrar, Frazer, & Thompson, 2011). While victim/survivor input in service provision is important, understanding that domestic violence is an experience that is unique to each woman is equally important, as Liang and colleagues put it:

We also encourage helpers to view the experience of domestic violence not as a unitary construct, but as a complex phenomenon that is subjectively experienced by each woman and thus affected by distinct histories and values (2005, p.81).

In keeping with the above, this project was created in an effort to increase knowledge on the help-seeking experiences of Latina victims of domestic violence as well as to give them a voice via their narratives of abuse and experiences with domestic violence service providers.

### **Purpose of Study**

This project will contribute to the growing, but limited, body of literature that exists on the help-seeking behaviors and experiences of domestic violence victims (Scordato, 2013); more specifically, it will help to fill the gap in the literature on the experiences of Latinas who are seeking help for their domestic violence situations (Cho, Velez-Ortiz, & Parra-Cardona, 2014; Reina, Lohman, & Maldonado, 2014; Cummings, Gonzalez-Guarda, & Sandoval, 2013; Salcido, 2011; Boy, 2010; Mathis-Pitts; 2010; Reina, 2010; Burgess-Proctor, 2008).

Prior research on Latinas and domestic violence has primarily focused on how immigrant Latinas are less likely to seek services for their victimization (Grossman & Lundy, 2007; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Kasturirangan, Krishnan, & Riger, 2004; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Dutton, Orloff, & Aguilar-Hass, 2000 and Perilla, 1999) as well as to the barriers to seeking services, such as lack of support networks (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Dutton et al., 2000; Perilla, 1999), limited English proficiency (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Perilla, 1999), and immigration status

(Sokoloff & Dupont; 2005; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Perilla, 1999).

However, little research has been conducted on those Latinas who are seeking services and the differences between help seeking Latino sub-groups (Garcia, Hurwitz, and Kraus, 2005; Kasturirangan et al., 2004).

Given the limited research on Latinas and domestic violence as well as the lack of specific research on assessing the domestic violence experiences of help-seeking Latinas in New York City, the data gathered for this study set out to examine the extent to which Latino sub-groups differ in their decision to seek help for their victimization. Additionally, given the influence of culture on perceptions of domestic violence in Latino communities, as well as its influence on the help-seeking behaviors of Latinas who are currently experiencing or have experienced domestic violence, this research will examine the Latinas' perceptions of the helpfulness of the services they receive based on their cultural and linguistic needs. The aforementioned is an important aspect of this research due to the push in the literature on the importance of culturally competent models in service provision to immigrant victims of domestic violence (Postmus, McMahon, Silva-Martinez & Warrener, 2014; Reina et al., 2013; Kulkarni, Racine, & Ramos, 2012; Aguilar, 2011; Gonzalez, 2010; Whitaker, Baker, Pratt, Reed, Suri, Pavlovs, et al., 2007; Adames & Campbell, 2005; Liang et al., 2005; Perilla, 1999).

### **Definition of Terms**

This research employs terminology such as *Latina*, *domestic violence*, and *intimate partner violence*. The use of these terms, or more specifically how they are defined in the literature, merits a brief discussion here, particularly since there are various definitions and a lack

of general consensus on their usage (DeKeseredy and Schwartz, 2001; Mooney, 2000; Auchter & Backes, 2013; Valdeon, 2013; Garcia- Preto, 1996; Comas-Diaz, 2001).

### *Hispanic/Latino Terminology*

According to Valdeon (2013), in order to address the ambiguities invoked by the terms ‘Hispanic’ and ‘Latino’, researchers have had to “specify [their] meaning” in their work (p.131). He goes on to discuss how there is a need for researchers to define these terms as the terms “do not occupy a precise place in a conceptual structure, they are not basically denotative and, above all, they are not fixed, recognized and disseminated with the help of the expert community” (p.131). This is not surprising given that the terms are used interchangeably (Gonzalez, 1992).

What is interesting is how most Hispanics/Latinos tend to use labels that identify where they are from. As Comas-Dias (2001) puts it:

Many individuals prefer to politically affirm their ethnic identity by using terms such as Chicanos, Xicanos, Ricans, or Boricuas, whereas others affirm their national origins by using terms such as Mexicans or Mexican Americans, Cubans or Cuban Americans, Columbians, Dominicans, Peruvians, Salvadorans, or Venezuelans, among many others (p.115).

One reason for the preference is that the term “Hispanic” evokes an association with colonization (Gonzalez, 1992). Garcia-Preto elaborates on this point by referencing a time where native inhabitants were subjected to violence (raped, murdered, and enslaved) at the hands of the Spaniards and Portuguese. She also discusses how “the influence of the Spanish culture and language” was dominant in those regions and gave rise to the dominance of the European culture (2005, p. 155). The latter has been cited as another reason why some Spanish speaking groups

prefer to be called 'Latino/a' instead of 'Hispanic'. According to some scholars, the term 'Hispanic' refers to Spain, emphasizes its culture and ignores the cultures of the indigenous peoples<sup>1</sup> (Quinones-Rosado, 1998, p. 21; Garcia-Preto, 2005; Gonzalez and Gandara, 2005). On the other hand, the term 'Latino/a', acknowledges the influences (Garcia-Preto, 2005, p. 155), refers to the former colonies of Spain- not Spain (Quinones-Rosado, 1998, p. 21), "reaffirms [a] pre-Hispanic identity" (Comas-Diaz, 2001; p.116) and refers to the "political differences between [members of Spanish speaking groups] and the Anglo population" (Gonzalez and Gandara, 2005, p. 396). Thus, by identifying themselves as "Latinos/as", they advance liberation and reject colonization (Comas-Diaz, 2001, p. 115).

Although the labels hold different meanings for those who choose one over the other, they are both pan-ethnic labels. As a result, those who come from Spanish speaking countries, or from a Spanish speaking culture, are lumped into a category based on the commonality of a shared language (Quinones-Rosado, 1998, p. 21). Garcia-Preto (2005), explains how the labels 'Hispanic' and 'Latino/a' are viewed by some as labels that "[take] away their nationality and symbolizes a loss of identity" (p. 155). Loss of national identity, albeit in theory, is problematic because nationality holds a special meaning for Latinos; it represents their "different cultures and sociopolitical histories" and also "provides a sense of pride and identity that is reflected in the stories they tell, their music, and their poetry" (Garcia-Preto, 1996, p.142). The aforementioned is important as people's daily interactions with others are sometimes framed within the context of their culture, beliefs, and identities. In fact, scholars state how most people identify with their

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<sup>1</sup> The culture of the indigenous people also incorporates the roots and influence of the African cultures as Africans (Quinones-Rosado, 1998; Gonzalez, 1992).

respective nationalities and come to learn of the pan-ethnic labels once they come to the United States (Gonzalez and Gandara, 2005; Garcia-Preto, 2005; Quinones-Rosado, 1998).

In sum, given that most people prefer to identify themselves by nationality, choosing to be identified as “Hispanic” or “Latino/a” is a matter of preference. The term “Latina” is the term that will be used here (except where references to government agencies and policies are made) because it evokes gender identity.

### *Defining Domestic Violence*

In their discussion on the challenges of defining domestic violence against women, DeKeseredy & Schwartz (2011), discuss how the definitions used can affect the outcome of research and also have political implications (p.4). Given the aforementioned, the importance of utilizing appropriate definitions is heightened; however, defining violence against women is often a difficult task given the various ways it is defined as a concept- a point they raise in their discussion on the use of “narrow” and “broad” definitions of domestic violence and the possible subsequent outcomes of those definitions,

DeKeseredy & Schwartz (2011), offer several reasons why some scholars choose to define violence narrowly. Among them: claims of including all types of harm experienced by women in abusive relationships (i.e., physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, homicide, stalking, etc.), instead of only focusing on physical harm and “sexual abuse with penetration”, makes it difficult to identify the causes of the abuse; how the use of narrow definitions help guard against “inflated” rates of violence against women; and, those who hold the belief that women are just as violent as men in intimate relationships generally exclude behaviors that are often cited in violence against women research such as “strangulation”, “separation/divorce

assault”, and “sexual assault” to name a few (p. 4). However, and as previously mentioned, how violence against women is defined, has implications for policy, research outcomes, and more importantly, for the women experiencing abuse. According to the authors, the implications are more serious when research yields low incident rates of violence against women or show that women are just as violent as men, for those findings may be detrimental to funding provided to address domestic violence against women (p. 5). In addition, outcomes derived from research with narrow definitions also minimize the seriousness of the violence against women and discourage some women from seeking help (p.5).

DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2011), go on to discuss how broad definitions are necessary given the variety of harms and abuse some women are subjected to in their intimate relationships. Contrary to narrow definitions, broad definitions of violence against women incorporate abusive behaviors such as, but not limited to, “sexual assault without forced penetration”, emotional abuse, economic abuse, coercive control, and blackmail (pp. 5-6). According to the authors, definitions should include non-violent/non-injurious behaviors along with violent and “highly injurious” ones as they “are just as worthy of in-depth empirical, theoretical, and political attention” (p.7). Behaviors included in broad definitions are not only worthy of the ‘empirical, theoretical, and political attention’ discussed by DeKeseredy and Schwartz, but they are important in understanding and gauging the range of domestic violence experienced by women.

As indicated above, the definitional challenges of defining the term *domestic violence* are as varied as the term *domestic violence* itself. That is, a researcher’s approach (Mooney, 2000) or aspects of a particular paradigm dictates how the term *domestic violence* is defined (Auchter & Backes, 2013). The governing paradigms and/or research perspectives are usually easily

identified by the terms used in their definitions. For instance the medical paradigms use words such as *'public health issue'*<sup>2</sup> or *'reproductive coercion'*<sup>3</sup>. Feminist definitions of domestic violence include terms such as *'power and control'* and *'coercive control'* in an effort to include non-physical/non-violent behaviors as well as to highlight the gender inequalities that exist in relationships (Ashcraft 2000; Mooney, 2000; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999) and legislative definitions may include terms such as "felony or misdemeanor crimes" (Auchter & Backes, 2013, p. 715).

Others discuss how the term 'domestic violence' is difficult to define because it is a social construct that meets the criteria for the moment; that is, it serves to convey what society views, or accepts, as domestic violence or how a particular group defines domestic violence in order to have a method in which to describe and understand it (Auchter & Backes, 2013; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). This is evident by the different terms used to describe domestic violence over the years, which include, but are not limited to *'wife beating'*, *'wife abuse'*, *'battered woman'*, *'intimate partner violence'*, *'violence against women'*, and *'dating violence'* (Auchter & Backes, 2013; Mooney, 2000; Muehlenhard & Kimes, 1999). Although the term

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<sup>2</sup> Center for Disease Control and Prevention,

<http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/intimatepartnerviolence/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists: Women's Health Care Physicians Committee on Health Care for Underserved Women, Number 518, February 2012;

<http://m.acog.org/Resources-And-Publications/Committee-Opinions/Committee-on-Health-Care-for-Underserved-Women/Intimate-Partner-Violence?IsMobileSet=true>

*domestic violence* is one that is used in the majority of the literature, some scholars discuss the importance of acquiring a specific terminology in order to address some of its limitations. As Mooney (2000) notes:

Many commentators...argue for a more specific terminology. For, although ‘domestic violence’ may be useful as a contrast to ‘stranger violence’, serving to highlight the fact that considerable violence occurs in domestic relationships, its generality is not helpful with regards to theoretical or policy concerns (p. 142).

Mooney goes on to discuss how the term ‘*domestic violence*’ invokes gender neutrality that “mask[s] the fact that women are most frequently subjected to violence by *men*” (p. 142). The gender neutrality invoked by the term ‘*domestic violence*’ is also invoked by the frequently used term ‘*intimate partner violence*’. Although the term ‘*intimate partner violence*’ identifies the specific relationship in question, it does not distinguish between victim and abuser. The aforementioned is a point raised by Mooney regarding the importance of identifying the victims and perpetrators of abuse and also the reason she offers for the preference of the use of terms such as “wife abuse” and “women abuse” by some researchers (p. 142). The use of gender-neutral terms is of particular concern because they, in essence, undermine a critical aspect of feminist analysis: “the dimensions of male dominance and power” and also “invokes violence as a problem for both sexes” (Bograd, 1988, p. 19). In addition, gender-neutral terms “mute” the differences between men and women (see Stanko, in Yllo & Bograd, 1988, p. 77) - particularly in the context of abuse. Some, especially anti-feminists and those who ascribe to a family violence approach, prefer the use of gender-neutral terms when discussing domestic violence because they hold the view that women are just as violent as men in intimate relationships (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011; Straus, 2011; Straus, Gelles, & Steinmetz, 2006; Straus &



Gelles, 1990; Gelles and Straus, 1988). The proclaimed notion that women are as violent as men is highly controversial (Mooney, 2000; Bograd et al., 1988). Some researchers, such as Dobash & Dobash (see Yllo & Bograd, 1988) discuss how research “claims made about battered husbands” made it difficult for programs that provided services to abused women to get funding because those claims debunked the concept of the battered woman as “suffering from a unique problem” in need of ‘special resources’ (p. 61). The controversy, however, is not lost on Straus and colleagues. Although they defend their research (approach, methods, and findings), they acknowledge the controversy and make reference to it in their subsequent works (1990; 2006; 2011). Take for instance the following statement found in the introduction section of their 2006 work:

Despite the overwhelming evidence, the findings on intimate partner violence perpetrated by women resulted in twenty-five years of *bitter controversy* (emphasis placed by this author) that still has yet to be resolved. The main focus of the debate has shifted somewhat from denying the reported equal rates of physical assaults by male and female partners to arguing that when women use violence it is in self-defense, in retaliation for violence initiated by men, or an act of desperation to end male oppression (Straus and Gelles, p. ix).

In a more recent publication, Straus (2011), makes reference to the controversy by stating how the terms used in his current work needed to be defined because “they are the subject of controversy” (p. 280). One of the ‘key concepts’ he was referring to was ‘symmetry’, which he defined as “approximately equal rates of perpetration of non-sexual physical assaults by males and female partners, or higher rates by female partners” (p.280). In the same article, Straus discusses how his works, along with at least another 200 studies conducted in the US and abroad,

find that women are as violent as men in intimate relationships (p. 280). He goes on to state, that those findings contradict the theoretical position that “a patriarchal social system privileges men to use physical violence to maintain a position of dominance in the family” (p. 280). However, it is important to note, that despite those findings, research still supports the prevalence of male perpetrated violence against women in intimate relationships and the debate on the use of appropriate research terms still rages on (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 2011).

In addition to the issue of gender-neutral terminology, Mooney (2000) brings up another important point, by stating how the term ‘*violence*’ is also problematic:

respondents, like the researcher, will vary in defining what constitutes ‘real’ violence...some respondents will define a push or shove as physical violence, whereas others will not. The values held by respondents are likely to be affected by gender, age, ethnicity, class, and education (p.143).

Along those lines, cultural aspects can also determine how a woman who has lived with domestic violence defines ‘*violence*’. According to some scholars, women with different ethnic backgrounds may consider “passive acts of aggression” or “harm by omission” as violent (White, Yuan, Cook, and Abbey, 2013, p. 227) and be more tolerant of the violence if they hold positive attitudes towards male dominance (Faramarzi, Esmailzadeh, and Mosavi, 2005, p. 230).

There is no question that there is disagreement regarding defining ‘*domestic violence*’ or more specifically ‘*violence against women*’. What is important, however, is having a working and appropriate definition, particularly when conducting research. Keeping in mind the definitional challenges of defining ‘*domestic violence*’ discussed above, this research employs the definition used by the United States Department of Justice:

a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or

maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person. This includes any behaviors that intimidate, manipulate, humiliate, isolate, frighten, terrorize, coerce, threaten, blame, hurt, injure, or wound someone.<sup>4</sup>

The researcher is aware that the above definition has definitional limitations as well. One limitation is that of gender neutrality with its use of the term '*intimate partner*'. Another limitation is based on concepts identified in the definition such as the term '*terrorize*'. Just as Mooney (2000) discussed how the term '*violence*' can have different meanings for different audiences, so too can the term '*terrorize*'.

Although there are problems defining the terms, it is common for most research, as evidenced in the literature, to use the terms '*domestic violence*' and '*intimate partner violence*' interchangeably. Some advocacy groups and local city agencies also use the aforementioned terms interchangeably as demonstrated in the definitions used by the New York State Coalition against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics.

The New York State Coalition against Domestic Violence (NYSCADV) defines domestic violence as:

*“a pattern of coercive behavior/tactics that is culturally learned, socially condoned, and is perpetrated by one person against their intimate partner. Types of abuse can include physical, sexual, psychological, and economic abuse. Domestic violence can also be perpetrated by and/or against a member of the same family or household.”*

*(nyscadv.org).*

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<sup>4</sup> See United States Department of Justice. <http://www.justice.gov/ovw/domestic-violence>

The Bureau of Justice Statistics defines intimate partner violence as violence that “includes victimization committed by spouses or ex-spouses, boyfriends or girlfriends, and ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends” (Catalano, Smith, Snyder, and Rand, 2009).

A closer look at the definitions above gives the reader an idea of the type of relationship being identified. The Bureau of Justice Statistics uses the term “intimate partner violence” and goes on to describe the intimate relationships; whereas the NYSCADV definition uses the term ‘domestic violence’ and includes violence perpetrated ‘by and against a member of the same family’.

For the purpose of this study, the term *domestic violence* will be used to describe and discuss the violence experienced by women with their intimate partners. The term *intimate partner violence* will be used when reporting findings in research where the terms were also used interchangeably.

### *Defining Abuse Categories*

This research employed short descriptions of the different categories of abuse: *Physical Abuse* (hit with a fist, open-hand, or object, pushed, shoved, slapped, or grabbed); *Emotional Abuse* (called names/humiliated/threatened to use an object); *Economic Abuse* (prevented from keeping/getting a job; threatened to withhold money); *Sexual Abuse* (forced into any sexual activity against will). It is important to note that coercive control was evident in some of the participants’ described experiences with the emotional and economic abuse categories. Coercive control is often difficult to prove, and may even be overlooked, because of its subtleties (threatening looks/criticisms). Swan and Snow (2002), define coercive control as “the nonphysical tactics used by abusers to maintain control over their partners.” The tactics include

“...use of intimidation, isolation, economic control, and controlling the partner’s activities and decisions” (p. 291). Threats of suicide are also included as tactics employed by abusers (Kuennen, 2014).

While subtle, coercive control is considered just as harmful in domestic violence situations as physical and emotional abuse because it allows the abuser to exert control over his victim in a manner that may not be detected by others (Stark, 2012). For example, a threatening look by the abuser can have a variety of meanings to his victim. Think of the parent that shoots a look of disapproval to an unruly child in order to get the child to cease his/her undesirable behavior. If the child associates negative consequences with such a look, he/she will be more likely to cease the behavior. If an abuser uses such tactics with his victim, chances are the victim will also associate negative consequences, or impending abuse, with the control tactic employed and will more than likely modify her behavior to the abuser’s liking. Coercive control is of particular importance to this research given the population under study. As will be discussed later in this chapter, culture plays an important role in how Latinas perceive and experience domestic violence. Their perceptions and experiences are largely grounded in their socialization process- a process that teaches them to accept violence as a normal occurrence in intimate relationships and in the household (Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Adames & Campbell, 2005; White et al., 2013). The impact of coercive control on women has not gone unnoticed; in fact, according to an article in *The Guardian*,<sup>5</sup> the United Kingdom passed a law (on December 29, 2015) that recognizes coercive control in domestic violence relationships as an offence. As discussed in a different, but related article, although this important legislation was welcomed,

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<sup>5</sup> *At last, a domestic violence law that shines a light on coercive control.* Kate Bailey (December 28, 2015).

some were concerned.<sup>6</sup> Some of the concerns were framed around the ability to identify, gather evidence, and prosecute abusers that subject women to coercive control. To address the aforementioned issues, steps have been taken to train social workers, police, and other professionals that work with victims of domestic violence on coercive control and how to recognize it.

Stalking is part of the domestic violence definitions used by domestic violence providers, law enforcement, and coalitions. However, stalking was not included in the categories being investigated in the present study, and as such should be considered a limitation of this study. Although only one participant identified stalking (co-occurring with emotional abuse) as her domestic violence experience, stalking did emerge as a behavior the participants associated with domestic violence. Moving forward, this researcher will include stalking as one of the categories in future research on domestic violence, given the fear and intimidation that it invokes in victims of domestic violence.

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<sup>6</sup>For the full discussion on the concerns see, *There's a new domestic abuse crime- but how will people stop it?* Louise Tickle (June 15, 2015), in The Guardian.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **Literature Review**

#### *Domestic Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean*

The research on domestic violence in Latin America is limited despite the fact it is considered a “global public health issue” (Sukhera, Cerulli, Gawinski, and Morse, 2012, p. 707). According to Sukhera and colleagues (2012), a multi-country World Health Organization study conducted in 2006, reported “the lifetime prevalence of physical or sexual partner violence ranged from 15% to 71% with most jurisdictions falling between 30% and 60%” (p. 707). In another study on the prevalence of domestic violence experienced by women in Latin America, Sagot (2005), reports that 25% to 50% of women living in Latin America report being victimized by a partner (p. 1293). Although, the research on domestic violence in Latin America and other Caribbean countries is scarce, there are data that discuss how culture affects domestic violence (Flake & Forste, 2006), how gender roles, norms, and attitudes help to perpetuate domestic violence (Uribe-Uran; 2013; Bott, Guedes, Goodwin & Mendoza, 2012, Flake & Forste, 2006), gaps in services (Stewart, Aviles, Guedes, Riazantseva & MacMillan, 2015), causes and risk factors associated with intimate partner violence (World Health Organization, 2010), and consequences of help-seeking (Sagot, 2005).

Flake & Forste (2006), evaluated data from the Demographic and Health Surveys in five countries (Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Nicaragua, and Peru) and identified “rigidly defined gender roles and a cultural definition of manhood” as factors that perpetuate violence against women (pp.19- 20). Uribe-Uran (2013), explored violence against women by

husbands in eight Spanish-speaking countries<sup>7</sup> and discussed how disobedience, failure to adequately attend to household and childcare duties, refusal to have sex, and infidelity were among some of the factors that lead to the abuse of women (pp. 51-52). Bott and colleagues (2012) report similar findings in their study on twelve Latin American and Caribbean countries (pp.89-90).<sup>8</sup>

In another study, Sukhera and colleagues (2012), set out to investigate the perceptions of community residents' (female community healthcare volunteers and male community leaders) on the responses to domestic violence in Honduras (pp. 707-708). Their findings revealed that the female community healthcare volunteers were more likely to acknowledge the existence of domestic violence, but denied any experience with domestic violence in their homes and communities (p. 710). In addition, female community healthcare volunteers were also more likely than the male community leaders to identify control and sexual abuse as domestic violence, while the men identified physical and psychological abuse as domestic violence (p. 712). The female community healthcare volunteers reported "fears of disclosing violence or seeking intervention" as reasons why some women may not seek services; some of the female community healthcare workers and all of the male community leaders also identified "the concept that IPV is a private issue" as a contributing barrier to women seeking services for their domestic violence situations (p.710).

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<sup>7</sup> The countries discussed in Uribe-Uran's research were Puerto Rico, México, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Argentina, Perú, and Venezuela.

<sup>8</sup> Bott and colleagues' findings are based on data collected from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) and the Reproductive Health Survey (RHS) on twelve Latin American and Caribbean countries.



Other research highlights some of the consequences of help-seeking in Latin America. Using data gathered from 10 Latin American countries,<sup>9</sup> Sagot (2005) discussed how the criminal justice system in those countries serves as a barrier to women seeking help. As a result, she classifies them as “the institutions that offer the worst responses to women who seek help” (p. 1306). According to Sagot, there is no judicial response to psychological abuse and physical assaults on women are not considered crimes if their injuries take less than ten days to heal (p. 1308). She goes on to discuss how the judicial response in some countries can also discourage women from seeking help, as is the case in Panama where women reporting abuse to authorities must then present their abusers with a copy of the report and arrests are only made when there are “at least three such reports” (p. 1308). Such a requirement not only discourages women from reporting the abuse, but may also signal to the women that they must address their situations without the interference of outsiders. In addition to the above, she also reports that women are often subjected to stereotypes (p. 1307) and have their situations trivialized when seeking help from law enforcement (p. 1308). The aforementioned, coupled with the women’s inability to access services available to them via legislation,<sup>10</sup> lend support to Sagot’s assertion that the criminal justice systems in those countries are less than adequate in addressing the issue of domestic violence.

The experiences, obstacles, and perceptions discussed above are similar to those of Latina victims of domestic violence living in the United States. The aforementioned will be discussed in the subsequent section.

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<sup>9</sup>The countries in Sagot’s research were Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Panama, Perú, Bolivia, and Ecuador.

<sup>10</sup> According to Sagot, all of the countries in his study had passed legislation aimed at addressing the issue of domestic violence (p. 1307).

## *Latinos/Latinas in the United States*

Demographic data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau report that there were 50.5 million Hispanics in the United States in 2010; the aforementioned number reflects a 43% increase in the Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010. Hispanics now make up 16% of the total population and remain one of the largest growing minority groups in the country.<sup>11</sup>

According to the 2013 population estimates, Hispanics make up 17.6% of the population in New York State and 28.6% of the population in New York City (NYC).<sup>12</sup> The New York City Department of Planning reports that there has been an 8% increase in the Hispanic population between 2000 and 2010 in NYC,<sup>13</sup> which reflects a slower, but continued, growth of the Hispanic population since the 2000 census data where there was a 21.1% increase in the NYC Hispanic population.

With the emergence of Latinos as one of the largest minority groups in the United States, some researchers have embraced the importance of developing a cultural understanding of this marginalized population in order to appropriately address the needs of Latino communities as they relate to health and mental health (Denham, Frasier, Hooten, Belton, Newton, & Gonzalez et al., 2007), acculturation (Sabina, Cuevas, & Zadnick, 2015; Jezzini, 2013; Kulkarni, Racine, & Ramos, 2012; Irazabal and Ramzi, 2008; Guarnaccia, Pincay, Alegria, Shrout, Lewis-Fernandez, & Canino, 2007) and violence against women; more specifically, Latina women (Kulkarni et al., 2012; Grossman and Lundy, 2007; Morse, 2007).

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<sup>11</sup> United States Census Bureau. The Hispanic Population: 2010, May 2011.

<sup>12</sup> U.S. Census Bureau, Quick Facts- New York City, retrieved November 5, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> New York City Department of Planning- Population Division, May 2011, retrieved November 5, 2014

### *Prevalence of Domestic Violence*

Domestic violence continues to be a serious social and health problem faced by many women in the United States (Field & Caetano, 2005; Tienfenthaler, Farmer & Sambira, 2005). According to aggregate data from the National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS- years covered: 2003-2012), there were approximately 970,000 reports of intimate partner violence, which accounted for 14.6% of all violent crime during that time period. Women were the victims of non-fatal incidents of intimate partner violence committed against them more often than their male counterparts (82% and 18% respectively). Although statistics reflect intimate partner violence is on the decline since 1994,<sup>14</sup> the data stated above are consistent with females experiencing intimate partner violence at a higher rate than their male counterparts (6.2/1,000 and 1.4/1,000, respectively) (Truman & Morgan, 2014). There have also been reported declines (and changes) in data reflecting intimate partner violence rates based on race and ethnicity.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics<sup>15</sup> reports that non-Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic whites had higher rates of intimate partner violence per 1,000 when compared to Hispanics (4.7, 3.9, and 2.8 respectively). The aforementioned has been a consistent trend among the three groups over the last 18 years, with Blacks reporting higher rates of intimate partner violence than Whites and Whites reporting higher rates than Hispanics (Truman & Morgan, 2014 and Catalano, 2012).

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<sup>14</sup> The rate of victimization is down from 9.8 per 1,000 in 1994 to 3.2 per 1,000 in 2012. The Bureau of Justice Statistic's, *Preview release of Intimate Partner Violence, 1993-2010*, reported the majority of the decline during the period of 1993-2000, with the rates stabilizing between 2001-2010 [retrieved, November 5, 2014].

<sup>15</sup> See U.S. Department of Justice. A Special Report: Nonfatal Domestic Violence, 2003-2012 (Truman & Morgan; April 2014, p. 11).

According to some scholars, statistics used in reporting the prevalence of domestic violence in Hispanic and minority populations is conflicting and sometimes contradictory (Frias & Angel, 2005; Aldarondo et al., 2002). Consequently, some of the contradictions in the statistics may be a result of non-reporting by Hispanics and Hispanic undocumented victims of domestic violence- a point that is raised in the literature discussing Latinas/Hispanics and domestic violence (Bent-Goodley, 2005; Perilla, 1999; Kasturirangan et al., 2004). The aforementioned is supported by Mooney's (2000) discussion on the importance of acknowledging the "hidden figures" of crime. According to Mooney, data gathered from national crime surveys (like the ones discussed above and in the next section of this research) can be misleading and also misrepresented due to under-reporting; she states:

The researchers themselves frequently recognize their data to be under-representative and there are doubts as to whether mass surveys covering the whole gamut of crime are sufficiently sensitive to pick up on all but a fraction of the actual incidence of domestic violence (p. 3).

However, the issue can be somewhat counteracted when questions geared towards gauging the incidents of domestic violence are asked during the interviews.

According to Mooney (2000), collecting data on the number of incidents of domestic violence yields larger numbers than data that is based on whether or not an individual has ever experienced domestic violence. By conducting in-depth interviews, the researcher has the opportunity to identify other incidents of domestic violence by asking follow up questions or when reviewing the data (pp.154-179). Thus, the researcher's process will assist in creating a more realistic picture of the prevalence of domestic violence.

Mooney (2000) goes on to discuss how the limitations inherent in victimization surveys can be attributed to the private nature of domestic violence, fear of retaliation by the abuser, shame, or the victim's reluctance to share her experiences with a stranger (pp.3-4). Research on Latinas also refers to the "private nature" of domestic violence and a woman's reluctance to report it; particularly to someone outside of the family (Bott et al., 2012; Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Adames & Campbell, 2005).

The importance placed on maintaining the privacy of family matters is evident in the use of adages such as 'don't air your dirty laundry' and 'what happens within these four walls stays within these four walls'. Research on domestic violence and social support discuss how Latinas may not be willing to share information about their domestic violence situations or ask strangers (formal networks) for help (Postmus, 2014). In fact, they may not be willing to disclose their victimization *because* they embrace the concept of the privacy of family matters; as noted by Bott and colleagues (2005):

[There was] widespread agreement with norms and attitudes that support women's subordinate gender roles and non-interference in situations of violence... [s]ubstantial proportions of women in these surveys did not agree that outsiders should intervene to help a woman who was being abused by her husband or the family problems should be discussed with those outside the family (pp. 114-115).

In addition to under-reporting, definitional issues can also contribute to fluctuating statistics. This is particularly true in research on domestic violence. As discussed earlier (*see Defining Domestic Violence*), how researchers define domestic violence and/ or construct their methodologies for collecting data has an impact on their results. Take for instance the controversial work of Straus and Gelles (1988). According to some of their critics, their finding

that women are just as violent as men in intimate relationships, was based on how they “count[ed] the acts of violence in isolation from the circumstances under which those acts occur” (Straus et.al., 1990, p.56). Had they taken context into account, their research would have probably yielded different results.

### *Prevalence of Domestic Violence in New York and New York City*

Although data can be misleading and misrepresented for reasons discussed above, the data presented here is used to provide a snap shot on the prevalence of domestic violence in New York and New York City.

The New York State Domestic Violence Dashboard Project,<sup>16</sup> indicates a 25% decrease in homicides committed by an intimate partner from 2013-2014. Of the 612 homicides in 2014, 45% were female victims who were killed by an intimate partner; women also comprised 80% of the victims of reported assaults (p. 2). For the same time period (2013-2014), the New York City Police Department responded to approximately 282,000 domestic violence incidents and 87,374 calls were made to domestic violence hotline advocates (Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence, 2014).

### *Aspects of Culture and Barriers to Seeking Services*

Not all women experience domestic violence the same way (Frias & Angel, 2005). Despite general statements, such as “domestic violence knows no boundaries” the reality is that the experience and dynamics of domestic violence is not the same for all women and it holds

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<sup>16</sup> For a full description of the data see New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2015). New York State Domestic Violence Dashboard Project 2014 Data.

different meanings (causes and consequences) for different groups (Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Frias & Angel, 2005; Adames & Campbell, 2005).

Scholars agree that little is known about domestic violence and Latinas as evidenced by the limited research in that realm, the focus of research on White women as participants, and the tendency to view domestic violence as a Black and White issue (Perilla, 1999; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Frias & Angel, 2005; Edelson, Hokoda & Ramos-Lira, 2007; Garcia et al., 2005). As discussed by Sokoloff and Dupont (2005), the tendency to focus on a one-size fits all approach does not allow for the inclusion and provision of services to women from different backgrounds (p.51); particularly where Latina immigrants are concerned (Paat, 2014).

As indicated earlier, Latinas<sup>17</sup> may experience intimate partner violence differently than their Anglo-counterparts; these differences are due in part to where they may be situated within certain social categories (i.e., race; ethnicity; gender; immigration status) (Belliveau, 2011, pp. 32-33) and may have an impact on how the violence is viewed and serve as barriers to seeking help.

### *Culture*

Culture<sup>18</sup> plays an important role in how Latinas view and experience domestic violence. In Latino cultures, women are socialized into gender ideologies that help to promote and

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<sup>17</sup> The researcher is aware that barriers and cultural aspects that frame how help-seeking is approached (or ignored) can be, and often are, experienced by other immigrant victims of domestic violence (see Liang et al., 2005; Yoshioka et al., 2013) and as such, they are not 'unique' to Latinas. However, given that the focus of this inquiry is on Latinas, the researcher will focus on the use of the "Latina" and "immigrant Latina" labels.

<sup>18</sup> This study adopts Sullivan and Rumptz's (1994) definition of culture (as cited by Kasturirangan et al., 2005; p. 319): culture is "a set of characteristics that include the beliefs, practices, values, norms, and behaviors that are shared by members of a group".

perpetuate domestic violence; many have also been socialized to accept violence as a normal occurrence that should be kept as a private matter (Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Adames & Campbell, 2005). In addition, for many Latinas, the centrality of family and its preservation is paramount. As such, many will tolerate and endure violence in an effort to keep their families intact. The aforementioned relates to *familismo* (familism) an important cultural factor that has been linked to Latinas and domestic violence.

*Familismo* is one of the core elements of the Latino culture. Antshel (2000), discusses how familism refers to the strong identification Latinos make with families and how they “consider the total family system as a supportive, integrated network [where] as a group [family] has precedence over individual interests” (p. 439). This identification “is characterized by strong feelings of loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity” (Yoshioka, Gilbert, El-Bassel & Baig-Amin, 2003, p. 172). Although familism may be seen as ideal or noble by some, it can also serve to help perpetuate domestic violence because the women may be reluctant to leave the abuser in order to keep their families intact or because they fear reprisals from their families. *Familismo* is also extended to others. Latinos are known to incorporate non-blood relatives into their fold and consider them family. For instance, “[c]ompadres and comadres (godparents) and hijos de crianza (adopted children), are also a part of this network” (Morse, 2007, p. 67). *Hijos de crianza* do not have to be legally adopted; they are sometimes children of other family members or friends who come to live with the family or are enmeshed with the family in some way (Morse, p. 67). Thus, irrespective of the blood relation, Latinos embrace their family networks and place a high value of importance on that unit. As a result, it is important that any provision of services, or strategies for treatment adherence, incorporate the concept of *familismo* when working with the Latino population (Antshel, 2003, p. 439). Given the importance of familism



in the Latino culture, it is often explored and/or discussed in studies on Latinas and domestic violence (Gonzalez, 2010; Reina et al., 2014; Postmus et al., 2014).

Gonzalez (2010), conducted a phenomenological study on the domestic violence experiences of 19 Latinas in Nebraska and found that a strong sense of loyalty to the family (familism) as well as “social-cultural pressures” such as male domination and the lack of social and familial support, were among some of the cultural factors that defined the participants’ experiences with domestic violence (pp. 97-98). In another study exploring the help-seeking behaviors of immigrant Latinas in Iowa, the authors discuss how “particular cultural scripts” such as male domination and “feelings of shame and embarrassment” impact the help-seeking practices of the participants (Reina et al., 2014, p. 609). The authors go on to discuss the importance of incorporating the concept of familism into the intervention strategies for domestic violence (p. 610). In keeping with the influence of cultural scripts on help-seeking practices of Latina victims of domestic violence, Postmus and colleagues (2014), discuss how *familismo* needs to be understood “as a social construct that can shape disclosing victimization” as a means to understanding why Latinas prefer the use of informal networks to address their domestic violence situations (p. 471).

Another cultural factor that has implications for victims of domestic violence is *marianismo* (marianism). *Marianismo* refers to the spirituality of women; more specifically, the “spiritual superiority of women over men” in Latino cultures (Yoshioka et al., 2003, p. 172). This ‘spiritual superiority’ lends itself to women engaging in self-sacrificing behaviors for their children and spouses (Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994, p. 394). *Marianismo*, as described by Morse (2007), “is the set of ideals embodied by the Virgin Mary—submission, self-sacrifice, religious commitment, humility, and modesty ... [which fosters] the capacity to withstand more

suffering” (p. 70). These cultural concepts of the Latino culture (among others not mentioned here) have been found to play a role in the tolerance of abuse as well as in the decisions made to remain in or return to abusive relationships (Edelson et al., 2007; Denham et al., 2007; Klevens, 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Garcia et al., 2005; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). However, other research has found that there are aspects of *marianismo* that are harnessed and help cultivate resilience that have far reaching consequences (Jezzini, 2013, p. 29).

In her research about the role of acculturation, *marianismo*, and sexism in predicting depression in Latinas, Jezzini (2013), discusses how certain aspects of *marianismo* such as “...maternal love, loyalty, compassion and generosity” have been used to help shape “the identity development of second-generation” daughters of immigrant Latinas (p.29). She goes on to discuss how other research report that women have harnessed aspects of *marianismo* that have “led to strong desires for employment, education and autonomy” (p. 29). These findings are important because they allow women to take steps in becoming self-reliant/self-sufficient, which may lead to cultivating attitudes that can help them leave oppressive and/or abusive relationships.

### *Barriers to Seeking Services*

Research on Latina women is saturated with the barriers they face when seeking services and/or leaving their abusive relationships. One barrier is the lack of a support network. Often Latina women, particularly immigrant Latinas, have left their extended families and social supports in their country/nation of origin; as a result, many depend on their husbands for guidance and for financial assistance in their new country (Postmus et al., 2014; Perilla, 1999; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Dutton et al., 2000). Other barriers, such as limited English

proficiency, removal of children (Postmus et al., 2014; Reina et al., 2014; Vidales, 2010; Perilla, 1999; Kasturirangan et al. 2004), lack of culturally and linguistically competent services (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Bent-Goodley, 2005), immigration status (Reina et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012; Vidales, 2010; Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005), community and family response (Vidales, 2010; Liang et al., 2005; Perilla, 1999; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005), feelings of shame or guilt (Kulkarni et al. 2012; Perilla, 1999), lack of knowledge of existing systems that offer help (Perilla, 1999; Kasturirangan et al., 2004), lack of knowledge on existing laws which criminalize domestic violence (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Moracco, Hilton, Hodges, & Frasier, 2005), and a general mistrust of police and other service providers (Vidales, 2010; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Perilla, 1999; Kasturirangan et al., 2004) all serve to either impede or frighten many Latinas from making the decisions that will lead them on the path to living a violence free life.

Although some of the barriers listed above can be, and sometimes are, factored into the decision-making processes of Anglo or non-minority women, the majority of these barriers are faced primarily by immigrant women. Barriers such as immigration status, fear of police, mandatory arrest policies, and language present additional challenges for Latina and Latina immigrant victims of domestic violence- particularly those victims who are undocumented. Some scholars have investigated how current institutional functions and immigration policies pose a real threat to undocumented Latinas. These threats range from structural barriers such as lack of language proficiency to institutional racism based on “anti-immigrant sentiments” (Reina & Lohman, 2015, p. 484-485) to having their families torn apart through deportation (Gomes & Sheriff, 2011, p. 119-121). The latter is based on Gomes and Sheriff’s (2011) discussion on the unintended consequences of the 1996 US immigration reform and its impact on women.

According to Gomes and Sheriff, some of the consequences can have dire results for victims of domestic violence, particularly women, because of the ultimate consequence is deportation (2011, p. 120-121).

### *Victim Services Programs*

Research is sparse on the use of victim services and their effectiveness. In the literature, most studies on programs have been narrowly focused and research conducted on a broader network of nonprofit victim services, such as the studies sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (Burt, Zweig, Andrews, VanNess, Parikh, Uekert et al., 2001; Newmark, Bonderman, Smith & Liner, 2003; Zweig, Burt, & VanNess, 2003;), have primarily focused on victim services programs in states that receive a particular type of funding. Little is known about nonprofit programs and communities that do not receive the funding sources cited in their studies (Burt et al., 2001; Newmark et al., 2003).

Among the available literature, there is research that discusses some of the reasons why women experiencing domestic violence may not use victim service programs. Non-use of victim services may be due to fear, language barriers, no or limited knowledge of service availability, being discouraged from seeking services by family and /or intimate others as well viewing their situations as not warranting services (Vidales, 2010; Liang et al., 2005; Zweig et al., 2003; Dutton et al., 2000; Sims, Yost & Abbott, 2005). Other research on victim services programs has highlighted the importance of tailoring services to meet the victims' needs in an effort to increase victim program participation (Reina et al., 2013; Simmons, Farrar, Frazer & Thompson, 2011; Aguilar, 2011; Stohr, 2005) as well as tailoring those services from a woman-focused approach (Liang et al., 2005).

Keeping with the importance of using a “woman focused approach” to service development, Kulkarni and colleagues (2012), elicited input from help-seekers and found that women identified four items that would enhance their experiences with service providers; the authors subsequently classified those items as “qualities of helpful resources”. The items the women identified were: “providing empathy, supporting empowerment, individualizing care, and maintaining ethical boundaries” (p. 91). The Kulkarni study was supported by the research outcomes of a study exploring domestic violence survivors’ use of social institutions (Clavesilla, 2014). According to Clavesilla (2014), the participants identified resourcefulness, using an empowering approach, providing empathy, helpfulness, and being culturally competent as positive aspects of their interactions with social service providers, law enforcement, and the judicial system (pp. 27-29, 33, and 38-39). McLeod, Hays, and Chang (2010), had similar results in their study on accessing services for domestic violence; their findings revealed women want to feel safe, want to be validated, and want support from their community (pp. 303-308).

A review of the crime victims’ movement conducted by Friedman (1985), discusses the importance of giving victims a sense of control and power in addressing their victimization with legal agencies. In another discussion, Hague and Mullender (2006), highlight the importance of empowering victims of domestic violence by asking them what they need and listening to them when constructing policies and developing service provisions. This includes the need to develop methods that support women who remain in abusive relationships (Grauwiler, 2007, p.191).

In keeping with the needs of domestic violence victims, research on help seeking behaviors have identified that female victims of domestic violence have a myriad of needs. For immigrant victims, those needs may require additional services (Dutton et al., 2000). However, what is promising in the literature is that victim services programs that collaborate with other

agencies to meet their clients' needs are viewed as more helpful than those programs that do not collaborate with other agencies (Zweig & Burt, 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Zweig et al., 2003; Dutton et al., 2000). In addition to collaboration, advocacy is also important to women. In a study exploring use of services by domestic violence survivors, the researcher found that 81% of the participants reported being satisfied with the domestic violence agency when advocacy, resources, and referrals were provided (Scordato, 2013, pp. 118).

Although the collaboration with other agencies facilitates the process of providing clients with comprehensive services, providing culturally competent services will enhance the clients' satisfaction with services and may lead to retentions of said services (Antshel, 2002, pp. 442-443).

### *Culturally Competent Services*

Research on service provision to Latinos finds that there is a need for culturally sensitive services (Morse, 2007, pp. 82-101).

Cross (1989) (as adapted by The Office of Minority Health, a branch of the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services), defines cultural and linguistic competency as:

a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals that enables effective work in cross-cultural situations [where] 'culture' refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups. [And] 'competence' implies having the capacity to function effectively as an individual and an organization within the context of the cultural beliefs, behaviors,

and needs presented by the consumers and their communities.

The current literature on Latinos and health care as well as on victim services, promote models to increase cultural competence (Kulkarni et al., 2012; Aguilar, 2011; Vidales, 2010; Guarnaccia et al., 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Yoshioka et al., 2003; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Antshel, 2002; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994), discuss the importance of understanding cultural gender scripts, and make suggestions to incorporate cultural nuances and factors such as *personalismo* (personalism), *respeto* (respect), and *familismo* (familism) in the programs and service delivery plans (Aguilar, 2011; Denham et al., 2007; Morse, 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Antshel, 2002). In addition, language and its use, is also discussed as an important aspect of Latino culture (Antshel, 2002; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994). Scholars discuss how language helps individuals create environments where they feel comfortable and also helps us understand how people relate to others and express themselves (Trinch, 2001 & 2003). Trinch (2003) discusses how language use is of particular importance to Latinas when discussing their victimization and/or seeking services:

Among its many functions, language is the structuring mechanism that we employ to make sense of what has happened to us, to understand what is occurring in our immediate interactions and to predict what might happen to us in our potential encounters (p.1).

Since language is the 'structuring mechanism' that helps shape our experiences, then being able to communicate with others in our native/preferred language becomes important; particularly when trying to convey specific, and accurate, information. This is especially true for non-English speakers because many statements and/or words cannot be easily translated to English without losing some of their meaning (Morse, 2007, pp. 86-88). Being able to convey

exactly ‘what has happened’ or ‘what is needed’ has implications for expected outcomes. For example, a woman who is seeking an order of protection will need to be able to articulate exactly what has happened to her in order to obtain an order of protection. If she is not able to narrate her story in a way that is acceptable to the person taking the report, then she may run the risk of not obtaining the order of protection (Trinch, 2003). Given the aforementioned, language becomes an essential part of providing culturally competent services. In addition to language, other cultural factors need to be taken into consideration when developing or creating service models geared towards Latinas.

Research conducted in health care settings have found that personalism, respect, and gender scripts also play an important role in how Latinos view their situations and interactions with health and mental health professionals (Antshel, 2002; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994). Personalism refers to relationship and spatial closeness, which, in the Latino culture, facilitates disclosure of uncomfortable topics and promotes increased participation in the programs and in their health care plans. Respect refers to the behaviors that are expected by Latinos that is determined by “age, gender, and authority” (Antshel, 2002, p. 440). Gender scripts, however, have a central position in the lives of Latinos-particularly Latinas. According to most research, centrality and prioritization of family (familism) are key factors in the Latino culture (Postmus et al., 2014; Reina et al., 2013; Gonzalez, 2010; Vidales, 2010; Whitaker et al., 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Given the aforementioned, a comprehensive approach to addressing domestic violence in Latina, and other immigrant cultures, would benefit from including cultural concepts (such as the ones identified above) that will encourage and facilitate use of services by immigrant help-seekers.



## CHAPTER THREE

### **Conceptual Framework**

The current literature on Latinas and domestic violence has laid the foundation for the specific aims of this study. As previously stated, prior research on Latinas and domestic violence has focused on the barriers to seeking services (Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Dutton et al., 2000; Perilla, 1999). However, little research has been conducted on those Latinas who are seeking services, and more specifically, on the differences between Latino sub-groups (Grossman & Lundy, 2007; Garcia, Hurwitz, and Kraus, 2004). This research aims to help contribute to the general knowledge of Latinas and domestic violence by specifically evaluating the help-seeking population as well as examining the differences that may exist among Latinas as it relates to immigration status, sub-group identification, and their identification of the types of abuse experienced. Given the influence of culture on perceptions of domestic violence in Latino communities as well as its influence on the help-seeking behaviors of Latinas, this research also examined the Latinas' perceptions of the helpfulness of the services they receive based on their cultural and linguistic needs.

Feminist standpoint theory was used as the conceptual framework and intersectionality theory as a lens to explore the following: do help-seeking Latinas differ in their experiences of domestic violence? Further, are the differences based on the following factors: (a) types of abuse experienced (b) immigration status (U.S born vs. Foreign born), and (c) sub-group identity (i.e., Puerto Rican vs. Mexican; Mexican vs. Honduran, etc.). This research also aimed to explore the Latinas' experiences with service providers used to address aspects of their domestic violence situations. To explore these concepts, the following specific questions were addressed:

1. How do Latinas describe their experiences with domestic violence?
  - a. Do those experiences differ based on their immigration status and sub-group identity?
2. What behaviors do help-seeking Latinas associate with domestic violence?
3. Do U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinas differ in their help-seeking behaviors?
4. Are help-seeking Latinas satisfied with the services they are receiving?
  - a. Does satisfaction with services differ by immigration status and sub-group identity?

### *Feminist Theory*

According to the literature, feminism has been at the forefront of identifying domestic violence as a problem (Mooney, 2000); it has also helped to raise awareness of the problem through research and advocacy (Mooney, 2000; Hawkins & Humes, 2002; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Frias & Angel, 2005; Tiefenthaler, Farmer & Sambira, 2005; Carlson & Worden, 2005; Gange, 1996).

Over the last three decades, feminist theory has helped to make visible that which was missing from male dominated and produced knowledge in research- women (Rafter & Heidensohn, 1995; Comack, 1999; Hawkesworth, 2006; Britton, 2000; Mooney, n.d.). Although the inclusion of “studies on women” that inform theory are important, it is equally important to produce “knowledge for women” (Comack, 1999, p. 288). Therefore, an important and central component of feminist theory is that of giving a voice to women. That being said, in producing knowledge on domestic violence, the focus would be on listening to women’s narratives about their experience with domestic violence and on “how women themselves define their experiences” (Mooney, n.d., p. 43).

This study utilized feminist standpoint theory as the theoretical framework as it aims contribute to the growing literature on help-seeking Latinas and domestic violence by producing knowledge based on the participants' experiences with abuse and use of domestic violence services. Intersectionality is also used in order to understand how the participants' experiences may have been shaped by structural factors (race, ethnicity, class, and immigration status) of their social identities.

### *Feminist Standpoint Theory*

Feminist standpoint theory is an “epistemological stance” used by theorists who value “the voices and experiences of the individual but do not seek to suggest that this is representative of all survivors” (Skinner, Hester, and Malos, 2005, p.14). In other words, the experiences of specific/individual Latina survivors of domestic violence may not be *generalized* to all Latina survivors of domestic violence because they each experience/d the victimization differently. In addition, given that standpoints are “unique and critical knowledge that individuals have on the basis of their social location” (Belliveau, 2011, p. 33), it is important to take those social locations under consideration (Hoffman, 2011, p. 197). The aforementioned is an important aspect of standpoint theory because not all experiences are *interpreted* in the same way. For instance, mainstream feminism has been criticized for focusing only on gender oppression and ignoring how other structural factors such as race, ethnicity, class (Hoffman, 2011; Belliveau, 2011; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005; Bograd, 2005), and immigration status (Dasgupta, 2005; Josephson, 2005) have an impact on the lives of women of color and may help to shape their experiences as well as their interpretations of such.

This study does not propose that help-seeking Latina victims of domestic violence are experts in *all* that embodies being a Latina victim of domestic violence; it proposes that their lived experiences have provided them with a unique knowledge that can help inform policy and the development of appropriate services for Latina victims of domestic violence.

### *Feminist Intersectionality Theory*

According to feminist scholars, the concept of ‘intersectionality’ is credited to the work of Kimberle Crenshaw, who developed the idea in order to address how the lives of women of color are affected by more than just gender oppression in the labor force (Bograd, 2005; Josephson, 2005; Belliveau, 2011). However, intersectionality soon became useful as an analytical tool in feminist discourse on the lived experiences of domestic violence of minority and immigrant women (Josephson, 2005). Intersectionality theory has been used to discuss how a lack of understanding on complexities of social structures and culture on the social locations and sexual identities of victims of domestic violence can lead to a “denial of victimization” and “real world consequences” (Bograd, 2005, pp. 30-33) as well as to identify oppression by social institutions (Josephson, 2005, pp.92-94) that are used by some victims as a means to escape their abusive situations.

Access to services is one of the ways women may begin to think about leaving their abusive relationships or make the determination to leave those relationships. Therefore, being able to access services is important. According to Bograd (2005), services may be rendered unnecessary or denied if the victims are viewed as underserving (not ‘real’ or ‘appropriate’ victims) (p. 30). Bograd illustrates the aforementioned with three examples: 1) victimization is denied if it is “invisible” or “undescribed”; for instance, she discusses how focusing on males as

primary aggressors and females as primary victims serves to deny the existence of domestic violence in gay and lesbian relationships, 2) social stereotypes serve to label some victims of domestic violence such as “prostitutes”, “incarcerated individuals”, and “women who fight back” as “undeserving of protection”, and 3) how experiences of domestic violence may be minimized when it is defined “as culturally normal for groups different from the dominant culture” (p.30). For Bograd, “intersections shape meaning systems and concrete avenues for escape” (p.33); therefore, it is important to understand these intersections with domestic violence not only to develop theories that advance the production of feminist knowledge from an intersectional perspective, but to develop services that meet the specific needs of victims (in this case Latinas and Immigrant Latinas) of domestic violence.

Josephson (2005) utilized an intersectional perspective in her work on domestic violence and welfare reform. Her work illustrates how accessing social services benefits (i.e., welfare) sometimes serves to further oppress victims of domestic violence through “social control”. Josephson defines social control as “the imposition of specified behavioral requirements that must be met by recipients of public benefits in order to maintain their eligibility for those benefits” (p. 88). According to Josephson, some victims of domestic violence cannot meet the work and other entitlement requirements due to recent victimization (p. 94) or the controlling behaviors of their abusive partners which sometimes entails intentionally “[sabotaging] women’s efforts to become self-sufficient” (p. 94). She also notes how others may choose to stay in abusive relationships because they find the entitlement requirements difficult to meet (p.93).

One cannot ignore how financial security- or access to some financial support- is needed to survive and provide for one’s self and family; this is even more important for women who are living with domestic violence for many of them have not been allowed to work, cannot work

because of their immigration status, or do not earn enough wages to become self-sufficient. As a result, some of these women require the assistance of social service provisions such as the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs discussed in Josephson's work (2005). However, as Josephson discussed, the rigid requirements, behavioral expectations, rules, and regulations make it difficult for women living with domestic violence to access those much needed services.

In addition to the above, some aspects of other domestic violence service provisions have also been criticized for being "rigid" and "bureaucratic"; thus creating an environment that is not conducive to help-seeking. According to Moe (2007), some programs (shelters specifically) "are, in effect, fostering women's psychological, economic, and legal dependence on the state" by "adhering to increasingly rigid bureaucratic expectations of self-sufficiency" (p. 679). From a feminist perspective, those agencies are replacing one form of oppression (i.e., forced dependence on the batterer) with another form of oppression (dependence on the state); in either case, the women do not have complete autonomy over their lives and/or situations. Research findings on the shelter experiences of minority women and intimate partner violence lend support to the aforementioned.

According to Anais-Bar (2012), all of the participants in her study "perceived their shelter experience as abusive and described it as being like *"jail"*, *"prison"*, *"military school"*, *"boot camp"*, and *"hell"*...Participants reported feeling *"degraded"* and *"humiliated"* by shelter workers" [original emphasis] (p. 55). In addition, the rules, expectations, and treatment the participants were exposed to were reportedly "more difficult than being with their abusive partner ... [they] felt that with [their abuser] they had more freedom of choice and self-determination" (p. 56-57). The latter has serious implications for victims of domestic violence

making the decision to leave their abusive partners as well for the service delivery of shelters. Such an experience may serve to further compound feelings of *alienation* and of *helplessness* in their abusive situations. Jenny, a participant in the present study, echoes some of the sentiments discussed above:

*...everything is kind of like... it feels rushed. For even when I sit down with my caseworker, it's kind of like, so we meet at 9am and its like, "ok so what you want to talk about? What's the plan for the week? Are you going to go to public assistance? Are you looking for a job? What's the run down for this week? Are you going to get that x-ray? Did you go for your physical? Okay, is there anything else? Is there something you feeling? ... And that makes me wanna like "no I'm okay; fine thanks." And you know...I'll call my girlfriend later and you know, we'll talk it out, because that right there, is like I'm being rushed.*

*... I don't want to go back to the situation that I'm in. Like I've been here a month and I'm starting to feel like that's where I'm going. Like I'm gonna have to pick up his calls. I'm gonna have to...I'm gonna have to give into him because...they want women to seek help, and for a long time, I would ask. I wasn't always in this situation, but my best friend was. And I would tell her "I don't know why you do this. I don't know why you deal with him" and I am eating my words now. Because this is why, and ...this is why women don't seek help, because when we do, we don't get the help we need and we just piss off our batterers. That's all that's done, is piss him off.*

The impact of policies on the lives of women living with domestic violence, such as the ones discussed above, are part of Shamita Das Dasgupta's (2005) discussion on immigration, race, and class. Dasgupta (2005) discusses how immigrant women face, what she identifies as,

“tripartite barriers” (p.66- 68) that make it more difficult for them to leave their violent relationships. She frames these barriers in three categories:<sup>19</sup> 1) personal (i.e., ‘fear’; finances; ‘lack of support systems’) (p. 65) ; 2) institutional (i.e., immigration policies; ‘cultural insensitivity’) (p. 65-66); and 3) cultural ideology (i.e., ‘meaning of marriage’; ‘keeping family intact’) (p.66); by doing so, she helps shed a light on different systems that can interact, simultaneously, to shape immigrant women’s experiences with domestic violence. Dasgupta does not use an intersectional perspective as an analytical tool; however her discussion lends some support for the argument on the importance of exploring how multiple marginalities intersect and have different implications for immigrant women.

The discussions above highlight how women from different cultural backgrounds and different social locations may experience and interpret domestic violence differently as well as how their victimization may be perceived by others along those same lines. Although the discussions varied, the authors’ recommendations for advancing theory and gaining a deeper understanding on how women experience domestic violence is similar: avoid a ‘monolithic’ approach to domestic violence (Bograd, p. 26-27), and acknowledge the importance of how race, ethnicity, immigration status, class and culture shape the lives and experiences of women (Dasgupta, 2005, p.67; Bograd, 2005; Josephson, 2005), so that appropriate policies and services can be developed to meet the needs of women seeking to leave their violent relationships (Josephson, 2005, p. 99).

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<sup>19</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion on the tripartite barriers discussed by Dasgupta, see Women’s Realities: Defining Violence against Women by Immigration, Race, and Class; chapter5, pp. 56-70, in Domestic Violence at the Margins\_(2005), Natalie Sokoloff and Christina Pratt, editors.



Given that the participants in this study are Latinas, and some are immigrant Latinas, using intersectionality as an analytical lens is appropriate and will help compliment the standpoint analysis of their narratives on the lived experiences with domestic violence and help-seeking.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Methodology**

#### *Research Design*

This is an exploratory and advocacy research, based on data collected from semi-structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Given the nature of the problem under study, the mixed methods approach was employed to facilitate the attempt to explore, and later explain, any differences that may exist between the participants. In addition, it also allowed for themes to emerge that can be explained in the current study or serve as the impetus for future research (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Furthermore, the use of standpoint feminist theory dictated the use of this design and intersectionality was used to analyze the participants' narratives.

Despite the tendency for feminist research to revert to the use of qualitative methods, it is now acceptable to use mixed methods (Skinner, Hester, and Malos, 2005; Mooney, 2000). The aforementioned is not a new phenomenon. According to Griffiths and Hanmer (2005), “descriptive statistics were being used alongside qualitative methods” during the early stages of feminist research and have been “important in establishing violence against women as a serious, widespread problem” (p.25). They go on to discuss how “no one method of research is inherently feminist; rather it is how studies are conceptualized and how findings are presented and used that gives research its feminist perspective” ( p.38). The current study, although favoring qualitative analysis, incorporates quantitative methods. The quantitative methods in this study were used to describe the socioeconomic and demographic data collected from the participants.

### *Recruitment Process*

The recruitment process began soon after approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted. The researcher began by scheduling meetings with the Program Directors and staff of the participating programs. During those meetings, the purpose and specific aims of the project were discussed. It was important to the researcher to engage the program staff in the discussion because she is aware (having worked in the field) of how some staff persons become protective of their clients. In addition, she also wanted to discuss the recruitment methods for the study: presenting to clients during a planned group session and posting flyers in the common areas of the participating programs. The aforementioned is a strategy that had already been discussed with the program directors during the program recruitment phase of this study. Of the ideas presented to the program staff, none included using staff to recruit participants for the study.

The researcher preferred the above methods of participant recruitment as it ensured participant confidentiality and minimized any possible indirect coercion the participants may have felt if they were recruited by program staff or volunteer workers. In addition, there is research that discusses the challenges that present themselves in advocacy and evaluation studies when program staff are approached by researchers, or instructed by their managers, to recruit participants for a study. Zweig and Burt (2002) discuss how victim service programs are usually understaffed and have staff who feel '*overworked*'. As a result, staff who are approached to recruit research participants view those requests as additional tasks for which they will not be compensated (pp. 10-11). To that end, in an effort to minimize undue pressure on program staff, the researcher reached out to potential participants directly via one of the two methods discussed above.

### *Participant Recruitment Process*

The researcher conducted a total of 4<sup>20</sup> client-group presentations (the attendance taken was not given to the researcher in order to maintain confidentiality of the program participants) in 3 of the 6<sup>21</sup> participating programs. Efforts were made to conduct client-group presentations in all six programs, but at the time of scheduling the recruitment presentations some of the programs were not offering group sessions or they had other topic-centered groups (i.e., financial literacy; parenting) currently running.

Where the client-group presentations took place, the researcher discussed the purpose of the study, criteria for inclusion in the study, and the methods to ensure the participants' confidentiality was maintained. In regards to the latter, the researcher informed those in attendance that the study would incorporate participants from 5 other programs and, as a result, it would be difficult for any particular program to know what their program clients shared/discussed during the interview process. Most of the clients liked that aspect of the project and one client exclaimed "*that works for me!*" At the conclusion of those presentations, the researcher gave them her contact information so that interested program participants could call her to further discuss the study and/or set up a time for an interview.

In addition to the presentations, flyers were given to all participating programs so that they could be posted in areas that were frequented by their clients. This was done so that clients

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<sup>20</sup> Two of the client-group presentations took place in the same program; one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

<sup>21</sup> The proposed research study identified a total of 9 programs that had agreed to participate in the study, with one only granting access to staff for an additional aspect of the study that was later dropped in order to facilitate completion of the project. However, at the time of client recruitment, only 6 of the programs granted access to their programs for participating in this study. Repeated attempts reaching out to the programs were ignored. As a result, the project moved forward with the 6 participating programs.

who did not attend the presentations could be made aware of the opportunity to participate in the research study. The flyers included a brief announcement about the study, criteria for inclusion, and the researcher's contact information. The flyers and all written materials were made available in English and in Spanish.

During the recruitment process two of the programs informed the researcher that they planned on posting the flyer in their ladies' room as that was a method they employed in their outreach efforts in the community.<sup>22</sup> According to the program staff, most people will read things that are posted and/or written on bathroom walls. They went on to discuss how they use unconventional methods to reach out to their target population in order to maintain client safety, but more importantly, *to get the information to their target population* (in this instance, women who are in domestic violence relationships). Other methods used by these programs include, but are not limited to, giving out compact mirrors and nail files to hair and nail salons and leaving magnets/posters on bathroom walls of Laundromats and women's dressing rooms in clothing/department stores; all of the items they hand out and/or post include their hotline number. That being said, several participants informed the researcher that they learned about the study from a flyer posted in the ladies' room of their program. The researcher will consider employing similar methods when recruiting for future research if such methods prove to be appropriate.

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<sup>22</sup> Personal face-to-face communications with one program director and two program staff persons from two of the participating programs. The subject came up when staff asked the researcher if she was planning on recruiting outside of the programs.

### *Sample*

The subjects for this project were a convenience sample of 32<sup>23</sup> Latina women between 18-65 years of age who were receiving services in one of the 6 domestic violence programs in New York City that granted access to their client-base. Participants were recruited during a 13 month period.<sup>24</sup> Given that this study focused on the experiences of help-seeking Latinas the convenience sample facilitated the recruitment of the targeted population.

All of the women participating in the study identified themselves as “Latina”. Women who identified themselves with an ethnic label other than “Latina/Hispanic” were not recruited for the study. As the women were included in the study, they were placed into one of two groups: U.S. born Latinas or Foreign born Latinas. The immigration status of the women was not a focal point of the current study, therefore, questions regarding their status were not asked; the women were only asked if they were born in the United States or outside the United States.

All of the participants were given a cash stipend of \$25 for their participation. The stipend served to facilitate the recruitment process as well as to facilitate travel to the interview site.

A detailed description of the sample will be provided in the following chapter.

### *Data Collection*

The data for this study was collected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 32 help-seeking Latina survivors of domestic violence residing in New York City. In order to assist

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<sup>23</sup> During the inception of this project, it was proposed that 50 women would be interviewed; however, recruitment efforts proved difficult. Possible reasons for the difficulty could be attributed to lack of interest in the project and/or method of recruitment.

<sup>24</sup> February 2012 through March 2013.

in the gathering of socio-demographic data as well as data on other topics of interest, a questionnaire containing a combination of closed and open-ended questions was also employed. For instance, two of the main topics of interest for this study were cultural competency and satisfaction with program services.

As a means to explore cultural competency, participants were asked questions regarding the language they were receiving services in as well as their language preference. In addition, participants were also asked questions regarding their perceived interactions with program staff and their satisfaction with services in order to further explore culturally competent service delivery. Research has found that Latinos are willing to discuss their health issues and domestic violence experiences if they are asked about them- but only if the person asking has established *confianza* with the client. *Confianza* (trust) is established by showing a genuine interest in the life of the person, being personable, being supportive, and the ability to provide them with referrals to other services/agencies that will help them address their immediate or long term needs ( Denham et al., 2007; Belknap & Sayeed, 2003; Kasturirangan & Williams, 2003). Given the importance Latinos place on some cultural factors such as *confianza* (trust), *respeto* (respect), *familismo* (familism) and *marianismo* (marianism), researchers like Denham and colleagues (2007), discuss how “truly culturally appropriate services to Latinas” is more than having bilingual staff; it involves the need to have staff who understand how cultural factors can impact service delivery to Latina clients (p. 132).

In keeping with provision of “appropriate services”, some scholars have suggested that survivors should be asked what they want so that appropriate and useful services can be provided. Others suggest that survivors’ perspectives be taken into account when policies and plans for service provisions are being created (Hague & Mullender, 2006; Friedman, 1985). The

aforementioned has implications for policy, especially since survivors of domestic violence are not a homogeneous group, and therefore, do not experience domestic violence the same way. To that end, participants were asked questions pertaining to their perceived level of input and control in the services being provided in an effort to explore if those perceptions relate to satisfaction with and use of future services.

### *Interview Tool*

The questionnaire used for this study (along with other written materials) was made available to the participants in both English and Spanish. Although the researcher is fluent in Spanish, she had the tool assessed for appropriateness and proper language use.

In order to ensure that the Spanish questionnaire was coherent, sensitive, and employed the proper grammar, word, and phrase use, the researcher had the questionnaire reviewed by six volunteers from one of the participating programs. The researcher explained the purpose of the questionnaire as well as the purpose for the review to the volunteers. The researcher also asked that the volunteers not write their names on the sheets and that they not answer the questions. She explained to the volunteers that she wanted to ensure universal Spanish was being employed so that participants from different Latino countries would be able to understand the questions that would be asked of them. The volunteers stated their understanding and began to review the document. Each participant wrote their comments and revisions on the questionnaire as well as their impressions of the overall document. The researcher read each comment and suggestion made and modified the tool accordingly. The researcher met with the women again to review the revised tool and to make final adjustments. All of the women agreed with the final draft of the questionnaire. The six women who reviewed the document represented five Latino countries



(Mexico, Honduras, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico) and Spanish was their first language. As for the sensitivity of the document, the clients reported that the document was sensitive and that they would answer those questions without reservations. One reviewer commented that she did ‘feel bad’ when she read some of the questions because they reminded her of what has happened to her, but that she was fine with the majority of the questions.

Given the nature of the questions being asked, it was expected that some of the participants would experience feelings of sadness, anger, and even feel uncomfortable during the interview. Keeping the volunteer reviewer’s comment in mind, the researcher used her experience as a trained domestic violence worker by employing sensitivity during the interview and all her interactions with the participants in order to make them feel comfortable and safe. In addition to employing sensitivity, the researcher established a rapport with the participants by keeping formalities to a minimum, while maintaining appropriate boundaries. Establishing rapport with the clients served to foster *confianza* (trust) and *respeto* (respect) - cultural factors that are among those that are highly valued by Latinos (Denham et al., 2007).

### *Analytical Procedures*

This study employed the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews and Feminist Standpoint Theory to inform this study. As discussed by Hawkesworth (2006), feminist standpoint theory is useful as an analytical tool as “[it] recognizes that knowledge claims are produced and accredited within specific communities” (p. 177). The participants in this study are similar in several ways: they all identified themselves as “Latina”, experienced domestic violence, and were all receiving services at a domestic violence program and/or shelter. The utility of employing standpoint theory in this study allowed for identifying their different

perspectives on domestic violence, help-seeking, and satisfaction with services with an understanding that the participants' perspectives were based on their subjective social locations.

All of the interviews, with the exception of two (#4-Nancy and #31- Song), were audio-recorded. The two participants that did not want their interviews recorded expressed feeling more comfortable if the researcher recorded their comments by taking notes. For those interviews, the researcher took copious notes, reiterated the responses to the participants throughout the interview, and had the participants review the interview document upon completion for accuracy.

Most of the interviews were completed within ninety-minutes with the exception of a few. Some of the women became overwhelmed in telling their stories, which prompted the researcher to stop the interview in order to give those participants a break and a cup of water. Once the participants felt that they could proceed, the interview continued. The researcher ensured that the participants were able to proceed by informing them that they had the right to end the interview and withdraw from the study if they felt they could not or did not want to continue (none of the participants withdrew from the study). The other interviews that lasted longer than ninety-minutes did so because the participants provided longer answers to the questions posed in the questionnaire and/or when asked to elaborate. Although the interviews were recorded, the interviewer also took notes on the interview tool. Most of the notes were used to record comments that the participants emphasized as well as the body language of the participants. All of the participants were asked to review the interviewer's notes after the interview.

All of the interviews were transcribed by the interviewer in order to ensure that the information was accurate. The interviews were transcribed in the language that they were administered. The interviewer refrained from further translating the Spanish transcripts into

English because she did not want to lose any information, or meaning, during that process. Given that the researcher is fluent in Spanish, she is aware that Spanish cannot be easily translated (verbatim) into English. Take for instance the following phrase, “*Ojos que no ven, corazón que no siente*”; translated verbatim: “*Eyes that don’t see heart that won’t feel*”. The problem with the aforementioned translation is that the phrase loses its intended meaning. A better translation, and one that embodies the meaning of the phrase as intended, would be “*What you don’t know, won’t hurt you*”. As the example illustrates, translating the words from one language to another increases the probability that the intended meaning may be lost in the translation. The aforementioned echoes a statement made earlier regarding Morse (2007) and a discussion on how language use establishes the importance of being able to convey exactly “what has happened” or “what is needed”, particularly when gathering narratives from non-English speaking participants (pp. 86-88). Given the importance of staying close to the data, and preserving the meaning of the participants’ narratives, the researcher felt it was best to abstain from transcribing the Spanish interviews into English. Recordings of all of the interviews were kept in order to ensure transparency of the research process as well as to facilitate review by outside parties if needed.

All of the data collected for this study was analyzed using the statistical software package SPSS 22 (2013); Atlas.ti version 7 was also used to explore emerging themes, and to further examine, the participants’ narratives as they relate to their help-seeking decisions, perception of domestic violence, and satisfaction with program services.

### *Data Reduction and Data Reconstruction*

The data gathered from the questionnaires were reviewed carefully in order to facilitate coding. The coding method used in this study is one that is recommended by Richards (as cited in Rudestam and Newton, 2007) and involves the following steps:

- (1) descriptive coding...involves storing and summarizing the attributes that describe each case (age, origin, etc.); (2) topic coding, or labeling text (as categories) with regard to its subject ... (3) and analytical coding, or creating new categories based on ideas that emerge as you reflect on the data (p182).

Using the coding method described by Richards enabled the researcher to begin coding the data as each interview was transcribed, which in turn, facilitated the identification of categories as well as the identification of emerging themes throughout the process.

As previously mentioned, the researcher transcribed each interview that was audio-recorded. She also included notes from the interview tool as well as audio-recordings of additional information provided by the client after the interview had ended and her own impressions. In addition to transcribing the audio-recorded interviews, the researcher also typed up the interview tool used for the two participants who did not want their interviews audio-recorded. All of the information was included in the transcriptions except for utterances that could not be made out by the participants. Given the importance of anonymity and of maintaining the participants' confidentiality, any names that were used (staff, program, or reference to self) were replaced with "XXXX" in the transcribed documents.

Once the interviews were transcribed, the researcher reviewed the transcriptions alongside the paper interview tool used to ensure accuracy of information. Taking one step further, the researcher reviewed each transcription with the audio-tape so that any discrepancies

would be detected and corrected. Once all of the transcripts were reviewed, the researcher re-read them and uploaded the transcribed documents to the Atlas.ti software where she then began general coding of the descriptive data (age, education, income, immigration status, etc.). Once the descriptive data was coded, the researcher went over each document several times in order to identify, create and code categories. For example, the category “Effects of Domestic Violence” was created when participants made the statements regarding the effects of domestic violence on their lives. For instance, the following statement: “...*right now I am protecting my heart. I told my mom I don't hate men, but right now I am not interested in meeting anyone.*” was coded as “Effects of Domestic Violence\_Impact on Future Relationships” under the category “Effects of Domestic Violence”. Further examination of the text based data yielded two more codes for the aforementioned category (Effects of Domestic Violence\_Children, and Effects of Domestic Violence\_Emotional Impact). The researcher continued to review the data in order to identify and examine the themes that emerged more critically until she felt she had reached the point of saturation.

### *Ethical Considerations*

As previously mentioned, the sample under study was a convenience sample of Latinas who at the time of the data collection process, were seeking services for their domestic violence situation in one of the programs that agreed to participate in the study. As such, the primary concern of the researcher was to ensure that the participants felt safe and confident in knowing their confidentiality would be maintained. To that end, the participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and given an informed consent form. The informed consent form outlined the purpose of the study, but more importantly, it discussed how confidentiality would

be maintained, the participants' rights as a research subject, and their right to terminate their participation at any time. The informed consent forms also included the contact information for the John Jay College Institutional Review Board and the researcher's advisor. The informed consent forms were given to the participants in the language of their choice (Spanish or English). Copies of the signed informed consents were given to all participants who deemed it safe to take them prior to conducting the interviews.

Prior to recording the interviews, the researcher informed the participants that the recordings would be transcribed and of the need to use pseudonyms to protect their identities. The participants were asked not to use nicknames or any aliases that they may have used in the past in order to ensure their confidentiality. The participants appeared to like this aspect of the interview process. Many of the participants chose their pseudonyms fairly quickly. For those who had some difficulty choosing a name, the researcher had them choose a random letter from a manila envelope and create a name that started with the letter chosen. The pseudonyms were used on all of the documents, with the exception of the consent forms and cash stipend receipts. The receipts were stapled to the informed consent forms and kept separately from the interview questionnaires. All documents for the study were kept in a locked drawer in one of the offices at John Jay College.

The interviews were conducted at a location and time that was selected by the participants. It was important that the participants select the location so that they felt comfortable and safe. The interviews, with the exception of two, were conducted in a private space provided by the participating programs or in an office provided by the Sociology Department at John Jay College. Given the nature of the study- that of interviewing women from different programs- conducting the interviews in the spaces provided by the programs did not pose a risk for

breaching the confidentiality of the participants' interviews because their responses could not be linked back to those programs. There were two interviews that were conducted in the participants' homes due to scheduling conflicts. The researcher consented to interview those participants in their homes after discussing the participants' request with her committee chair. Given that the participants were not living with their abusers and had not had any contact (positive or negative) with their abusers for some time, it was deemed safe for both parties. The interviews were conducted in the language preferred by the participant (19 Spanish/13 English).

### *Study Limitations*

As with all research, this project has its limitations. One limitation is that of using convenience samples of help-seeking Latinas and domestic violence programs. Although the use of convenience samples excludes, by design, other groups or individuals who might contribute to the study and questions being investigated, their use does facilitate the recruitment of members in the population of interest. Given the focus of the research was on help-seeking Latinas and the programs they utilize, it was important to the present study to ensure that the units of analysis were made up of those who identify with being Latina/Hispanic or that listed the availability of services in Spanish.

Another limitation is that of sample size. As indicated earlier, the focus of this study was to explore the processes and meanings that Latinas ascribe to their experience with victim services and not to generalize the findings. Although the findings may not be generalized to all help seeking Latinas, the process being employed will serve to inform on how to approach a larger study. Specifically, it will help by identifying what works and what could be improved. In addition, the data that emerges from the current study can also serve as impetus for future and

more focused research on this topic (i.e., provision of culturally competent services). It was the expectation of this researcher, that the current study would produce information that will not only contribute to the current literature on Latinas and domestic violence, but also contribute to the body of knowledge on what help-seeking Latinas want, and need, in order to address their current situations.

Despite the small sample size, the findings generated from the current study, can help to foster an interest in focused research and/or exploratory research on other areas of Latina victims/survivors of domestic violence. One focused research area could be on the social networks of Latina victims of domestic violence. Although exploring victims' networks is beyond the scope of the current project, future research focused on exploring victim networks may employ a respondent driven sampling (RDS) method to recruit participants. The RDS approach would enable the researcher access to other victims who may not be seeking services, and such a discovery may lead to the exploration on the non-use of victim services programs and the use of, perhaps, non-organizational related resources or 'networks', in managing their current situations. Findings from the current research may also lead to research focused on the experiences of Latinas seeking assistance and protection from the different agencies that comprise the criminal justice system. Questions explored in the current study such as the economic status of the victims, their experiences with criminal justice services (i.e., police and DA's office) as well as the likelihood of using those services in the future, may help provide insight about other networks that impact the help-seeking behaviors of Latinas. In either case, the current research serves as an impetus for future research that may help merge policy with practice.



## CHAPTER FIVE

### Sample

#### *Description of Sample: Demographics*

The participants for this study were a convenience sample of 32 help-seeking Latina victims of domestic violence that were enrolled in a participating domestic violence program. Of the 32 participants, six were residing in a domestic violence shelter at the time of the interview, but only two of the participants discussed their experiences with the services they were receiving at those shelters.

All of the participants identified themselves as Latinas (n=32). Demographic data (Table 1) of the sample show that the majority of the participants (n=17) were between the ages of 30-39. The majority of the sample (n=12) reported a 1<sup>st</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade education, followed by seven participants reporting some high school and nine participants reporting having some college, an Associates and/or a Master's Degree or higher. More than half of the sample was unemployed at the time of their interviews. The majority of women reported an annual income of less than \$10,000. The majority of the participants reported having children and the majority of the children were under the age of 18.

The participants were divided into two groups (foreign-born or U.S.-born) based on their stated immigration status.<sup>25</sup> The majority of the participants reported being born outside the United States and were subsequently placed in the foreign-born group. Of the participants in the foreign-group, 15 were born in Mexico. Eight of the participants reported being born in the

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<sup>25</sup> Immigration status was determined by the answer given to the following question: *Which of the following best describes your immigration status: US Born / Foreign-Born?*

United States (7 of Puerto Rican ethnicity and 1 of Dominican ethnicity). Most of the participants preferred Spanish over English (17 vs. 7) and the remaining participants reported not having a preference.

Table 1

*Cases by Demographic Variables (N=32)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency
<i>Age</i>	
21-29 years old	8
30-39 years old	17
40-49 years old	4
50-65 years old	3
<i>Highest Level of Education</i>	
1st -8th Grade	12
Some High School	7
High School Diploma	3
GED	1
Some College	5
Associates Degree	1
Master's Degree or Higher	3
<i>Employment Status</i>	
Employed	14
Unemployed	18
<i>Income (N=26)*</i>	
\$0 - \$10,000	18
\$11,000- \$25,000	4
\$26,000- \$45,000	2
\$46,000- \$80,000	1
\$81,000- \$100,000	1
<i>Children</i>	
Yes	30
No	2
<i>Number of Children (N=30)</i>	
1 Child	8
2 Children	8

Table 1. Continued

*Cases by Demographic Variables (N=32)*

Demographic Variable	Frequency
3 Children	8
4 Children	3
5+ Children	3
<i>Age of Children (N=30)</i>	
Under 18	23
Over 18	3
Under/Over 18	4
<i>Immigration Status**</i>	
Foreign-born	24
U.S.-born	8
<i>Country of Origin- Foreign-born (N=24)</i>	
México	15
Dominican Republic	3
Guatemala	2
Honduras	2
El Salvador	1
Jamaica~	1
<i>US-born Ethnicity (N=8)</i>	
Dominican	1
Puerto Rican	7
<i>Language Preferred</i>	
Spanish	17
English	7
Doesn't Matter	8

Note: \*Income variable frequencies and percentages were based on 26 respondents; those respondents who responded “Don’t Know” or who “Refused to Answer” were excluded.

\*\*Immigration Status variable relates to “Foreign-born” or “US-born” classifications

~Other: Country of Origin variable: Respondent was born in Jamaica to a Cuban mother and identified as *Latina*

### *Description of Sample: Types of Services Utilized*

Table 2 displays data on the reported services used by the women in this study. Although six participants were residing in a domestic violence shelter at the time of their interview, only two discussed their experiences with the domestic violence shelter.<sup>26</sup>

When asked how they heard about their program, 10 of the participants reported having been referred by another program, 8 reported hearing about the program via a friend, co-worker, or other person, 3 via outreach efforts, 2 via a hotline and the police and 3 via the DA's office, lawyer, court or by some other means.

More than half of the participants were enrolled in the program for less than 9 months with the majority of the remaining participants (n=9) having been enrolled for 12 months or more. The majority of the sample also reported they had experienced more than one domestic violence incident (n=24), were receiving and participating in counseling services and (n=28), and were receiving case management services (n=22).

Case management incorporated services such as referrals to address the participants' immediate needs as well as advocacy services. Legal advocacy (court accompaniment, referrals to attorneys to assist with child support, divorce, immigration, and other legal matters the participants' may have) was used by 19 of the participants at the time of their interviews. Half of the participants (n=16) reported having engaged in safety planning, while 13 reported using crisis intervention and group counseling services.

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<sup>26</sup> Participant experiences and discussion on domestic violence program and shelter services will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Some of the participants (n=8) reported utilizing services for their children. Children services incorporated individual counseling for the children as well as referrals for medical and outside counseling services.

Table 2.

*Help-Seeking: Utilization of Services (N=32)*

Variable	Frequency
<i>Type of Program*</i>	
Domestic Violence Program	30
Domestic Violence Shelter	2
<i>Heard About Program</i>	
Outreach	3
Hotline	2
Word of Mouth	8
Referred by Police	2
Referred by DA's Office/Lawyer/Courts	3
Another Program	10
Other	3
<i>Length of Enrollment (in months)</i>	
Less than one month	4
1-3 months	6
3-6 months	8
6-9 months	3
9-12 months	2
12+ months	9
<i>First Domestic Violence Incident</i>	
Yes	8
No	24
<i>First Time Seeking Services</i>	
Yes	20
No	12
<i>Number of Times Sought Services for Domestic Violence Incidents</i>	
2 Times	6
3 Times	2
3-5 Times	2

Table 2. Continued

*Help-Seeking: Utilization of Services (N=32)*

Variable	Frequency
5+ Times	2
<i>Current Valid Order of Protection</i>	
Yes	18
No	14
<i>Program Services Utilized</i>	
Case Management	22
Individual Counseling	28
Group Counseling	13
Aftercare Services	2
Independent Living Skills	10
Legal Advocacy	19
Safety Planning	16
Crisis Intervention	13
Services for Children	8
Other Services Provided	7

\*Note: At time of interview, there were 6 participants residing in a domestic violence shelter. However, only two of the participants (24: Jenny and 31: Taylor) focused on the shelter during the interview.

*Participant Summaries*

The participants are briefly introduced below. The summaries were written shortly after the interviews and the transcription of the digital recordings took place, as part of the process of working with and analyzing the data collected. In addition, the summaries presented below have been edited for ease of presentation during this portion of the discussion. Given the aforementioned, it is important to note that some of the information presented below (employment status, income, housing compositions and program enrollment) may have changed since the interviews took place and the writing of this paper.

### ***Alex***

Alex is 33 years old, was born in Guatemala and has been living in the United States for 7 years. She has 3 children, ages 6, 4.5, and 3. She lives with her children. Alex has a high school diploma and is working part-time. Her primary sources of income are her wages, public assistance and food stamps. She doesn't know how much she earns annually. She experienced physical and emotional abuse in her relationship. The abuse started after 6 months, but before the first year of their relationship. The abuse began in the United States. She described domestic violence as the worst thing that can happen to a woman and the worst thing that happened to her. This is not the first incident, time, or program where she has sought services. She learned about this program via another program that provided services to her daughter. She's been enrolled in the program for 4 months. She is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Bianca***

Bianca is 21 years old and is U.S. born. She has a one year old son and lives at home with her mother, grandparents, siblings and mother's partner. She is not working and is enrolled in a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) preparatory program. Bianca is hearing impaired and her primary source of income is SSI. Her annual income is between 5K and 10K. This is not the first time she is seeking services and this was not her first domestic violence incident. This is also not the first program where she has sought services. She has been enrolled in the program for one month. Bianca experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started within 6 months of their relationship, which was after she met the abuser's former boyfriend. She didn't know that he was gay. She describes domestic violence as a war between cats and dogs. Anger and spirituality are behaviors she associates with domestic violence. Bianca is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Esni***

Esni is 38 years old and lives with her 3 children, ages 18, 12, and 9. She is working part-time and hopes to enroll in a GED program. She has a ninth grade education. Her primary sources of income are her wages, SSI for the 2 kids and child support money. She was born in Honduras and has lived in the United States for 16 years. She doesn't know what her annual income is. This is not the first time she is seeking services and it is not the first domestic violence incident. This is her second time seeking services from this program (this has been her only program); she has been enrolled for 4 weeks. She experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. He never hit or threatened her with an object. The abuse started three years into their relationship, after she became pregnant with her son. She met her abuser in the United States. Esni describes domestic violence as something horrible that she would not wish on anyone. She associates hatred and a desire to control with domestic violence. Esni is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Gina***

Gina is 27 years old, foreign-born, and completed the 7th grade. Gina's country of origin is Mexico and she has been living in the United States for 10 years. Of those 10 years 6 were on Long Island and 4 in NYC. She has 3 children ages, 4, 7 and 9. Gina is unemployed and her primary source of income is public assistance. She does not know how much she earns annually. Gina, her partner and children share a residence with Gina's brother, his wife and their children. Gina is currently living with her abuser; they have been together for 11 years. This is Gina's first time seeking services for domestic violence in a program, but it is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 6 months and is receiving individual counseling as well as counseling for the children. Gina reports physical and emotional abuse.



The abuse started at the beginning of their relationship and before they came to the United States. She said it was worse when living on Long Island because there weren't many services available. Gina describes domestic violence as physical and emotional abuse toward women. She associates pushing, cursing, and hitting with domestic violence.

### ***Giselle***

Giselle is 23 years old, born in the Dominican Republic and has been living in the United States for about 5 years now. She is enrolled in a non-residential domestic violence program. Giselle lives at home with her mother and 13 year-old brother. She has no children and is not currently working. She earns less than \$5,000 a year. Her primary sources of income are her mother and some of the savings she had from her previous job. She has some college and is currently enrolled in a forensic science program for an Associate's Degree. This is not the first program where Giselle has sought services for her domestic violence incidents. She has sought services 5 - 6 times. Giselle has been enrolled in this program for 5 months. Giselle experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started 2.5 years into the relationship after she discovered that he was cheating on her. Giselle describes domestic violence as a complex situation where one may not even realize they are in it- a situation where one is focused on alleviating the situations and living day to day. She associates being submissive and staying calm with domestic violence behaviors on the part of the victim and lots of trauma and need for control over others on the part of the abuser. Giselle is not currently involved with anyone and stated that she is 'frustrated'.

### ***Irma***

Irma is 36 years old and was born in Honduras but raised in Mexico. She has an elementary school education and is working full-time. Her annual income is between \$15K and \$20K. She has been living in the United States for 15 years. Irma has three children ages 17, 10 and 7 of which the oldest is male. She currently resides with her two daughters. This is not the first time she sought services (she sought services 3 times before). This is not the only program where she has sought services and it is not her first domestic violence incident. It is however, the first time that she reported the abuse. She has been enrolled in the program for one year. Irma experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. She didn't know that he was violating her. She learned that he was sexually abusing her once she started receiving services. She saw it (sexual intercourse) as an obligation not a violation. She said he never threatened her with an object, but he would throw shoes, slippers and once threw a cup at her. She met her abuser in the United States and the abuse started within the first year of their relationship. Irma describes domestic violence as not just physical. She used to think domestic violence was only when your partner hit you- not yelled at you. She associates aggression, jealousy, possessiveness, checking your phone, and not letting you go out with anyone with domestic violence. She is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Jarisbeth***

Jarisabeth is 35 years old, was born in Mexico and has been living in the United States for 16 years. She has two children ages 15 and 9 and lives with her children and grandchild. She is unemployed at the moment because her contract finished. Her primary sources of income are public assistance and Food Stamps. She earns less than 5K annually. Jarisabeth has a 9th grade education. This is the first time she seeks services and the only program where she has sought

services. It is not her first incident. Jarisbeth has been enrolled in the program for one year. Jarisbeth experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started within the first 6 months of their relationship and before they came to the United States. Jarisbeth describes domestic violence as the worst thing that can happen to a woman. Physical, verbal and abuse of children are behaviors she associates with domestic violence. She has been in a new relationship for 6 months (living separately).

### ***Jessica***

Jessica is 42 years old, has a 7 year-old daughter and some college. She is not currently working because of childcare issues, appointments, and counseling. She earns less than 5K annually and her primary sources of income are public assistance and food stamps. She currently resides with her friend and two other children. She was born in Mexico and has been living in the United States for 15 years, of which 7-8 are in NYC. This is her first time seeking services, the only program where she has sought services, and her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 14 months. Jessica experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. Onset of abuse was within the first 6 months of the relationship. She met her abuser in the United States. Jessica describes domestic violence as something tough; she used to think domestic violence was when you were killed. She associates stalking behavior, yelling, and aggression with domestic violence. Jessica is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Laura***

Laura is 37 years old and has a 9th grade education. She was born in El Salvador and has been living in the United States for 11 years. She has two girls, ages 8 and 9 and lives with them and her partner. She has been with her partner for 11 years. She is not working because there is

no work; her primary source of income is what her partner provides and food stamps. Her annual income is between 5K and 10K. This is the first time seeking services and the first program where she has sought services. It is also the first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 3 months. Laura experienced physical and emotional abuse in her relationship. She said the abuse started within the first 6 months of their relationship. She met her abuser in the United States; he is from Mexico. She doesn't know how to describe domestic violence because it was always like that in her home growing up. Getting angry a lot, breaking things, and controlling behaviors are behaviors that she associates with domestic violence.

### ***Nancy G.***

Nancy G. is 31 years old and has a 9th grade education. She is not working and is enrolled in a training program to learn English. Her primary sources of income are public assistance and Food Stamps; her annual income is less than \$5K. Nancy has four children ages 12, 9, 6, and 4. She currently lives with her 4 children and a lady that rents a room to her. Nancy was born in Mexico and has been living in the United States for 10 years. This is the first time Nancy seeks services and the only program she has used, but it is not her first domestic violence incident. Nancy experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. She suffered so much that she wished he would die:

*“...era como un odio bien fuerte que muchas veces yo pensaba que ojala le atroparía un carro y se muriera. Ojala que un día pudiera salir de este infierno que estaba viviendo.”*

(Translation: “...it was a hatred so strong, that many times I would wish that a car would hit him and he would die. I wished that one day I would be free from the hell I was living.”)

The abuse began in Mexico, but she met him in the United States. The abuse started at the very beginning of their relationship. Nancy describes domestic violence as the following behaviors: not having your own voice, hitting, controlling, and lack of trust. She also associates stalking behavior with domestic violence. Nancy is not in a romantic relationship at this time.

### ***Nicole***

Nicole is 26 years old and has 3 children ages 8, 4, and 3 months. She lives with her mother and her 14 year old brother. She has a 7th grade education and is not currently working. Her primary source of income is food stamps; she did not want to disclose what she earned annually. Nicole was born in Mexico, but has lived in the United States for 23 years. This is Nicole's first domestic violence incident and the first time she is seeking services. She has been enrolled in the program for 2 years. Nicole experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse during her relationship. The abuse started after the first year of their relationship; after she gave birth to her daughter. She describes domestic violence as being trapped: *"...like if you were inside a closet and you can't get out."* Nicole associates impression management with domestic violence: *"He was like, tried to be a nice father outside; inside my house he was different..."* Nicole is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Nicole Two***

Nicole Two was born in the United States and is 30 years old. She has two boys, ages 4, but does not live with them (the boys were placed in foster care by the Administration for Children Services (ACS) due to her domestic violence incident). Nicole is currently being charged with attempted murder. Nicole has some high school and is not employed at the moment due to her court case. She lives alone and her primary source of income is Food Stamps. She

stated that her dad pays for her cellphone bill. Her annual income is less than 5K. This is not her first time seeking services, not her first domestic violence incident, and this is not the first program where she has sought services. She has been enrolled in the program for 7 months. Nicole experienced physical and emotional abuse. The abuse started within the first six months of their relationship. Nicole describes domestic violence as arguing and fighting. She associates witnessing abuse as a child with learning how to be abusive: *“I think how you are being brought up...if you see it in a household you learn it...”* Nicole is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Nuve***

Nuve is 40 years old and was born in the Dominican Republic. She has a 4th grade education and has been living in the United States for 22 years. She is not currently working and does some volunteer work. Her approximate annual income is less than \$5,000 a year and her primary source of income is Food Stamps. Nuve has 4 children ages 25, 19, 12, and 7 and lives in a City Shelter (PATH) with her 7 year old son. This domestic violence program is the only program where she has sought services. She looked for services twice before (once at PATH, but they didn't help her because she didn't have proof). She has been enrolled in the domestic violence program for about 4-6 months. Nuve experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started after the first year of their relationship. She believes it started because he became smitten with the 17 year -old that lived in the apartment with them (they were living with another couple at the time). Nuve describes domestic violence as bad and unjust and associates violent behavior with domestic violence. Nuve is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Taylor\****

Taylor is 35 years old and was born in the United States. She has 5 children ages 21, 18, 16, 13, and 3. She is currently living in a domestic violence shelter with 4 of her children. Taylor works full time and earns between 5K and 10K annually. Her wages, supplemented by public assistance and Food Stamps, are her primary sources of income. This is not the first time she has sought services and it is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been living in the domestic violence shelter for three months. She experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. She cannot remember when the abuse began. She describes domestic violence as more than just physical. The shelter has provided her with classes on domestic violence and she now describes stalking, physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse as domestic violence. Taylor associates behaviors such as asking for a woman's money or yelling at her with domestic violence. Taylor is not in a relationship at this time.

\*Note: She is describing services and speaking of satisfaction about the shelter.

### ***Terry***

Terry is 32 years old and has a high school diploma. She is not working because she just had a baby (one month old). Her primary source of income is her partner (he is not the abuser). She is receiving help from the Women, Infant, and Children Nutritional Program (WIC) and her annual income is less than 5K. She is currently living in an apartment with her partner, baby, and a roommate. Terry was born in Mexico and has lived in the United States for 12 years. This is the first time she is seeking services and the only program where she sought services. This is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 2 weeks. Terry experienced physical and emotional abuse during her relationship with her ex-partner. She was with him for 4 years and the abuse began at the beginning of their relationship (a few months

after she started living with him). She met her abuser in the United States. Terry describes domestic violence as physical and emotional abuse; she associates a smooth talker who knows how to reel you in with someone who is an abuser.

### ***Thalia***

Thalia is 32 years old and has three children ages 12, 6, and 3. She was born in Mexico and has been living in the United States for 13 years. She has an elementary school education and works part-time. Her primary source of income comes from public assistance and food stamps for the children. Her annual income is between 5K and 10K. She lives with her three children. This is the first time she has sought services for domestic violence. However, this is not the first program she has used and this is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 8 months. She experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse (she does not define obliging to sex when she didn't want to as sexual abuse). The abuse started after the first year in their relationship, after her son was born. She met her abuser in the United States. Thalia describes domestic violence as physical and emotional abuse. She associates controlling and humiliating behaviors with domestic violence. Thalia is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Carolina***

Carolina is 35 years old and has 4 children ages, 11, 6 and 3 year-old twins. She was born in Mexico and has lived in the United States for 11 years. Carolina has an elementary school education and is not working because of childcare issues. Her primary income is public assistance in the form of cash and food stamps. She earns less than 5K annually. This is her first time seeking services, first program used, and first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 2 months. She experienced physical, emotional, economic, and



sexual abuse. The abuse started within the first 6 months of their relationship. She met her abuser in the United States. Carolina describes domestic violence as dangerous and not only physical in nature. She associates controlling and aggressive behaviors with domestic violence. Carolina is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Esperanza***

Esperanza is 30 years old and does not have any children. She has a master's degree and works full time. Her annual income is between 50K and 80K. Esperanza is U.S. born and lives alone. This is Esperanza's first incident and first time seeking services; she has been enrolled in the program for less than a month. Esperanza is a stalking victim. The stalking began after she stopped their dating relationship. Esperanza reported that she did not experience physical, emotional, economic or sexual abuse. Esperanza was unable to describe domestic violence because she only saw it as someone being hit; she stated she couldn't see the emotional aspect of the abuse. Esperanza associates anger, erratic, and dominant behavior with domestic violence. Esperanza is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Huffy***

Huffy is 65 years old and has an older daughter. She lives alone and does not work because of her disabilities. She is U.S. born (Puerto Rico) and has lived in the states for 59 years. Her annual income is between 5K and 10K and her primary sources of income are social security benefits and SSI. This is the first time she is seeking services and the first program used. This is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for five years. Huffy experienced physical and emotional abuse. The abuse started with her last partner after 6 months, but within the first year of their relationship (after she moved in with her). Huffy

describes domestic violence as something that is hard to get out of. She is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Isabelle***

Isabelle is 22 years old and has been living in the United States since she was two years old (born in Mexico). Isabelle has a High School Diploma and is not currently working. She and her daughter are living with her parents and her 2 siblings. Her primary source of income is her reliance on her parents and some savings she had from a previous job. This is Isabelle's first domestic violence incident, first time seeking services, and first domestic violence program. She has been enrolled in the program for one month. Isabelle experienced physical, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse. The abuse began two years into their relationship and after she became pregnant. She said he started changing towards her after she gave birth. Isabelle describes domestic violence as physical and emotional abuse and she associates obsessiveness and controlling behaviors with domestic violence. Isabelle is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Jenny\****

Jenny is 26 years old, was born in the United States, and has a high school diploma and some college. She is currently unemployed and living in a domestic violence shelter with her 6 year old son. Her primary source of income is less than 5K annually; she receives food stamps and has Medicaid. This is not her first domestic violence incident and it's not the only program she has attended (was referred to the shelter by another program). She reports that this is the first time she is seeking services for her domestic violence situation. She has been in the domestic violence shelter for one month.\* She receives non -residential services at the participating program. Jenny experienced physical, emotional and economic abuse. The abuse began three

years into their relationship. She describes domestic violence as physical and verbal; she associates anger, physical abuse, and destroying property with domestic violence. Jenny is not in a relationship at this time.

\*Note: She is discussing the services at the shelter, which is not a participating program.

### ***Julia***

Julia is 53 years old, born in Mexico, and has lived in the United States for 25 years. She has 5 children (all over the age of 18) and she lives with her sister and two nephews. She works full time and earns between 10K and 15K annually. Her primary source of income is her job. This is her first time seeking services and the first program where she has sought services, but it is not her first incident with domestic violence. She has been enrolled in the program for one year. Julia experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started before they came to the United States and three years into their relationship- after he went into the military. Julia describes domestic violence as the abuser having control, yelling and getting angry, and being physical. She stated that she used to think “*te casaste; aguanta*” (translation: “*you got married; deal with it*”). She associates hitting kids, verbal abuse and controlling behaviors with domestic violence. Julia is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Larissa***

Larissa is 46 years old and born in Mexico. She has been living in the United States since she was 6 weeks old. She lives with her only child, a fourteen year old daughter. Larissa has a PhD and is a director of a university program. Her annual income is between 80K and 100K. This is her first incident and first time seeking services, but it’s not the first program she has utilized (she sought services in other places but reports that they were not very helpful). She has

been enrolled in the current program for 1.5 years. Larissa experienced physical, emotional, and economic abuse during her relationship. The abuse (emotional) began within the first three weeks of the relationship. She describes domestic violence as “violence... power overt” and associates physical, financial, and verbal abuse with domestic violence. Larissa is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Lisette***

Lisette is 44 years old and has a 10 year old son. She was born in the Dominican Republic and has been living in the United States for about 26-27 years. She is currently living in a city shelter with her son. She has some college and is not working at the moment because she is dealing with a sleeping disorder. Her primary sources of income are public assistance and food stamps. She does not know what her annual income is. This is her first time seeking services (intensely) in a program and this is the only program she has used. This was not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for over a year. She experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started shortly after he became a border in her home. Lisette describes domestic violence as emanating from sex: *“DV mostly comes from sex ..., most people, most females out there, they have to understand that when you are in a very, very vulnerable state of mind, the only way, I’ve been there, the only way to feel good about ourselves and as a female, is spreading our legs because we’re worth it, we feel that we’re worth something to that man. And that’s not the way to go.”* She associates behaviors such as wanting to change the way a person acts or dresses with domestic violence: *“It starts like, “I don’t like this. I would appreciate you change this little top you’re wearing” ... Okay, “why?” There’s always “a why”. ‘Because I don’t want men looking at you’.* She is in a

relationship for 9 months now. He is not the abuser; the abuser is deceased. This participant is awaiting trial for stabbing her abuser to death.

### ***Lucy***

Lucy is 28 years old, U.S. born, and has two children ages 5 and 10. She is working full time as a para-legal and her primary source of income are her wages. Her annual salary is between 40K and 45K. Lucy has a high school diploma and is currently enrolled in college. She lives with her two children. This is the first time she is seeking services and the first program she utilizes, but it's not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for two months. Lucy experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started later in the relationship after she told her abuser she was leaving him. Lucy defines domestic violence as emotional, verbal, and physical abuse. She identifies with being the primary abuser in the relationship. She reported that she used to verbally abuse her husband for years. Lucy is currently in a new relationship.

### ***Maribel***

Maribel is 39 years old and is U.S. born. She has 3 children ages 17, 12, and 5. The two younger sons are the biological sons of the abuser and they live with him (they were removed from her by ACS). Maribel lives alone. Her abuser is a former police officer (who was abusing her while he was still active). Maribel has an Associate's Degree and works fulltime as a manager. Her annual salary is between 30K and 35K. This is not her first domestic violence incident and it is not the first time she seeks services. However, this is the first program where she is receiving services because she was placed on waiting lists before. This is the second time she is enrolled in this program. She has been enrolled for 5 months now. Maribel experienced

physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. The abuse started within the first 6 months of their relationship in the form of emotional abuse. She describes domestic violence as being put down, demeaned and physical. She associates blaming behaviors with domestic violence. She is currently in a relationship (not with the abuser).

### *Nancy*

Nancy is 36 years and was born in Guatemala. She has 2 sons, ages 6 and 9 respectively. She has been living in the United States for 14 years. She has an elementary school education. She is unemployed and the primary source of income is the SSI assistance she receives for her son; however, she sometimes cleans houses when she can. Her estimated annual income is between \$5,000 and \$10,000. This is the first time and first program where she has sought services. However, it was not the first incident of domestic violence. She has been enrolled in the program for 2 months. Nancy met her abuser in the United States and the abuse started during the first week of their relationship. Nancy experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse. She describes domestic violence as emotional, physical, and sexual abuse. She associates behaviors such as verbal abuse, cursing, hitting, and financial stress with domestic violence. She is not currently involved in a romantic relationship.

### *Nilsa*

Nilsa is 36 years old, born in Mexico, and has been living in the United States for 7 years. She has an elementary school education and works full-time. She earns between \$10k and \$15K a year. Her primary sources of income are food stamps and her wages. She has 5 children ages 18, 14, 12, 9, and 5. She lives with her 5 year old daughter. This is the first time she is seeking services and the only program she where she has sought services. This is not her first domestic

violence incident. Nilsa has been enrolled in the program for 3 months and has experienced physical and emotional abuse. The abuse started in Mexico, within the first year of their relationship. When they moved to the United States it became worse because she didn't have her mother or his mother to help curb the behavior. She describes domestic violence as something that happens in a home because women allow it to happen to them. She said she allowed it to happen to her because she was afraid, because she didn't want to be alone and didn't have anyone to help her. She associates hitting, verbal abuse and physical abuse with domestic violence. She has been romantically involved with someone for 4 months (not the abuser).

### *Nina*

Nina is 28 years old and has 2 children ages 7 and 8 months. Nina is from Mexico and has been living in the United States for 12 years, of which 7 are in NYC. She currently lives with her husband and two children. She has been with her husband for 2.5 years. Nina has an elementary school education and she is not working; her primary source of income are her husband's wages. This is not her first domestic violence incident or her first time seeking services; she has sought services 4 times before, but this is the first time she found services and the first program she has utilized. Nina has been enrolled in the program for two weeks. Nina has experienced physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse (sexual abuse was experienced with her ex-husband). Nina has always wanted a family, which is why she stays in the relationship. Nina can't leave the relationship at this time because she feels it will be much harder for her. She wants to prepare herself (school, documents, and work) first. The onset of the abuse began at the beginning of her relationship. She met her abuser in the United States. Nina describes domestic violence as abuse where the strongest prey on the weakest. She used to think

that hitting was the only thing associated with domestic violence, but now associates behaviors such as controlling money, humiliation and making you feel bad as abuse.

### ***Song***

Song is 57 years old and was born in Jamaica, but raised in Canada. She is Latina via her mother who is Cuban (she also identifies with being a Latina). Song has been living in the United States for 7 years. She has a Master's Degree and some post-graduate work completed towards her PhD. Song has two children over the age of 21 and works in exchange for services (currently at a church). Her annual income is zero at the moment. Good Will helps her get by; she does not have any health benefits. This is not the first time she seeks services and it is not the only program. Song has sought services at 8 different places (including this domestic violence program). She has been enrolled in this program for about 10 months. Song experienced physical and emotional abuse during her relationship. The abuse began 4 years after she came to the United States to be with him. Song defines domestic violence as "*anything that devalues, invalidates a person*" in a family; control and manipulation are behaviors she associates with domestic violence. Song is not in a relationship at this time; but stated that she is still emotionally connected to her abuser.

### ***Tatiana***

Tatiana is 33 years old and was born in Mexico. She has been living in the United States for 15 years. She has 3 children, ages 10, 6, and 4. She has an elementary school education and has a part-time job where she works for 2 hours a week. Her primary sources of income are public assistance, food stamps and her wages. Her annual income is less than 5K. Tatiana is currently living in a shelter with her children, but she is discussing the non-residential domestic



violence program during this interview. This is her first time seeking services and the first program she utilizes. This is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in the program for 1 year. She experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse during her relationship. The abuse began 4 years after they began their relationship. She describes domestic violence as physical abuse, verbal abuse, and throwing things. She associates controlling behavior, jealousy and neglecting one's family with domestic violence. Tatiana is not in a relationship at this time.

### ***Theresa***

Theresa is 31 years old and has a 10th grade education. She was born in Mexico and has been living in the United States for 2.5 years. She has two children, ages 7 and 12, but they live in Mexico with her sister. She is living with a friend. She works full-time and her annual income is between 10K and 15K. Her primary source of income are her wages. This is the first time she is seeking services and the only program, but it is not her first domestic violence incident. She has been enrolled in this program for 11 months. Theresa experienced physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. The abuse started before coming to the United States and later in their relationship, about 6 months after they married. She lived with the abuse for 14 years. She wasn't able to describe domestic violence except to say that it is a very sad thing and it makes you feel like you are worthless. She associates lack of communication and lack of respect with domestic violence. Theresa is in a relationship (not with the abuser).

## CHAPTER SIX

### Research Findings and Discussion

This chapter focuses on discussing the findings of the study, some of which derived from the research questions and others that emerged from the women's narratives. The chapter is organized in the manner outlined below. The findings for each of the research questions will be followed by concepts that emerged from the data. There are four sections:

- I. Latinas Lived Experiences with Domestic Violence
  - a. Description of experience with domestic violence (research question).
  - b. Behaviors associated with domestic violence (research question).
  - c. Coercive control and familial extension of coercive control (emerging concept).
- II. Help-Seeking
  - a. Description of help-seeking behaviors (research question).
  - b. Consequences of help-seeking (emerging concept).
- III. Experience With Domestic Violence Services
  - a. Satisfaction with services rendered (research question).
  - b. Criminal justice response to domestic violence (emerging concept).
- IV. Women's Voices
  - a. Perception of society's response to domestic violence
  - b. Living in the United States and perception of domestic violence
  - c. Effects of domestic violence
  - d. Wants and needs
  - e. Advice to women

- f. Reflections: change
- g. What's needed to address domestic violence and help victims/survivors

## I. Latinas Lived Experiences with Domestic Violence

### *Description of Experience with Domestic Violence*

One of the specific aims of this study was to explore the experiences of Latinas with domestic violence. The participants were asked about the types of abuse they experienced and to describe behaviors they associate with domestic violence. The aforementioned served to gauge the range of abuse the participants experienced as well as their perception of domestic violence. The data for each is presented here followed by a discussion on the range of abuse the women experienced.

### *Types of Abuse Experienced*

Domestic violence, or intimate partner violence, includes physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse as well as stalking behaviors. The types of abuse investigated in this research are listed below and include the elements of the defined terms that were used in the questions asked during the interviews:

*Physical Abuse*: being pushed, shoved, punched, slapped, and/or grabbed; hit with a fist, open hand, or with an object.

*Emotional Abuse*: being called names to be made to feel badly, humiliated, and/or being threatened with an object.

*Economic Abuse*: prevented from getting and/or keeping a job; threatened to withhold money; controlling all of the money.

Sexual Abuse: forced into any sexual activity against one's will; withholding sex.

Stalked:<sup>27</sup> being followed and spied on; repeated calls, e-mails, and text messages; showing up at your place of employment/home; making threats against your loved ones.

For the majority of the participants (31), physical abuse co-occurred with other types of abuse. The majority of the participants reported experiencing physical, emotional, economic, and sexual abuse; while 9 reported physical and emotional abuse, 3 reported physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, 2 reported physical, emotional, and economic abuse and 1 participant reported experiencing emotional abuse and being stalked (see Table 3.1). Although not part of the original inquiry regarding types of abuse experienced, stalking behaviors emerged as a form of abuse experienced by the women during their narratives and will be discussed later in this section.

Looking at each abuse type separately, one sees that the majority of the participants (n=31) reported experiencing physical abuse. Of the thirty-one, 29 reported being hit with a fist, open-hand, pushed, shoved, slapped, and/or grabbed and 11 reported being hit with an object.

All of the participants reported experiencing emotional abuse. The majority reported having been called names and humiliated and 12 reported having been threatened with an object. For economic abuse, 13 reported having been prevented from getting a job and 17 reported the abuser threatened to withhold money from them. More than half of the sample (n=20) reported experiencing sexual abuse.

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<sup>27</sup> Stalking was not being investigated during this research; however, one of the participants seeking services reported being stalked as her abuse type, so it is included here as part of the data collected. Stalking is considered abuse by victims and domestic violence advocates and agencies. The stalking definition used here is based on the New York Police Department's description. [[http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/domestic\\_violence/OE\\_Stalking\\_Stalker\\_Layout.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/nypd/downloads/pdf/domestic_violence/OE_Stalking_Stalker_Layout.pdf)]

Table 3.1

*Abuse Experience and Elements of Abuse (N=32)*

Variable	Frequency
<i>Type of Abuse</i>	
Physical	31
Emotional	32
Economic	19
Sexual	20
Stalking	1
<i>Physical Abuse</i>	
Hit with Object	11
Hit with Fist, Open-hand	29
Pushed, Shoved, Slapped, Grabbed	29
<i>Emotional Abuse</i>	
Called Names	31
Humiliated	30
Threatened with an Object	12
<i>Economic Abuse</i>	
Prevented Getting Job	13
Threatened to Withhold Money	17
<i>Sexual Abuse</i>	
Yes	20
No	12

*Domestic Violence Experience by Immigration Status*

Table 3.2

*Type of Abuse by Immigration Status*

	Physical	Emotional	Economic	Sexual	Stalking
<i>Immigration Status</i>					
Foreign-Born (n=24)	24	24	14	16	0
U.S.-Born (n= 8)	7	8	5	4	1

\*See Table 3.1 for definitions of abuse types.

As Table 3.2 shows, most of the women experienced physical and emotional types of abuse regardless of their immigration status. The foreign group reported experiencing economic abuse more so than the U.S.-born group, with little variation (14 and 5, respectively). There was also little variation between the two groups with sexual abuse (16 and 4, respectively), although the foreign-group was more likely to report having experienced sexual abuse.

### *Domestic Violence Experience by Sub-Group Identification*

Table 3.3

#### *Type of Abuse by Sub-Group Identification*

<i>Sub-Groups</i>	[ <i>n</i> ]	Physical	Emotional	Economic	Sexual	Stalking
Mexican	15	15	15	8	10	0
Dominican*	4	4	4	4	3	0
Honduran	2	2	2	2	2	0
Guatemalan	2	2	2	1	1	0
Salvadoran	1	1	1	0	0	0
Jamaican**	1	1	1	0	0	0
Puerto Rican	7	6	7	4	4	1

\*Three out of the four Dominican participants are foreign-born.

\*\*Respondent was born in Jamaica to a Cuban mother and identified as *Latina*.

\*\*\*See Table 3.1 for definitions of abuse types.

Table 3.3 reveals the types of abuse experienced by the women's sub-group identities. Physical abuse was experienced by most of the women (n=31) and emotional abuse was experienced by all of the women across the sub-group categories. The Mexican (10), Dominican (3), and Honduran women reported experiencing sexual abuse more so than women in other sub-groups. More than half of the Puerto Rican (4) and one of the Guatemalan women also reported having experienced sexual abuse. Results for reported sexual abuse were similar to those for reported economic abuse. All of the Dominican and Honduran women, most of the Mexican (8)

and Puerto Rican (4) and one of the Guatemalan women reported having experienced economic abuse. The Jamaican and Salvadoran women did not report having experienced sexual or economic abuse.

### *Behaviors Associated with Domestic Violence*

In an effort to explore how the women in the study perceived domestic violence, they were asked to describe behaviors that they associated with it. As the data reveal (Table 3.4), many of the women described behaviors (controlling, non-physical violence) that were not included in the initial abuse type categories (see Table 3.1). Instead, their descriptions provided insight about the various experiences they have had with domestic violence as well as the overarching theme of coercive control that emerged from their narratives. The latter will be discussed later in this section.

The women's responses were analyzed and collapsed in to one of the following categories that emerged from their collective responses: physical abuse (hitting/shoving/injuries); emotional abuse (verbal abuse/'humiliate you'/'put you down'); economic abuse (financial stress/controlling money/withholding and taking money away); controlling ('controlling'/lack of trust/ possessive/checking phone and other property/calling consistently/ 'telling you what to wear/how to dress'/ 'not letting you go out'); non-physical violence (anger/aggression/destroying property) and other (alcohol use/ 'pretending to be different'/blaming/domestic violence is viewed as normal).

*Behaviors Associated with Domestic Violence by Immigration Status and Sub-Group*

*Identification*

As the data in Table 3.4 show (see below), the foreign-born group provided more descriptions for each category than their U.S.-born counterparts. What is evident as well is that the majority of the foreign-born women associated behaviors that were collapsed into the “emotional” and “controlling” categories.

Table 3.4

*Behaviors Associated with Domestic Violence by Immigration Status*

<i>Immigration Status</i>	Physical	Emotional	Economic	Controlling	Non-Physical	Other
Foreign-Born (n=24)	8	10	4	15	4	4
U.S.-Born (n= 8)	1	2	2	1	0	2

\*The labels for each category were shortened for ease of presentation.

Table 3.5

*Behaviors Associated with Domestic Violence by Sub-Group Identification*

<i>Sub-Groups</i>	[n]	Physical	Emotional	Economic	Controlling	Non-Physical	Other
Mexican	15	6	8	3	7	2	2
Dominican*	4	1	0	1	3	1	3
Honduran	2	0	0	0	2	1	0
Guatemalan	2	2	1	1	1	0	0
Salvadoran	1	0	0	0	1	1	0
Jamaican**	1	0	1	0	1	0	0
Puerto Rican	7	0	2	1	1	0	1

\*Three out of the four Dominican participants are foreign-born.

\*\*Respondent was born in Jamaica to a Cuban mother and identified as *Latina*.

\*\*\*The labels for each category were shortened for ease of presentation.



The data in Table 3.5 reveals Mexican (7), Dominican (3), and Honduran women are more likely than women from other sub-groups to associate controlling behaviors with domestic violence. Mexican women (8) were also more likely than women across all sub-groups to associate emotionally abusive behaviors with domestic violence. In addition, Mexican (6) and Guatemalan women were more likely to associate physical violence with domestic violence. The latter is not meant to imply the women do not associate physical violence or emotionally abusive behaviors with domestic violence, for as that data in Table 3.1 reveals, 31 out of the 32 participants answered “yes” to having experienced physical abuse and all of the women reported experiencing emotional abuse. Instead, the women’s responses indicate how the women associate *additional* behaviors with domestic violence and those behaviors *derive* from their lived experiences with domestic violence. The following example helps illustrate the latter.

Although controlling behaviors are considered ‘non-physical violence’, a separate category with the label “controlling” was created in order to separate the women’s inferred and explicit reference to ‘control’ from other forms of non-physical violence.

As indicated in the data presented above (Tables 3.4 and 3.5), half of the women in the study associated controlling behaviors (inferred or explicitly) with domestic violence. The following examples illustrate the women’s descriptions of control:

Irma, Jessica, Nancy G., and Thalia’s descriptions of controlling behavior highlight regulations, restrictions, and lack of trust as controlling behaviors:

Irma: ...*pues que sea agresivo, celoso, posesivo, no te dejan salir con nadie, te chequean el teléfono. [Translation]: well, that the person is aggressive, jealous, possessive, doesn’t let you go out with anyone, checks your phone.*

Jessica: ...*el que prohíbe salir con amistades, el que siempre está chequeando el tiempo,*

*el que te grita, verdad, agresivo. [Translation]: he prohibits you from going out with friends, is always checking the time, the one who yells, you know, aggressive.*

Thalia: *...de que te humillen, te dominen, que te diga que es lo que te tienes que poner; como vértice. [Translation]: that they humiliate you, dominate you, tell you what you need to wear; how to dress yourself.*

Nancy G: *...cuando no tenía confianza en mí...estaba revisando todas mis cosas. Llamándome cada rato... No podía respirar. [Translation]: ...when he didn't trust me...he would look through all of my things. Called me all of the time...I couldn't breathe.*

Other women explicitly identified 'control' or 'the need to control' as behaviors they associated with domestic violence:

Song: *...anything designed to hurt, put down, control, manipulate.*

Giselle: *... que él siente, que le falta algo en su vida y él tiene que tener control sobre la vida de otra gente. [Translation]: ...that he feels that something is missing from his life and he needs to control the lives of others.*

Isabelle: *Controlling; someone who is very obsessive.*

Esni: *Un deseo enorme para controlarme. [Translation]: A strong desire to control me.*

Carolina: *...agresiva, controlante. [Translation]: aggressive, controlling.*

Laura: *... que se enoje mucho, que rompe cosas, controlante. [Translation]: gets angry a lot, breaks things, controlling.*

### *Range of Experience with Domestic Violence*

While the data presented in the tables above provides some information on the types of abuse experienced by the women in this study, they do not convey the extent of their experiences with domestic violence. A greater understanding of the women's experiences, and the impact of domestic violence on their lives, was facilitated by the qualitative component of this study.

The domestic violence experienced by the women in this study ranged from verbal abuse (being called names and humiliated) that made some of them feel devalued and worthless, to being threatened with objects and weapons (gun/knife), hit with objects (bat/clock), subjected to physical violence in their homes, on the street, and/or in front of family and friends, to being sexually abused. In addition to physical violence, most of the women in the study also experienced other types of abuse (emotional, economic, and sexual) at different times or together. Below are some of the experiences shared by the women in this study:

Isabelle: *I used to ask him for money and he said he didn't have. He said I was just sitting there and doing nothing. He made me feel like I was a burden to him. I would ask him for money for my daughter not myself. I used to beg him for money. He would tell me that I had to do something. Cook something, clean something.*

Maribel: *Call[ed] me a fat slob, a cow, a nag...in front of his family. He would dictate to them, "oh she can't eat that she's fat and she's on a diet".*

Giselle: *...el me halo por el pelo, me arrastro en la calle. Me abrió una blusa que yo tenía y me estaba agarrando si bien... siempre le gustaba agarrarme por aquí, me dejaba todo eso llenos de morados...me agarraba por las muñecas. Pero yo peleaba siempre. Lo agarraba [Translation]: he grabbed me by the hair, dragged me in the street. He tore my shirt and I was trying to grab it...he always liked to grabbed me*

*here...he would leave them black and blue...he always grabbed me by the wrists. But I always put up a fight. I used to grab him.*

Alex: *...el me agarro, me hico moretes en los ojos, me reventó la boca, me saco sangre de la nariz. [Translation]: ...he grabbed me, gave me black eyes, he busted my mouth, and made me bleed from the nose.*

Lucy: *He hit me with his phone. He had the phone in his hand and he was hitting me with the phone on the head. The kids play baseball, so he took a bat and put it on my neck so I wouldn't leave.*

Isabelle: *He came home after I picked up my daughter from my mother. We all ate dinner. Then he told me that he wanted to have sex with me and I was like, "no I am just tired". He got upset and started interrogating me. If I had someone else; if I was with someone else when I went to pick up my daughter. He was telling me that he wanted to be with me. He kept saying that I was his wife and I needed to be with him. I told him that I didn't have to be with him. He followed me to the room and kept telling me to be with him and I kept saying no. He started kissing me, pulling on my clothes. He kept telling me that I have to be with him because I was his wife. I kept telling him to stop and pushed him away but he kept on and he forced himself on me. He didn't hit me; he forced himself on me.*

Irma: *Entonces el empezó y me dijo ábrete. Le dije que no, me grito "ábrete te dije". Le dije que no quería y él me dijo que no era si yo quería era que debes que hacer. Pa' ese tiempo yo no sabía que era una violación, pensaba que era una obligación.*

*[Translation]: Then he started and told me "open up". I told him no and he yelled at me "open up I said". I told him that I didn't want to and he told me that it wasn't if I wanted*

*to it was my duty. At that time I didn't know that it was rape; I thought that it was an obligation.*

Some of the women in the present study defended themselves by using violence against their abusers; for some, the consequences were severe:

*Nicole Two:...we were fighting about something that happen on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July...he wanted to leave and I didn't want him to leave...he knocked me down...and went all the way into the kitchen...he knocked me down again to the floor...while I was on the way down...I grabbed whatever from the counter...it was a knife and I cut his arm and I cut an artery and he needed surgery. I called the cops ...the detective was asking who did this...my boyfriend said that he slipped and fell but the detectives kept asking who did it...I got scared and said I did it. I was arrested.*

Lisette had been terrorized by her abuser for three years (2008-2011); despite numerous calls to the police and arrests, the abuser kept coming back. Lisette felt helpless and fought back:

*He came back 2011, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2011, he came attacked me I called the cops. He ran right before they got there, okay. Um, then he attacked me again on July 15<sup>th</sup>, I got all these dates because I have to. July 15<sup>th</sup> 2011, same year. He came back. He left; they couldn't get him on time. Now mind you, if this is the report and I called you twice, and I'm showing you the order of protection that he's violating, your duty, representing the law is to find him. Not let him attack me again. Because I had enough and nobody is doing anything. So um, August 6<sup>th</sup> he attacks again. But guess what? August 6<sup>th</sup> I stabbed this guy 8 times and I still don't remember...Yes...I'm out on bail. This case is still active.*

*Um, but he died...right there. I mean when they put him in the ambulance he was already dead. And that was it.*

Although some of the women may have experienced more severe physical violence than others, their experiences do not diminish the experiences of those who experienced less violent types of abuse. The aforementioned is not intended to minimize the severity of the abuse experienced by some women, but to highlight instead how non-physical violence can also have long lasting effects that can lead to changing one's way of being. Esperanza did not report physical abuse, but excerpts from her narrative about her experience with emotional abuse and being stalked helps illustrate the long lasting effects of non-physical violence:

*...I'm always wearing flats and sneakers in case I have to run. 95% of my shoes are stilettos and I can't tell you the last time I put them on. I haven't really gone out. I am not depressed, but I have changed my availability. I was the queen of 'let's go out for a drink after work'. I was the social butterfly. I have changed. I don't have that need right now; I don't like noise.*

She goes on to describe other ways her experience has affected her when asked if there is anything she would change or make better about her situation:

*...I think that this (her experience) has been very enlightening for me, the systems and how they work. I was living a very, not sheltered, but a very egotistical lifestyle. You know, and I thought myself to be kind of above any of this and it's really grounded me., um, and changed me in that sense and I think it's humbled me and I think that was good (starts laughing)...I'm hoping I can walk away with that.*

As is evident by the experiences described above, presentation of data alone does not contribute to developing an understanding of the participants' experiences. In order to gain an understanding of their experiences, and to explore if there were differences between the groups, warranted a closer look at the data. In addition to the experiences already discussed, qualitative analysis of the data allowed for two important and unexpected themes to emerge: coercive control (with additional circumstances specific to the foreign born sample) and violence as a result of challenging male privilege.

### *Coercive Control*

According to Evan Stark (2012), "Coercive control is the most devastating form of abuse as well as the most common." (P. 212). Indeed, as discussed above, more than half of the women in this study have associated 'control' or 'controlling behaviors' with domestic violence. In addition, tactics associated with coercive control emerged from the women's narratives of their experiences with domestic violence, primarily in the form of threats, surveillance, and degradation (coercive tactics) and deprivation, exploitation, and regulation (control tactics).

Coercive control is defined as physical and non-physical tactics used by abusers in order to control, instill fear (Arnold, 2009; Anderson, 2009; Lehman, Simmons, & Pillai, 2012; Myhill, 2015) and/or "compel or dispel a particular response" (Stark, 2012, p. 207). In addition, the subordinate position of women, particularly in the private sphere, facilitates the abusers' ability to exert control over women by regulating activities that have been traditionally designated as women's and wifely duties: "mothers, homemakers, and sexual partners" (Stark, 2012, p. 201).

Stark separates coercive control into two spheres: coercion (Intimidation) and control (Isolation and Deprivation, Exploitation, and Degradation) (Stark, 2012, pp. 207-211).

According to Stark, intimidation incorporates the use of threats, surveillance (includes stalking) and degradation; whereas control, incorporates isolation and deprivation, exploitation and regulation (2012, pp. 207-211).

As previously mentioned, coercive control emerged as a concept in some of the women's accounts and experiences with domestic violence; they are summarized below.

### *Coercion*

The participants' narratives identified several coercive behaviors that meet Stark's definition of methods of intimidation (threats, surveillance, and degradation).

#### Threats:

Some of the women discussed how abusers used threats against family members and children, future violence, deportation, and custody of children in order to intimidate them, keep them from leaving, and/or keep them from seeking services:

#### *Family/Children*

Nina: *Le decía a mi hijo que le iba tirar los juguetes por la ventana y le iba botar la ropa y que era un chismoso y que no se metiera con él. [Translation]: He would tell my son that he was going to throw his toys out the window and that he was going to throw out his clothes and that he was a bigmouth and not to mess with him.*

Lisette: *I went, I got him arrested but then I get a phone call from him, my mom lives right up the corner, we're in the same little neighborhood...anyways, so, all his threat because I was, I'm the youngest, so I was like, very attached to mom, that was my baby. And he managed to threaten me with that and my son.*

#### *Threats of future violence (hit/kill)*

Larissa: *...he used to say that if I left him he would kill me.*



Jenny: *He said that he would put a bullet in my head...when he's upset and out of his character, I believe he would.*

Another form of intimidation by threat of future violence came in the form of “public victimization”; that is, the participant believed that her abuser would physically harm her because he had done so in public in the past.

#### *Public Victimization*

Nilsa: *pues una vez que estuvimos con familia, porque aquí yo no tengo familia, pues se puso decirme cosas muy agresivas delante de su familia y yo no decía nada, porque si es la verdad que yo tenía miedo como él siempre ha sido muy violento, pues yo no le decía nada. [Translation]: Well, one day we were with family, since I don't have any family, well he became verbally aggressive with me in front of his family and I didn't say anything, because it's true, I was afraid, since he has always been really violent, so I wouldn't say anything to him.*

Theresa: *En México; una vez delante de mi hermana me metió una pata. Un día me iba pegar y ella por defenderme se metió por medio y él le dio en el ojo. [Translation]: In Mexico, one time in front of my sister he kicked me. One day he was going to hit me and she got in the way to defend me and he hit her in the eye.*

Taylor...*he threatened me, he actually was, we were out and he told me he would beat my ass, excuse my language, right in front of everyone and nobody would do anything about it...we were out in a supermarket...he said, “and you see how they all turned away? They're not going to help you”.*

### *Deportation and Fear of Losing Custody of Children*

Some participants discussed how threats of deportation and how they would lose their children kept them from leaving their abusers and/or from seeking help. Gina reported that she didn't seek services for her previous incidents of domestic violence because she felt intimidated by her partner:

*Y este, anteriormente yo me sentía muy amenazada de mi pareja. Casi no le contaba a nadie lo que me pasaba. [Translation]: Well, before I felt really intimidated by my partner. I hardly discussed what was happening to me with anyone.*

Julia discussed how she was afraid because her abuser would tell her that she would be deported and lose her kids:

*...tenía miedo, porque él me decía que si yo llamaba la policía que él me iba a llamar a la emigración y no iba a ver a mis hijos más. [Translation]: I was afraid, because he used to tell me that if I called the police that he would call immigration and I wouldn't see my children again.*

### Degradation

Most of the participants who disclosed their abusers' threats as a method of intimidation were from the foreign-born sample. However, the majority of the participants (30/32) experienced degradation.

Abusers' degradation tactics emerged in three categories: (1) negative comments about physical appearance, (2) comments aimed at diminishing women's self-respect, and (3) criticizing the participants' parenting skills. A few examples for each category will be presented here.

## *Physical Appearance*

Nilsa discussed how he would humiliate her publicly:

*Me hacía sentir mal, que yo era fea, que era gorda, que yo no servía para nada. Que había mujeres más bonitas. Mujeres que si tenían bonito cuerpo, no como yo. Yo toda fea, que na' más me tenía para jugar conmigo, no porque sintiera amor o quería estar conmigo. El lo decía delante de otra gente. [Translation]: He would make me feel bad, that I was ugly and I was fat, and that I was worthless. That there were women prettier than me. Women with nice bodies not like me. I was ugly all over, and that he only had me to play with me, because he didn't feel love for me or want to be with me. He used to say that in front of other people.*

Carolina: *Siempre me decía que era una estúpida y fea. [Translation]: He would always tell me that I was ugly and stupid.*

Esni: *...una vez yo tuve una pelea con él, me dijo que...me dijo que, "ah yo me voy a encontrar una mujer joven. No una fea y gorda como tú." [Translation]: I had a fight with him once and he told me...he told me, "ah, I am going to find me a younger woman. Not an ugly and fat one like you".*

## *Diminishing Women's Self-Respect*

Alex: *... me llamaba una prostituta. [Translation]: ...he used to call me a prostitute.*

Nuve: *...me llamaba sucia, una escerosa, que era un cuero, que cogía llamadas de otros hombres [Translation]: ... he used to call me a prostitute, that I was dirty, filthy, that I was a whore, that I was taking calls from other men.*

Lisette: *...he would say "you're such a sleazy whore; you remind me of my mother".*

Bianca: *...bitch, whore, slut, hoe, tramp, to make me feel low.*

### *Parenting Skills:*

Jessica, Lucy, and Nicole disclosed how their abuser would criticize their parenting skills:

Jessica: *Me dijo una vez verdad, yo estuve mal y la niña estaba llorando, el no soportaba a los llantos de la niña, y me dijo, “que ¿no puedes controlar a esa niña? Me dio entender así como yo fuera una estúpida [Translation]: He told me once right, I was sick and the baby (girl) was crying, and he couldn’t stand her cries, and he said to me, “what, you can’t control that baby?” He made me feel like if I was stupid.*

Nicole shared how he would insult her when she challenged him:

*Every time I tried to defend my daughter he said I was a bitch and a bad mom.*

Lucy shared how her abuser would attack her parenting skills to hurt her:

*“I’m the worse mother”...”whore” Every time he wanted to hurt me he would attack my parenting skills.*

### Surveillance

According to Stark (2012), “stalking is the most prevalent form of surveillance” and consists of behaviors that include, but are not limited to, searching their partners’ belongings and “having them followed” (p. 209). Although only one participant (Esperanza) identified stalking as her abuse type, it became apparent, that some of the study participants had experienced stalking (surveillance) behaviors as part of their overall experience with domestic violence. Foreign-born participants (10) described behaviors associated with surveillance more so than U.S.-born participants (2). Of the participants, Mexican women (6) reported behaviors associated

with surveillance more so than women in other sub-groups. The participants described how their abusers would follow (stalk) them, call their jobs, and/or show up at their place of employment.

### *Stalking*

Taylor shared how her abuser's stalking served as a reason to seek services:

*I was actually moving from house to house with my kids, and he was finding out everywhere I was. He was watching me; he had other people watching me. I couldn't take it anymore. He actually showed up at my grandmother's house where I was staying and started threatening. I said I couldn't do it anymore. My grandmother is 80 years old and didn't need to go through that stress.*

Some of the clients shared that the stalking started when the relationship ended:

Carolina: ... yo estaba dejada del pero siempre me perseguía y me molestaba.

*[Translation]: I was separated from him but he would always follow and bother me.*

Esperanza shared how she ended the relationship with her abuser because he showed up to her house "uninvited"; it was after she ended the relationship that the stalking behavior increased:

*I broke up with him because he showed up at my house unexpectedly, unwanted, he was not invited. At that point was that he became very aggressive, stalking, threatening, very erratic and um, very unpredictable.*

*He never been to my job; he showed up to my job. He never been to my parents' house; he showed up at her parents' house. He never been to my best friend's house; he showed up at my best friend's house. Um, showed up in the parking lot where I park my car in*

*one of my offices. The constant calls. There was one day he called me 54 times. Multiple texts, calls, um, non-stop. It was non-stop for 12 weeks.*

She goes on to discuss how after a brief period of cessation the stalking began again:

*And then, exactly January 1st, this year, he believed it to be a new year and I would give him a new chance; it was a new beginning. And that's where he escalated to the point where I had, it was totally out of my control. That's when I had to tell my family members, my friends, the police, my employees, my employer because it got to a point that I became afraid because I didn't know what was next from him; he was unpredictable.*

#### *Calling and Showing Up at Place of Employment*

Some of the participants disclosed how their abusers would call their job or show up unexpectedly.

Isabelle: *He would meet me outside my job. He would just show up.*

One participant lost her job because her abuser kept calling her.

Giselle: *Yo perdí un trabajo parte de él. Yo estaba trabajando en una oficina dental. Yo ayudaba en la oficina dental y él sabía que yo trabajaba allí. So, el comenzó a llamando a la oficina dental. Es un teléfono comercial, y con tres líneas. Yo no sé cómo lo hacía pero él llamaba un minuto tras de otro...llamando, llamando, llamando. Y el teléfono sonando a cada rato, cada rato, cada rato. Y entonces la, la doctora dijo que no podía*

*estar con eso y me tenía que dejar ir. [Translation]: I lost a job because of him. I was working in a dental office. I was helping the dental office and he knew that I worked there. So, he began to call the dental office. It's a commercial phone, with three lines. I don't know how he would do it, but he kept calling back to back...calling, calling, and calling. The phone kept ringing, and ringing, and ringing. And then, the doctor told me that she couldn't have that and that she had to let me go.*

Esni shared how she left her abuser and he began to go pick her up at work until she took him back.

Esni: *El empezó a mencionarme a la otra mujer que el tenía...que ella era mejor. Un día me moleste tanto que me fui de la casa. Me fui de la casa y el, como sabía...yo trabajaba en un salón de belleza y él me fue a buscar allá. Todos los días él me iba a buscar al trabajo. Él me dijo que me amaba que volviera a la casa...y yo regrese otra vez con él. [Translation]: He started to tell me about a mistress that he had...that she was better. One day I was so bothered by it that I left the house. I left the house, since he knew...I worked at a beauty salon he would go pick me up there. He would go pick me up every day. He told me that he loved me and for me to come back home...and I went back to him.*

### Control

Stark (2012) describes control tactics as those that serve to “isolate their partners to prevent disclosure, instill dependence, express exclusive possession, monopolize their skills and

resources, and keep them from getting help or support”<sup>28</sup> (210). Additionally, Stark defines “materiality of abuse” as “a partner’s control over basic necessities such as money, food, housing and transportation, sex, sleep, toileting, and access to health care.” (p. 211).

The participants in this study disclosed experiences that fell in the isolation and deprivation, exploitation, and regulation (including materiality of abuse) categories. Similar to the degradation category on the coercion spectrum, the majority of the clients (23/32) described experiences associated with deprivation, exploitation, and regulation as a method of control. Foreign-born participants (17) described behaviors associated with deprivation, exploitation, and regulation more so than the U.S.-born participants (4), with Mexican, Guatemalan, and Honduran women describing those behaviors more so than women in the other sub-groups. A few examples will be presented for each category for the sake of brevity.

### *Isolation*

There were three participants that described isolation behaviors that met Stark’s definition of isolation tactics.

Nancy G. (pseudonym) described her experience as one that encompassed consistent calls, going through her things, and restricting her outside activities.

*Nancy G.: cuando no tenía confianza en mí...estaba revisando todas mis cosas.*

*Llamándome cada rato como...no sé. No podía respirar. Si quería ir a buscar a los*

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<sup>28</sup> Stark includes behaviors such as repeated calls or showing up at work in the isolation category as a method “to keep them from working or to isolate them at work” (p. 210). The behaviors described by the participants (regarding repeated calls and unannounced appearances at work) met the definition of stalking and did not include an element of isolation (as described by Stark), therefore, they were categorized as surveillance.



*niños me decía “no, no. Yo te los traigo...yo te compro la leche...” todo, ¿me entiendes? No puedes ni siquiera somarte a la calle. [Translation]: When he didn’t trust me, he would go through my things. Would call me all of the time...I don’t know. I couldn’t breathe. Even to go get my children he would say “no, no. I will bring them to you...I will buy you the milk...” Everything, do you understand? You couldn’t even step outside.*

Maribel’s experience with isolation included her children. She was free to go, but not with her children, which, in essence, restricted her autonomy.

Maribel: *He had told me that he was taking more than two hours; I saw that was opportunity to leave the house. He never would allow, I could leave the house, but I couldn’t take my kids. So he would lock me in the house like superman and I couldn’t leave the house. I could leave the house by myself, or with one of the kids, not both.*

Lisette shared her experience of being “terrorized” in her own home. Her experience embodies Stark’s definition of isolation, particularly the element of “express exclusive possession”.

Lisette: *One morning I’m waking up, mind you, it’s like days in between after it happened, I am listening to this hammer, the door, he’s putting locks on the door outside, it was just really, really crazy...he ripped out my hair, he, just because I was going to be his or nobody else, or he would kill me. There were times that I couldn’t even take my son to school and it was right across because he had locked my doors, he unplugged my phone, no internet nothing. I meant everything was off. I’m talking about terror in my own home. And at times he would put a knife to my neck and threaten me with that object...not even at the window.*

## *Deprivation, Exploitation, and Regulation*

The behaviors associated with deprivation, exploitation, and regulation are designed to foster continued dependence on the abuser and ensure that women “conform [to] gender stereotypes” (Stark, 2012, p. 211). In addition, “materiality of abuse” refers to the abusers’ control “over basic necessities”, which include but are not limited to ‘money’, ‘food’, and ‘housing’ (p. 211).

Some of the women shared how their abusers did not want them to work and one discussed how her abuser made her close her welfare case and then began to abuse her:

Isabelle: *He didn't want me to work. He said I didn't need to work. He didn't want me to have my own money. Wanted me to depend on him...I would ask him for money for my daughter not myself. I used to beg him for money. He would tell me that I had to do something. Cook something; clean something.*

Nancy G: *Yo nunca trabaje...pues, porque él era muy controlante. [Translation]: I never worked...because he was too controlling.*

Larissa: *I would look for a job and right before an interview he would call me...I wouldn't be able to concentrate...I would be like, “what are you doing?” It wasn't until this happened that I realized that he would do it all the time. I told him that I wanted to be financially independent again. When my opportunities for work started shrinking, he would be more controlling.*

Irma: *Él no quería que yo trabajara y no me quería dar dinero tampoco. Si necesitaba algo para las niñas tenía que enseñarle el recibo...si yo quería algo tenía que hacer algo.*

*Como portarme bien por una semana; no gritarle, ni pelearle. Llevar la 'fiesta en paz'. Como como decir siempre 'si, si, si'...como que me lo tenía que ganar. [Translation]: He didn't want me to work and he didn't want to give me money either. If I needed something for the girls, I had to show him the receipt...if I wanted something I had to do something. Like, behave for a week, no yelling at him or fighting with him. I had to 'keep the peace'...having to always say 'yes, yes, yes'...It was like I had to earn it.*

Thalia: *Yo tenía asistencia pública para los niños y él me dijo que no cogiera ya eso. Yo cerré el caso, me quede con los cupones solamente. En ese tiempo que yo cerré el caso él empezó a maltratarme. [Translation]: I used to get public assistance for the kids, and he told me not to keep it. I closed the case and kept the food stamps only. During the time that I closed the case was when he started to abuse me.*

#### *“Materiality of Abuse”*

Some of the women who worked had to share their wages with their abusers, turn over their wages to their abusers, or had their wages taken by the abuser:

Nina: *...quiere controlarlo todo. Cuando nosotros nos ajuntamos y yo empecé a trabajar, él me dijo “todo lo que necesites me lo pides a mí. Y me dé tu cheque para guardarlo.”...Él no lo está gastando, pero no tengo acceso a mi propio dinero.*

*[Translation]: ...he wants to control everything. When we first got together and I started working, he told me “ask me for whatever you need and give me your paycheck so that I can save it”...He isn't spending it, but I don't have access to my own money.*

Jessica: *...me decía que tenía que compartir mi dinero con él. [Translation]: he said that I had to share my money with him.*

Julia: ...un día me estaba esperando para que yo le diera mi dinero...él me buscaba en la cartera y me cogía el dinero. [Translation]: he was waiting for me one day so that I could give him my money...he used to search my purse and take my money.

Carolina: ...me quitaba el dinero [Translation]: he used to take my money.

Jarisbeth: Me dijo que le diera dinero, le dije que no tengo, y me llamo una pendeja. Me pidió otra vez y se lo di para que le comprara comida a mis hijos, y él me insulto...llegue a la casa, me empezó a insultar y me corrió de la casa, y era tarde como las 11:30 de la noche, y me corrió de la casa con los niños...los niños son hijos de él. [Translation]: He told me to give him money, I told him that I didn't have any and he called me stupid. He asked me again and I gave it to him so that he could buy food for my children, and he insulted me...I got home and he started to insult me and threw me out of the house, it was late, like 11:30 at night, and he threw me out of the house with the kids...those are his kids.

Taylor: He would take my money...I, we had, the baby, the two boys at the time and they needed their diapers, and their wipes, and some formula. I went to go buy them the stuff, he took the money and said 'no' because he needed it to go hang out with his friends. And that was the end of that. I ended up having to call my mom and have her Western Union me some money so I can get the babies what they needed.

Some of the participants shared how their abusers' regulated what they wore and others shared how their abusers would become abusive if their food was not up to par or ready by dinner time:

Thalia: *Él me decía como vestir y me compraba ropa fea. [Translation]: He would tell me how to dress and bought me ugly clothes.*

Nicole: *He became controlling and would tell me what to wear...he used to buy my clothes...t-shirts and sweatpants.*

Nicole also reported that her abuser had once physically abused her because she didn't add salt to the food.

Theresa: *Si yo llegaba y la cocina estaba ocupada, no podía cocinar y él se enojaba y me llamaba puta porque él pensaba que yo andaba por la calle. [Translation]: I wasn't able to cook if the kitchen was being used by the time I arrived home, and he used to get angry, and call me a slut because he thought I was hanging out in the streets.*

The women's narratives described how they were subjected to more than just physical violence. Their narratives revealed how their abusers used coercive control tactics to regulate almost every facet of their lives (home, work, parenting, and even how they dressed). For some women cultural expectations may serve as an extension of coercive control.

As discussed above, abusers use coercive control tactics to exert and maintain power over women. In addition, their tactics are used to establish complete dominance over women and the subordinate position of women facilitates that process. In fact, the 'essence of coercive control' as noted by Stark (2012):

...is that it's primarily male offenders [who] exploit persistent sexual inequalities in the economy and in how roles and responsibilities are designated in the home and community to establish a formal regime of domination/subordination behind which they

can protect and extend their privileged access to money, sex, leisure time, domestic service, and other benefits (p. 206).

For some Latinas, particularly immigrant Latinas (including the women in this study), the designated “roles and responsibilities” sometimes entail tolerating abuse and remaining in abusive relationships for the sake of the family and their marriages (Raj & Silverman, 2002; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Vidales, 2010); not doing so may put them at risk of being ostracized and criticized by friends and family as discussed by some of the women in the current study:

Irma: ...*que dirán? En el caso mío, pues mi familia me dio la espalda a mí. Mi mamá era de esas que decían que el matrimonio es para toda la vida. El yerno que entraba primero era el único yerno. [Translation]: ...what will people say? In my situation, well, my family turned their backs on me. My mother was one of those that used to say that marriage is for life. The son-in-law that walked in first was the only son-in-law*

Isabelle: ...sometimes, women think ‘what will people say? My relatives say? My friends? My neighbors? You know, ‘hablarias’ (gossip).

Jaribeth: *Porque en nuestro país (México), desgraciadamente, tenemos como nos decían los padres, y lo abuelos, “te casas, es para toda la vida. Tienes que ser buena esposa, tienes que ser esto, tienes que (ser) lo otro” ...el más que nada ‘el qué dirán?’ ...Así es en mi país, que la mujer tiene que ser muy de hogar, directamente a tu hogar, no puedes salir, no te puedes divertir porque eso es malo y la gente la va a criticar. [Translation]: Because in our country (Mexico), unfortunately, we have to, like our parents and grandparents used to say, “you get married, it’s for life. You have to be a good wife, you have to do this, you have to do that...and more than anything the “what will people*

say?"...*That's how it is in my country; the woman has to be a homebody, and only in the house, can't go out, can't have fun because that is bad and the people will criticize her.*

Like Irma, Nilsa also lost her family when she left her husband; her mother stopped talking to her when she called to tell her that she had left him. Nilsa discussed how her father condoned her husband's abusive behaviors:

Nilsa: *La situación empeoro porque él se sentía apoyado por mi papa. Yo no podía decirle nada a mi esposo, ni decirle 'que no', porque mi papa me decía que me callara o me iba dar un trompón delante de él. Y él se sintió muy protegido por mi propio padre.*

*[Translation]: The situation worsened because he felt he had my father's support. I couldn't say anything to my husband, not even 'no', because my father would tell me to shut up or he'd punch me in the mouth in front of him. So he felt he was really protected by my own father.*

Latinas' reluctance to leave abusive relationships due to cultural beliefs that dictate tolerance of abuse for the sake of the family can be viewed as an extension of coercive control. The narratives of half of the foreign-born sample (12), and of nearly all of the Mexican women in this study (10/15), provide support for viewing family members, and others in their communities, as extensions of coercive control. Their narratives reveal role expectations as well as the consequences (loss of family support; criticisms) associated with breaking with traditional cultural norms. Although the women do not state that they are *afraid* of the consequences, they do identify the consequences of breaking with cultural norms and expectations *as reasons* for remaining in the abusive relationships; as a result, one can make the assumption that family members (who uphold cultural expectations) can, and often do, operate as extensions of coercive control, particularly for immigrant women from Latino countries. The aforementioned is not

meant to label Latinas as more submissive or subservient than other women, or to demonize their family members, but rather to highlight how cultural nuances such as *familismo* (a core element in the Latino culture) serves to perpetuate violence against women *as an extension* of coercive control that is enforced by family members, and not independently, as is the usual discussion of cultural concepts in the literature (Abell & Gecas, 1997; Flake & Froste 2006; Vidales, 2010). The latter has implications for future research as it would be beneficial to explore if abusive men from Latino cultures perceive the beliefs systems in their cultures as advantageous in maintaining male dominance and privilege in their relationships.

### *Male Privilege and Violence*

Another finding in this study was the use of violence by some of the abusers to maintain and/or establish their power and control in the relationships. Women recalled incidents where they were subjected to physical abuse because they challenged, questioned, or denied sex to their abusers. The aforementioned is not an uncommon response by abusers (Anderson, 1997) and in some instances may be reinforced in cultures that uphold “spousal obedience” (Bott et al., 2012, p. 96; Uribe- Uran, 2013) and ‘male dominance in families’ (WHO, 2010, p. 2). In this study, foreign-born participants (6) experienced violence as a result of challenging male privilege more so than their U.S.-born counterparts (2), with women from Honduras and Guatemala (4) having experienced it more so than women in other sub-groups. As explained by some women in this study, challenging their abusers was sometimes the antecedent to some of their physical assaults. Their stories are presented here under the three emerging themes of challenging male privilege: 1) disobedience, 2) questioning the abuser, and 3) refusing to have sex.



*Disobedience:*

Isabelle: *I told him that it was nice being with his family for a little while but now it was time to go home because I was tired and had to go to work the next day. Then he wanted me to leave the baby and I said “no, she’s going with me.” So when I grabbed her, he smacked me.*

Alex: *El llego borracho a la casa, y yo estaba preparando leche y él quería que yo fuera al cuarto de él. Le dije que esperara un momento porque estaba calentándoles la leche a los nenes en la cocina. Se fastidio y me callo a golpes. [Translation]: He came home drunk, and I was preparing some milk and he wanted me to go to his room. I told him to wait one moment because I was heating up milk for the kids in the kitchen. He became angry and beat me up.*

Irma: *Pues que en cierta ocasión me dijo ‘mira hazme esto’ y no lo hice y me dijo ‘no me haces caso’ y me agarro por los pelos. [Translation]: Well, on one occasion he said ‘hey, do this for me’ and I didn’t do it and he said ‘you don’t listen to me’ and he grabbed me by the hair.*

Nuve’s abuser became angry when he realized that the bad odor they smelled was due to a glass of milk that fell behind the small refrigerator in their room:

*Pasaron los días y había una peste, y fuimos a chequear, y cuando vio que era la leche, me dijo “tu si eres una sucia, viendo que esa leche esta allá tras y no limpiaste”. Yo le dije que él era el sucio, que no me faltara el respeto porque “yo a ti no te estoy faltando el respeto”. Le dije que lo limpiara. Y allí fue el incidente (de abuso físico).*

*[Translation]: Days passed and there was a bad smell, we went to check, and when he saw that it was the milk, he said to me, “you sure are a pig, seeing that the milk is back*

*there and you didn't clean it". I told him that he was the pig and not to disrespect me because "I am not disrespecting you." I told him to clean it. That's when the incident happened (the physical abuse).*

#### *Questioning the Abuser:*

Nuve noticed a bruise on her son's arm and questioned her abuser about it:

*...el niño fue que me lo dijo y tenía un morado. Yo fui, lo reclame, y me dijo que no lo jodiera, un mexicano, que no lo jodiera, que me fuera para la chinga, algo así. Y me saco el bate y me dio por allí. [Translation]: ...my son was the one who told me and he had a bruise. I went, I questioned him, and he told me not to nag him, he was Mexican, not to nag him, and to go fuck myself, something like that. And he took the bat and hit me here.*

Esni: *Yo lo encontré sentado en un carro con una muchacha. Yo le pregunte porque me estaba haciendo eso...buenos nos insultamos y yo me fui para la casa. Cuando el llego a la casa, el me sentó en una silla y me empezó dar los galleteados en las cara.*

*[Translation]: I found him sitting in a car with a girl. I asked him why he was doing that to me...well, we started arguing and I left and went home. When he got home, he sat me down in a chair and started smacking me.*

Bianca: *One day we were out eating pizzas...we were happy; as we were walking he was quiet and I asked him what's wrong, he said, "nothing; nothing". I told him to express himself. I am trying to talk to him and he starts to get mad. We are arguing...he got mad. He started to push me, grab me and threw me on the floor. He kicked me in the stomach...I was two months pregnant.*

### *Refusing to Have Sex:*

Julia: ...era un Día de los Padres...pues no fuimos a celebrar. Él estaba borracho.

*Quería tener relaciones conmigo y yo le dije que no, que no quería. Y él me agarro y me pego así con el puño cerrado en el ojo...lo tuve verde como por un mes. [Translation]:*

*...well it was one Fathers' Day... and we went to celebrate. He was drunk. He wanted to have intercourse with me and I said no that I didn't want to. He grabbed me and hit me like this with a closed fist in the eye...I had it black and blue for about a month.*

Taylor: *Um, there was a time when he wanted to have sexual intercourse and I had told him no. He had actually pulled out a belt because he wanted it at that point and needed it, as he said, and he actually hit me with the belt buckle in front of my kids.*

The qualitative analysis of the women's narratives allowed for a clearer picture of their lived experiences with domestic violence to emerge. As their stories unfolded, their disclosures of abuse, their cultural beliefs, and their descriptions of behaviors they associate with domestic violence revealed how foreign-born women and U.S. born women have similar, yet different, experiences with domestic violence. Their narratives also reveal how control, or more specifically coercive control, has been used by their abusers to maintain dominance and uphold male privilege in their relationships.

## II. Help-Seeking

One of the aims of this study was to explore the help-seeking behaviors of Latina victims of domestic violence. The outcomes of this exploration can help to inform the creation of policies and outreach efforts aimed at providing comprehensive services for women experiencing domestic violence and women who have left their abusive relationships.

This section will discuss the help-seeking behaviors of Latinas as well as the consequences (positive and negative) of their help-seeking. The women in this study were asked about their decisions to seek-help, reasons for not seeking help in the past, and their thoughts on why women remain in abusive relationships.

### *Description of Help-Seeking Behaviors*

Literature discussing Latinas and domestic violence include discussions on the barriers that sometimes keep Latinas, particularly immigrant Latinas, from seeking services. These barriers include, but are not limited to immigration status, fear of deportation, limited English proficiency, fear of police and social services, community and family response, and lack of knowledge of services and existing systems that offer help (Postmus et al., 2014; Reina et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012; Vidales, 2010; Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005).

The women in this study were asked to provide their thoughts on why women stay in abusive relationships. The initial reason for eliciting their thoughts was to determine how they perceived other women in situations similar to their own. What emerged from their narratives, however, was how some women responded to the question with their own reasons for remaining in abusive relationships, thus, providing additional information regarding their reasons for not seeking help when they were asked the question directly.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Participants who reported more than one domestic violence incident were asked why they didn't seek services for previous incidents. They were not asked why they remained in the abusive relationship directly because the investigator did not want risk the possibility that the participants would interpret her intentions in a negative way (i.e., as placing blame) or that they would become defensive.

There were three categories that emerged as reasons why some women remain in abusive relationships: financial dependence, fear, and love.

The foreign-born women (10), more so than U.S.-born women (3), identified economic reasons for why women stay in abusive relationships. The Mexican (5), Honduran, and Guatemalan women identified economic reasons more so than any other sub-group.<sup>30</sup> The foreign-born women and U.S.-born women had similar response rates in identifying fear (7 and 5, respectively) as a reason, with Mexican women (5) identifying it as a reason more so than women in the other sub-groups. U.S.-born women (50%) identified love as a reason for staying more so than their foreign-born counterparts (25%), with Puerto Rican women (4) reporting love as a reason more so than women in other sub-group categories.

The women's responses are consistent with the literature on why women stay in abusive relationships (Kim & Gray, 2008). Fear has often been quoted as one of the reasons some women stay in abusive relationships and economic/financial reasons usually top the lists. According to Kim and Gray (2008), several studies identify income as the "strongest predictor of leaving or staying"; moreover, "[e]conomic dependency on the batterer is the primary reason why women do not leave and the primary reason they return, with economic concerns prevailing over safety" (p.1466). Although fear emerged as one of the reasons women remain in abusive relationships, half (6) of the fear responses were couched in the greater context of becoming economically deprived. Take for instance the following comments:

*Nuve: ... [m]iedo. Para mí, miedo porque, yo estaba decidida para dejarme de esta persona antes de que me pasara esto. Él me decía a mi "tú no tienes con que pagar un*

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<sup>30</sup> Foreign-born participants (n=24) and U.S.-born participants (n=8); see Table 1 for sub-group identification breakdown.

*cuarto. Así que tú no te puedes dejar de mí, porque yo soy el que paga renta”.*

*[Translation]: Fear. For me, fear because I was determined to leave that person before this happened to me. He used to tell me “you don’t have a means to pay for a room.*

*Therefore, you cannot leave me, because I am the one who pays the rent”.*

Tatiana: *No sienten que esta preparadas para seguir adelante. Puede ser el dinero que le dé. [Translation]: They don’t feel like they are prepared to move on. It could be the money that they get.*

Lucy discusses lack of financial independence as a reason why some women are forced to stay in abusive relationships:

*I didn’t have no fears leaving. I was always the one who made the most money; I was always the one who paid the bills on time; I was always the one who did things right in that relationship. So for me per se, I think it was 10 times easier because I was the man of the house. So for me to pick up and leave was nothing. I think typically for woman they’re not. So maybe financially, or maybe they get scared they’re not gonna make it, or they’re gonna struggle, or you know, cause you know, cause I witnessed someone who was like, “where am I gonna go if I can’t pay rent?” And I understand, but in her case she should have stuck her ass in a shelter.*

Lucy’s comments are consistent with the previous discussion of the importance of addressing the current socio-economic structure of women in society (see Mooney, 2000).

Women who are not financially dependent on their abusive partners can more readily leave those relationships without worrying about where to live, how to pay the rent, and if they have

children, how to provide for those children. But what happens when love for their abusers is the primary reason for staying?

According to some scholars, women who quote love as a reason for staying in abusive relationships are viewed as “masochistic” (Kuennen, 2014, p. 991; Kim & Gray, 2008, p.1465). That is, most people (advocates and law enforcement included), may view women who want to preserve their relationships as blameworthy for their situations and not worthy of assistance. Kuennen includes feminist legal scholars in her discussion of those who may not understand how love can be a factor in a woman’s decision to stay in an abusive relationship. According to Kuennen (2013), feminist legal scholars refer to love as a ‘false consciousness’- “a false belief that is produced by and reinforces existing power arrangements in society, and that is held in spite of being contrary to the holder’s own interests” (p.176). However, Kuennen (2014) discusses how it’s not such an unusual concept; in fact, she notes, “data show that a primary reason women stay in abusive relationships is for love” (p.990). She goes on to discuss how most women do leave their abusive relationships and how those that leave have a greater probability of being abused than women who stay (p. 989). Some of the participants discussed how love is a probable factor for staying in abusive relationships and their comments were paired with a desire, or hope, that their partner would change:

*Giselle: Porque yo tenía los sentimientos que lo quería mucho. Yo creía que él iba a cambiar. Incluso, yo creía que yo estaba haciendo cosas malas. Y yo trataba de hacer las cosas diferentes para que el no tuviera esa reacciones conmigo. Pero el no cambiaba.*

*[Translation]: Because I felt that I loved him very much. I thought that he was going to change. I even thought that I was doing things wrong. So I tried to do them differently so*

*that he wouldn't react towards me that way. But he wouldn't change.... a veces porque quieres a la persona...y piensa que la persona va a cambiar. [Translation]: sometimes because you love the person...and think that the person is going to change.*

While some of the women discussed loving their partner, others disclosed how they wanted to feel loved:

Taylor: *I would have to say love. Because that was my biggest thing, "I love him; he loves me". Growing up I always felt I didn't get the love I needed. So I felt that was his way of showing me love.*

Nicole Two: *...from my opinion, I loved him. He was my first love, my first relationship...I tried to hold on no matter what we been through or what he did...I wanted a family.*

Advocacy for women should take into account a women's decision to stay in abusive relationships for reasons other than children, fear, or financial dependency. In addition, such advocacy should shape society's remedies for domestic violence. Current criminal justice remedies that are based on separation (Kuennen, 2014) may not be suitable options for some women- particularly Latina women who place a high value on family.

### *Reasons for Not Seeking Services*

Most of the women (24), reported that they had experienced more than one domestic violence incident (see Table 2) and of them, 20 reported that they were seeking services for the first time. Financial need and lack of knowledge of services were among the reasons provided; however, the majority of the responses were collapsed into two categories: 1) love and family; 2) fears.



## Love and Family

This category incorporates three response types: loving their abusers/wanting to be loved, desire to have a family, and the belief that once you married you were married for life. Although the latter is often discussed in the context of culture, it is appropriately included here because of the high level of importance placed on family (*familismo*) and on how women in some Latino cultures are socialized to accept and tolerate violence for the overall benefit of the family; as such, they may sacrifice themselves (*marianismo*) in order to keep their families together (Edelson et al., 2007; Denham et al., 2007; Klevens, 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Garcia et al., 2005).

Foreign-born women (7) provided more responses in this category than their U.S.-born counterparts (3). Women from the Mexican, Honduran, and Puerto Rican sub-groups were the only ones to provide responses in this category; Mexican women disclosed belief of being “married for life” more so than any of the women across sub-group categories.

## Fears

The women provided five different ‘fear’ responses: 1) general fear of abuser, 2) fear of being deported, 3) fear of losing children, 4) fear of being arrested, and 5) fear of police<sup>31</sup> as reasons for not seeking services. General fear of abuser was the most common reason provided for not seeking services across all sub-groups (9), with Mexican and Puerto Rican providing the majority of responses in this category. Fear of deportation applied only to the foreign-born

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<sup>31</sup> Fear of police derived from participant responses where the women had contact with the police for a prior domestic violence incident and were left feeling that the police couldn’t help them. It is included in the ‘fears’ category because it contributed to their perception that their abusers were free to abuse them without consequence.

participants due to their undocumented status; Mexican women (4) were more likely than any other foreign –born sub-group to disclose fear of deportation as a reason for not seeking services. Fear of losing children was provided as a reason for not seeking services by Puerto Rican women more so than any other sub-group.

Foreign-born women, more specifically Mexican women, disclosed fear of being arrested and of police as reasons for not seeking services. The police response to domestic violence, as described and experienced by the study participants, will be discussed later in this chapter as an emerging concept (criminal justice response to domestic violence) of the women’s experiences with domestic violence programs and services.

The data provided above are consistent with research on barriers to seeking services. Removal of children (Postmus et al., 2014; Reina et al., 2014; Vidales, 2010; Perilla 1999; Kasturirangan et al., 2004), immigration status (Reina et al., 2014; Liang et al., 2012; Vidales, 2010; Perilla, 1999; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005), financial dependence on abuser (Postmus et al., 2014; Dutton et al., 2000), lack of knowledge of available services (Kasturirangan et al.,2004) and a general mistrust of police (Vidales, 2010) are listed among the various barriers that may serve to frighten many Latinas from seeking help for their domestic violence situations. As discussed earlier, some of the barriers identified above can be, and sometimes are, factored into the decision-making processes of women from other ethnic, racial, or cultural backgrounds. However, barriers such as

immigration status and limited English proficiency present challenges for Latina and Latina immigrant<sup>32</sup> victims of domestic violence; particularly those Latinas that are undocumented.

### *Reasons for Seeking Services*

Despite the many barriers faced by the women in this study, they all made the decision to seek services and/or to leave their abusers. This section presents the reasons the women provided for taking the step(s) to reach out for help.

The women provided responses that were collapsed into four categories: 1) increased aggression, 2) needing help, 3) children, and 4) referred.

### Increased Aggression

The majority of the women (14) in the study identified increased aggression as a reason for their decision to seek services. This category includes increased aggression, severe assaults, and fear of harm to loved ones. Fear of harm to loved ones was included in this category because it is an extension of the abuse experienced by the women, thus, increasing the abusers' aggression on a different level. Foreign-born women (11) identified increased aggression more so than U.S.-born women (3), with Mexican and Dominican women identifying increased aggression as a reason more so than women in any other sub-group. Below are some examples the women shared regarding fear of harm to loved ones. Esperanza shared how fear for her sister's safety prompted her to seek services:

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<sup>32</sup> The investigator is aware that immigration status presents itself as a barrier for all immigrant women-especially if they are undocumented; however, she ascribes these challenges to Latina immigrants as they are the focus and participants in this study.

*That evening when I went home and wanted to tell her what happened, she told me that he went to her job, and he got in not once, but twice to see her. That was what made me go to law enforcement and go to the cops. The reason he went to see her was because he believed that she was the one keeping us apart. And um...um, and I still believe to this day that she is in danger...The biggest trigger for me was that he jeopardized those around me and I care for those around me more than myself.*

Taylor had a similar experience:

*I was actually moving from house to house with my kids, and he was finding out everywhere I was. He was watching me; he had other people watching me. I couldn't take it anymore. He actually showed me up at my grandmother's house where I was staying and started threatening. I said I couldn't do it anymore. My grandmother is 80 years old and didn't need to go through that stress.*

### Needing Help

Needing help is comprised of two response types: 1) needing to talk to someone; 2) realizing that they couldn't do it alone. The foreign-born women (4) reported needing help more so than their U.S. born counterparts (2), with Mexican women reporting needing help more so than women in other sub-groups. In addition to needing help with advocacy, the majority of the women's comments centered on a need for emotional healing:

Gina: *Hacen 6 meses que, este, todo lo que yo, este, pasaba antes, no lo podía borrarle de mi mente. [Translation]: It's been 6 months, (verbal nuance) that all this (verbal nuance), what happened before, and I couldn't erase it from my mind.*

Isabelle: *After I got my order of protection, I saw that I couldn't do this by myself and needed someone to help me. I need help understanding all this legal stuff and I needed money and someone to help me with my feelings too.*

Esni: *Me sentía deprimida. Yo no quería solicitar servicios esta vez, pero cuando el empezó otra vez. [Translation]: I felt depressed. I didn't want to seek services this time, but when he started again.*

Bianca: *...I needed help emotionally.*

Nicole Two: *I needed help. Because I didn't want to be treated that way.*

### Children

Some of the women stated that they decided to seek services because of their children. This category was comprised of two response types: 1) aggression towards children and 2) children's exposure to their abuse. Mexican women (4) and one Puerto Rican woman disclosed deciding to seek services because of, or for the benefit, of their children. Most of the responses provided by the women in this category centered on their children's exposure to their abuse. Their concerns are valid as there is evidence in the literature of the possible consequences of childhood exposure to domestic violence.

According to Mbilinyi, Logan-Greene, Neighbors, Walker, Roffman, and Zegree (2012), exposure to domestic violence in the home can lead to accepting domestic violence as normal in adult relationships. They provide support for their discussion by citing Delson and Margolin's 2004 research, where it was found that more than 50% of adult perpetrators of domestic violence had been exposed to domestic violence in their childhood (p. 173). Kernsmith (2006) and Stover

(2005), echo Mbilinyi and colleagues' findings of long-term consequences of childhood exposure to domestic violence. According to Kernsmith (2006), early exposure to domestic violence may lead to accepting violence as a normal occurrence and to learning “specific tactics that can be used to control a partner” (p. 164). Stover (2005), discusses how childhood exposure to domestic violence can significantly predict future adult perpetration or victimization of domestic violence. (pp. 449-450).

As discussed above, and revealed in numerous studies (Mbilinyi et al., 2012), the concept of domestic violence as “normal” can have serious implications for child witnesses of domestic violence. Efforts made to address domestic violence must also include services for children. Children may sometimes find themselves uprooted and having to leave their friends, family, and familiar surroundings when their mothers leave their abusers- sometimes to go into shelters where they can't stake claim to anything. Services aimed at providing children with an outlet to discuss their feelings and understand the changes they are experiencing are paramount. Some domestic violence service providers offer services for children in the form of individual and group counseling. Those programs that do not offer on-site services to children usually provide referrals to mental health providers in the community. Some of the participants discussed their fears and concerns regarding their children.

Jarisbeth and Lucy discussed their concerns for their daughters; they do not want their daughters to experience what they have experienced:

*Jarisbeth: ...yo hablo con ella todo el tiempo. Es difícil de que ella entienda...por eso me gusta que ella venga a las terapias aquí para que ella no caiga en los mismo. Ella me dice, “o él no quiere que yo use me Facebook” Yo le digo, “no, él no tiene derecho prohibirte nada. De hecho que es el padre de tu hijo, pero no, él no tiene derecho a*

*prohibirte nada.” [Translation]: ...I talk to her all of the time. It is difficult for her to understand...that is why I like for her to come to the therapy session over here so that she does not fall into the same situation. She tells me, “Oh, he doesn’t want me to use my Facebook”. I tell her, “No, he doesn’t have the right to prohibit you anything. He may be the father of your son, but no, he does not have the right to prohibit you anything”.*

Lucy:...I don’t want her [her daughter] to think that’s okay, for a man to put his hands on you. And she totally saw, “but okay, he’s sorry” and she totally had his back. And mentally, mentally that killed me because it is not okay for a man to put your hands on you. So to think that I’m raising a child that was going to think that’s okay was destroying me. It was destroying me.

Where Jarisbeth and Lucy focus on their daughters, Bianca and Nicole Two discussed what they want for their sons:

Bianca: I want my son to be a better man than his father. (Bianca)

Nicole Two: I refuse for my boys to be like their father...I would talk to them; show them what’s right from wrong... try to be positive, not to bad talk their father at the same time.

### Referred

Some of the women were referred to domestic violence services by the police, hospital staff or through mandate. Most of the responses for this category were provided by the foreign-born group (6) and one U.S.-born woman. Mexican women (4) reported being referred to services more than women in the other sub-group categories. Some of the women shared their stories on the events that led to being referred to services.

Three of the women were mandated to seek services. Lucy was mandated to anger management classes as a result of being arrested when she defended herself against her abuser. Nilsa was ordered, by her daughter's school, to secure an order of protection after her husband showed up drunk at their daughter's school; as a result, she was mandated to seek services by ACS. Laura was also mandated to services by ACS when her daughters told the school what was happening in the home.

Where Lucy, Nilsa, and Laura were mandated, the other women in this response category were referred to services, primarily by hospital staff:

Jessica: *Fui al doctor, para el ginecólogo, con las gafas, y me preguntaron si yo estaba viviendo con la violencia doméstica, y le dije que sí, y me dieron este número.*

*[Translation]: I went to the doctor, to the gynecologist, with the sunglasses and they asked me if I was living with domestic violence, I told them yes, and they gave me this number.*

Thalia: *.fui al hospital y me dijeron que había servicios si los quería. [Translation]: I went to the hospital and they told me services were available if I wanted them.*

Theresa: *Me dijeron que tenía una infección que se llama clamidia y me dijeron come se pasa, y yo le dije que él me va pegar porque él siempre me dice que soy yo. Me mandaron a hablar con una señora y me dijo que podía ir a un programa si yo quería. Y me dieron este número. [Translation]: They told me that I had an infection called chlamydia and how it's transmitted, and I told them that he is going to hit me because he always says that it is me. They sent me to talk to a lady and she told me that I could go to a program if I wanted to. They gave me this number.*



The women's reasons for deciding to seek services were consistent with the available literature; women usually seek services when they feel the aggression and physical violence is escalating or because they may want to leave the relationship and need support navigating those decisions.

As previously mentioned above, the women in this study made the decision to seek services for various reasons and at different points in time in their abusive relationships; the majority did so after the second or numerous incidents of domestic violence and others after the first. In either case, the women took the first step by reaching out to others for help with their domestic violence situations. As with any decision, the women's decisions to seek services had consequences.

#### *Consequences Associated with Help-Seeking*

The consequences associated with women's help-seeking are separated into two categories: positive consequences and negative consequences.

#### Positive Consequences

Two themes emerged as positive consequences associated with women's help-seeking in this study, feeling safe and resilience.

#### *Feeling Safe*

The 'feeling safe' category incorporates statements regarding feeling safe, not feeling judged, and being able to talk about their abuse experiences freely.

A little less than half of the sample (14) reported feeling safe since seeking services. The foreign-born women (9) were more likely to report feeling safe than U.S.-born women (5). Mexican women (7) and Puerto Rican women (4) were more likely to report feelings safe as a consequence of their help-seeking than the women in the other sub-groups. Below are some examples of the women's responses:

Nina: ... (no) me quiero separar del...no me están obligando, o diciendo "tu estas mal", o juzgando. [Translation]: I don't want to separate from him (her abuser) and they aren't forcing me to, or saying "you are wrong," or judging me.

Nancy G: ...ahora estoy tranquila [Translation]:...now I am at peace.

Nuve: ...estoy en otro sitio viviendo. Por ahora un sitio seguro para estar con mi hijo. [Translation:] ...I am living elsewhere now. For now I am in a safe place with my son.

Jessica: Me siento que ahora puedo compartir. Ya yo no soy tímida. [Translation:] I feel like I can share now. I am no longer shy.

Thalia: Me siento segura. No me están juzgando. [Translation]: I feel safe. I don't feel judged.

Maribel: I feel calm; relaxed...I don't keep anything bottled up anymore.

### *Resilience*

Although not a specific aim of this study, resilience emerged as a concept within the positive consequences associated with the women's help-seeking. A full discussion on resilience is beyond the focus of this project, but emerges as an implication for future research, particularly in the area of exploring the post-domestic violence experiences of women.

For some scholars resilience is a process (dynamic; interactional) by which individuals develop and embrace methods to cope with and address adversity (Shanthakumari, Chandra, Riazantseva, and Stewart, 2014; Luthar, Cicchetti, and Becker, 2000; Arrington & Wilson, 2000). Other research discusses how resilience is sometimes defined by, or focused on, individual characteristics or “attributes” that help to adapt strategies in the face of adversity (Anderson, Renner, and Danis, 2012, p. 1281; Arrington & Wilson, 2000). An example of focusing on individual characteristics is found in the definition used by Warner, Baro, and Eigenberg (2004), where “a woman’s capacity” is the mechanism by which she “[faces] adversity and develop[s] adaptive strategies that allow her to successfully respond to mistreatment and move forward with life” (p. 23). Furthermore, other scholars note that defining resilience is problematic and its conceptualization is dependent on the methodology used in resilience research (Crann & Barata (2015).

The women in this study provided responses that are associated with traits and behaviors described in resilience research, such as, “self-esteem”, “autonomy and optimism” (Arrington & Wilson, 2000, p. 221) as well as an increased sense of control (Crann & Barata, 2015, p. 14). That being said, the resilience category here incorporates positive statements about self and moving forward as well as increased control and financial independence. Some excerpts of the women’s narratives that demonstrate their resilience are provided below:

Nina: ...tengo una idea que quiero hacer. [Translation]: ...I have an idea of what I want to do.

Alex: *Ahora me siento mejor, a como estaba antes...me siento que puedo seguir adelante.* [Translation]: *Now I feel better, like I did before...I feel like I can move*

on.

Jaribeth: ...aprendí a vivir sola. [Translation]: ...I learned how to live on my own.

Nancy G: Me siento muy bien. Voy a la escuela...yo también puedo...yo puedo.

[Translation:] I feel really good. I am going to school...I too can...I can.

Jessica: ...yo me sentía como una mariposa que no podía volar. Pero ahora me siento como una mariposa que si puede volar... creo lo que tiene uno que seguir es la perseverancia, la fe, y la confianza. [Translation]: I used to feel like a butterfly that couldn't fly; but now I feel like a butterfly that can fly...I feel that one has to continue to persevere, have faith, and have confidence.

Thalia: ...me siento libre; como una palomita libre. Yo voy a seguir adelante.

[Translation]:...I feel free; like a free bird. I am going to continue to move on.

Theresa: ...ya no tengo miedo que un hombre me pegue, porque no me voy a dejar. Y yo trabajo y no necesito dinero de un hombre. [Translation]: ...I am not afraid that a man is going to come and hit me, because I won't let him. And, I work and do not need money from a man.

Terry: ...lo bueno es en esto que me paso, que me enseñó quererme más y a valorarme más...Me siento más fuerte. [Translation]: ...the good thing about what happened to me is that it taught me to love myself more and to value myself more...I feel stronger.

Taylor: I am in control of my life now, not him. I do what I want, when I want, with my money...I'm working. Something I couldn't do when I was with him.

The majority of the women in this study (21) disclosed statements that demonstrate their resilience. Foreign-born women (70%) were more likely than U.S.-born women (50%) to provide statements indicative of resilience, with the majority of the Mexican, Guatemalan, and

Honduran women providing more resilience related statements than women in the other sub-groups.

### Negative Consequences

Some of the women in this study also faced additional challenges and experienced negative consequences as a result of seeking help for their domestic violence situations. The negative consequences experienced by some of the women in this study fall into two categories: 1) instability and 2) impact on children.

#### *Instability*

In this study, instability is characterized by the response types of the women, which include loss of family support, homelessness/shelter-living, and financial need. Foreign-born (25%) and U.S.-born (25%) women had similar rates of identifying instability as a negative consequence associated with seeking help for their domestic violence situation. Mexican women (6) associated instability as a negative consequence more so than women in any other sub-group.

Homelessness/shelter-living is one of the consequences experienced by some of the women in this study. The aforementioned is not surprising as some of the women were completely dependent on their abusers because they did not have family nearby or in the United States. Other women had nowhere to turn because their families ostracized them for breaking with traditional norm expectations regarding marriage. Thus, some of them were left with limited housing options and were either living in a shelter, someone else's home, or renting a room at the time of their interviews. Some of their comments are included below.

Nilsa's mother stopped speaking to her and her family rejected her when she called to tell them that she had left her husband due to the abuse. She discussed how she wants to provide stability for her daughter and keep the benefits she has:

*...pues un lugar para estar estable y no estarme moviendo con mi hija cada rato. Quiero un lugar estable porque me da miedo que me vayan quitar los cupones. [Translation]: ...well, a place where I can be stable and not keep moving around all the time with my daughter. I want a stable place to live because I am afraid that I will lose my food stamps.*

Irma also disclosed how she lost her family's support:

*... mi familia me dio la espalda a mí. Mi mama era de esas que decían que el matrimonio es para toda la vida. [Translation]: ...my family turned their backs on me. My mother was one that used to say that marriage is for life.*

Jessica and Nancy G. were sharing apartments or rooms with other women and their children. Nuve, Tatiana, Jenny and Taylor were living in shelters and looking for housing stability as they navigated services for their domestic violence situations.

### *Impact on Children*

This category is comprised of disclosures of how help-seeking resulted in loss of custody and/or removal of children from the home as well as to how help-seeking contributed to neglecting the children. Three participants (two Mexican and one Puerto Rican) shared how their help-seeking directly affected their children:

Jaribeth: *Mi hija salió embarazada y tiene un niño...por la violencia, los descuide...los descuiden que me concentre andar por las cortes y en los precintos policía...Pues en ese aspecto quizás mi hija busco, no en la manera correcta, pero busco refugio en otra persona. [Translation]: My daughter became pregnant and had a son...because of the violence, I neglected them (her children)...I neglected them by concentrating my efforts in going to court and police precincts...Well, in that aspect, my daughter probably looked for, not in the right way, but looked for solace in another person.*

Thalia: *Él le pegaba a mi hijo mayor. Yo llame a ACS y abrieron una investigación contra él. Yo me deprimí mucho, me quería morir. Yo estuve en el hospital psiquiatrico por una semana, y allí me quitaron a los niños. [Translation]: He used to beat my eldest son. I called ACS and they started an investigation on him. I became so depressed; I wanted to die. I spent a week in a psychiatric hospital and that's when they took my children away from me.*

Maribel: *...they helped me get into a domestic violence shelter. I still [had] the kids. Now the court order said, which my understanding was, not to leave the state of New York. But they, his attorney, made it even tighter and said not to leave the county of the Bronx. And I didn't read the fine print...you cannot stay in the same county where the crime occurs, it's like witness protection, they have to hide you, so they took me up to Westchester County...Then the judge, felt that I violated the order, and basically told me that I was abusing the court system, shopping around for the order of protection, which she denied me. Basically she told me that I had to relocate back to NY, that once the house was sold, I would have to find an apartment and get a job back here in NY in order to get my kids*

*back. She was taking the kids away from me and giving them to the father because I...she didn't care, because she said that I was the one guilty for leaving the county of the Bronx.*

Maribel's account of how she lost custody of her children is one example of how the criminal justice response (emerging concept) was perceived to be lacking and/or inadequate by some of the women in the study. The women's experiences with the criminal justice system will be discussed in the following section.

### III. Experience with Domestic Violence Services

Research is sparse on the use of victim services and their effectiveness due to the limited use of the perspectives of women who engage in help-seeking and utilization of services (Zweig & Burt, 2007; Postmus, Severson, Berry, and Yoo, 2009).

Among the available help-seeking research, scholars have identified program elements that help enhance women's experiences with service providers, which include providing a supportive and empowering environment, resourcefulness and helpfulness, and being empathetic (Kulkarni et al., 2002; Mc Cleod et al., 2010; Clavesilla, 2014). In addition, collaboration with other programs (Zweig & Burt, 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Zweig et al., 2003; Dutton et al., 2000) and advocacy (Scordato, 2013) are also listed as aspects of adequate service provision.

Providing women with a sense of control and power in addressing their victimization with legal agencies is also important (Friedman, 1985). The aforementioned is of particular importance given that the majority of the women in this study were subjected to the coercive control of their abusers, which in some instances stripped them of their decision-making power (see Section I above).

In addition to the program elements already mentioned above, provision of adequate services to Latinas needs to include culturally competent service models. According to research,



understanding cultural gender-scripts, incorporating cultural nuances and factors such as *personalismo*, *respeto*, *marianismo*, and *familismo* in programs and services (Aguilar, 2011; Denham et al., 2007; Morse; 2007; Antshel, 2002) and understanding the importance of language and its use (Antshel, 2002; Trinch, 2003 & 2001; Morse 2007) are important elements in providing culturally competent and sensitive services to Latinas, for together they help to shape their experiences and perceptions of their interactions with others (Trinch, 2003; Morse, 2007).

Exploring the women's experiences with domestic violence services was another aim this project. Specifically, it aimed to explore if the women were satisfied with the services they were receiving, and if satisfaction with services differed by immigration and sub-group identity. To that end, the women were asked if they were satisfied with the services they received, felt their programs were helpful, and if they would repeat use of and recommend the programs to others.

This section will begin with a discussion on how the women in this study perceived services rendered followed by a discussion on the emerging concept of the criminal justice response to domestic violence.

### *Satisfaction with Services*

Service providers are charged with the task of maintaining a delicate balance between their clients' safety and immediate needs while operating within the parameters set by their funders, governing agencies, and state laws. More importantly, they need to maintain this balance under the watchful eyes of their clients. Satisfaction with services can serve to facilitate the difficulties some women may face when trying to separate from an abusive partner through support, "individualized care", advocacy, and empowerment (Kulkarni et al., 2012; p. 91).

Dissatisfaction with services can lead to feelings of helplessness, remaining in abusive relationships, or returning to abusive relationships.

Jenny, a participant living in a domestic violence shelter at the time of her interview, discussed her frustration with the services she was receiving:

*I just, I thought there was going to be more help. It's kind of like, if you don't hunt them down they're not really looking for you to let you know, "listen you have to do this and this." And then when the time is up, they're kind of like "well, you were supposed to do this". And the way I see it is I don't know what I am supposed to be doing. Like I've been in this situation and I don't know that I'm supposed to see this person, this person, and this person. Cause no one...no, they just say there's a lot of things you are supposed to be doing. And that's it...You're supposed to just find your way.*

Jenny goes on to discuss how she wants to be understood:

*[want someone that] makes me feel like I'm not wrong here. Because I have a son with this person, and this was my family and for a long time, you know, we were all we knew. We knew each other and that's it; there was no one else in the world to us. So now I feel like, I don't feel like a bad person, because I knew it was only getting worse. But there's times you know that I feel a little bit bad. I feel bad for my son, I feel bad for my batterer, I feel bad for myself. You know, I feel...was it? Should I even be going through this? So I'm looking for someone, you know to be like, "you did the right thing", you know, and that's not what she's doing. ...domestic violence is serious, and it's not easy to just get up and walk away. I see it like a disease, like you can't just get up and walk away. Like it's in your head, all the time, every day, all day. And people are easy to judge. You know they're easy to be like, "oh like she keeps going back because she likes it" but it has to do*

*with the money, it has to do with the family, it has to do with that person is all you know. It's a habit being with that person all the time. And the arguing becomes a habit as well.*

Jenny's statements demonstrate how dissatisfied she was with the services she was receiving at the shelter. In fact, when asked if she was satisfied with services, if she felt empowered, if she was able to speak freely about her abuse, and if she would repeat use of and recommend the program to others she replied "no" to all. She also perceived staff interactions with her as negative.

Taylor, another shelter participant, had a positive perception of the services she was receiving. She did mention however, that more staff is needed in order to navigate the services women need:

*I mean, what they need to do is bring in more people to work, who know what they're doing, and individualize them so their caseloads aren't so heavy...and where they actually have to help us with apartment searching, welfare, and all this other stuff.*

Taylor also discussed how she perceived staff interactions as positive with her and eluded that they may not be perceived as so by other residents:

*Positive with me. I mean, I see other women in the office who are basically abusing the system, so they come in with their attitudes so the workers are like, "I gave you the information you need, so you basically have to do for yourself now."*

Most of the women in the study (30) reported that they were satisfied with the services they were receiving in their programs. Foreign-born women (95%) were more likely than U.S.-born women (75%) to report that they were satisfied with the services; all of the Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Guatemalan women reported they were satisfied with services more so than the women in the other sub-groups.

The women in the study provided similar responses when asked if they felt their programs were helpful. The majority of the women (25) felt that their programs were helpful. Foreign-born women (83%) reported that their programs were helpful more so than U.S.-born women (62%); Mexican and Guatemalan women reported that their programs were more helpful than women in the other sub-groups. Below are some reasons the women shared about their programs being helpful:

Gina: *Porque este programa ayuda mucho a las mujeres que tienen el auto estema baja. Este programa ayuda mucho. [Translation]: Because this program helps women with low self-esteem a lot. This program is very helpful.*

Nilsa: *Es un programa que si ayuda...va un poco lento, pero yo estado viendo que me están ayudando poco a poco. Si hay respuestas. [Translation]: This is a helpful program...they are going a little slow, but I see that they are helping me little by little. There are results.*

Jessica: *Me ayudan. Sí, porque hasta ahorita, si yo tengo...le digo “me llevo esta carta” y ella me lo lee y me dice lo que tengo que hacer. [Translation]: They help me. Yes, because just now, if I have...I tell her, “I received this letter” and she reads it to me and tells me what I need to do.*

Bianca: *Helping me a lot, sometimes I feel it’s not enough. Some of the past for me is still stuck here...you know when you have something stuck on the wall and you need a lot of things to get it out? That’s how I feel.*

Lucy: *It’s serving its purpose...the reason why I wanted it was because I felt like I needed to get it off my chest. I wasn’t seeking additional help, not financially, nothing other than me just emotionally getting it off my chest, more to the fact that it’s been 2*

*years and up until this year, I was still going through it even though I wasn't living with him.*

Maribel: *...they give me a good sense of hope that I can get things resolved.*

The women were also asked if their programs were collaborating with other agencies in order to meet their needs. The majority of the women (20) stated that their programs were collaborating with other programs. Foreign-born and U.S.-born women had the same response rate (62%) on their programs collaboration with other programs to meet their needs. Mexican and Dominican women reported knowledge of program collaboration more so than the women in the other sub-groups. In sum, the majority of the women reported that they were satisfied with the services they were receiving, considered their programs helpful, and stated their programs were working with other agencies and programs to meet their needs. Their responses are supported by previous research that speaks to the importance of collaborating with other programs to meet client needs as well as factors, such as helpfulness, that increase satisfaction with program services (Kulkarni et al., 2012; Zweig & Burt, 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Zweig et al., 2003; Dutton et al., 2000).

Exploring if the participants' felt they could speak freely about their domestic violence experiences with program staff and how they felt sharing their experiences with the researcher was important to this project due to the "private nature" associated with domestic violence in Latino communities (Perilla, 1999). All of the foreign-born women and the majority of the U.S.-born women (6/8) shared that they could speak freely about their abuse experiences. Some of the participants' responses were framed by the cultural concepts mentioned earlier (*familismo*-familism; *confianza*- trust; *respeto*- respect). Trust and a judgement-free environment were

factors in some of the participants' ability to speak freely to their counselors and/or advocates as evidenced by Thalia's and Irma's comments:

Thalia: *Sí. Porque ellas me han dado confianza, seguridad en mi misma. Me siento cómoda con ellas. No me están juzgando. Siento que con ellas puedo confiar lo que no me puedo confiar con otras personas. [Translation]: Yes. Because they have given me confidence, and [helped me be] secure in myself. I feel comfortable with them. They aren't judging me. I feel that I can trust them with what I wouldn't trust anyone else with.*

Irma: *Sí. Porque no te recriminan lo que hiciste. No te están recriminando si estás bien o si estas mal. [Translation]: Yes. Because they don't judge what you did. They aren't judging if you're right or if you're wrong.*

For Nina, respect and the preservation of family (familism) were important:

*Sí. Porque me siento en confianza y porque siento que mi consejera me entiende. Sé que estoy aquí porque me van ayudar, no me van a juzgar, o juzgando discriminar... tampoco quiero denunciarlo ni quiero separarme de él. ...no me están obligando, o diciendo "tu estas mal", o juzgando prácticamente..., me están ayudando... [Translation]: Yes. Because I feel I can trust and because I feel my counselor understands me. I know I am here because they are going to help me, not judge me or discriminate...I also don't want to report him (abuser) or leave him...they are not forcing me, or telling me "you're wrong", or judging me...they are helping me.*

In addition to the above, the participants were asked how they felt about sharing their experiences with the researcher. All of the participants asked (31/32) responded with a positive

statement such as, “fine”, “good”, “relaxed”, “comfortable” and “feeling trust”. Their responses are indicative of the cultural nuances that are associated with “confianza” (trust).

### *Culturally Competent Services*

As discussed in chapter two, the current literature on Latinos and victim services discuss the need for culturally competent service models that incorporate the cultural concepts that guide the everyday interactions of Latinos (Kulkarni et al., 2012; Aguilar, 2011; Vidales, 2010; Guarnaccia et al., 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Yoshioka et al., 2003; Menjivar & Salcido, 2002; Antshel, 2002; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994).

Culturally competent models go beyond speaking the clients’ language; it includes an understanding of the importance Latinos place on cultural concepts, such as *personalismo* (personalism), *respeto* (respect), and *familismo* (familism) as well as an understanding of the gender scripts that shape the lives of Latinos. (Postmus, 2014; Aguilar, 2011; Denham et al., 2007; Morse, 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Yoshioka et al., 2003; Antshel, 2002; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991). Given the importance placed on providing culturally competent services for Latina victims of domestic violence, this research set out to investigate if Latina clients preferred to receive their services in Spanish and if they were satisfied with services provided in Spanish.

The majority of the women (n= 17; all foreign-born) had a preference for services to be provided in Spanish; some of the Mexican women (4) and some of the Dominican women (2) did not state a preference. Of the U.S-born women, 6 out of 7 (five Puerto Rican) stated a preference for service provision in English. The majority of the women also reported that they were

receiving their services in Spanish (n=19; all foreign born) and that they were satisfied with those services.

Language, and language use, is essential to the provision of culturally competent services. Language is the mechanism used to convey our experiences (Cruz, Marshall, Bowling & Villaveces, 2008; Trinch, 2003 & 2001). Since language is the ‘structuring mechanism’ that helps shape our experiences (Trinch, 2003, p. 1), then being able to communicate with others in our native/preferred language becomes important. This is especially true for the majority of the participants in this research because of their need to be able to express exactly what has happened to them in order to receive services. Esperanza, a participant that is fluent in English, spoke about the importance of language:

*... I went to the ADA on a Saturday and there was an obvious battered woman there with her child. And the police brought her in and I remember seeing her and they kept talking to her in English and that bothered me, the language disconnect.*

Some of the Spanish speaking women shared their thoughts on the importance of receiving their services in Spanish:

Nuve: *Porque entiendo lo que me dicen. Como yo estoy; lo que me paso, no se me salido de la cabeza...tienen paciencia y me entienden. Me tranquilizo. [Translation]: Because I understand what they are saying to me. The way I am; what happened to me, I can't get it out of my head...they are patient and they understand me. I can feel relaxed.*

Nina: *Todas entienden lo que le digo. Me siento feliz que me entienden y me escuchan. [Translation]: They all understand what I say to them. I feel happy that they understand me and hear me.*



Nancy G.: ...*porque entiendo y me puedo explicar mejor. [Translation]: Because I understand and I can explain myself better.*

Jarisbeth: *Bueno, se me hace más cómodo hablar con ellas porque no se inglés. Para mí es importante porque se me hace más fácil. [Translation]: Well, it makes it easier to talk to them because I don't know English. To me it's important because it makes it easier or for me.*

Carolina: *Porque lo entiendo mejor; me puedo comunicar mejor con ellas (las trabajadoras). [Translation]: Because I understand it better (Spanish); and I can better communicate with them (the staff).*

Language, and language use, although essential, is only part of what is needed to provide clients with culturally competent services. Having an understanding of, and incorporating, cultural concepts<sup>33</sup> (*personalismo, respeto, confianza, and familismo*) into service planning are beneficial to providing culturally competent services to Latina victims of domestic violence (Postmus, 2014; Aguilar, 2011; Denham et al., 2007; Morse, 2007; Whitaker et al., 2007; Moracco et al., 2005; Yoshioka et al., 2003; Antshel, 2002; Rogler, Cortes, & Malgady, 1991).

Some of the cultural concepts discussed above were evident in the statements made by some of participants when they discussed their satisfaction with services:

*Personalismo, confianza and familismo:*

Esni: *Me tratan de una manera especial. Es importante para mí que me traten bien (starts crying) “es importante que te hablen bonito” [Translation]: They treat me*

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<sup>33</sup> See *Culture and Culturally Competent Services* in Chapter Two for description of cultural concepts.

*special. It is important to me to be treated well (starts crying) “it’s important that they speak nicely to me”*

Julia: *Me escuchan y me ayudan. [Translation]: They hear me and they help me.*

Irma: *Me hacen sentir como en mi casa. [Translation]: They make me feel like I am in my house.*

Isabelle: *They are nice, patient. I feel like I am in a family.*

According to some of the women in this study, culture as a whole, is important and some of them shared how learning about and understanding different cultures is helpful.

Jessica: *Que busquen los testimonios de las mujeres para entender más...es importante conocer y entender la cultura, porque todos vinimos de diferentes culturas y a veces, precisamente por la cultura pasa las cosas, verdad...pasan las cosas y yo siento que es la cultura. [Translation]: They should seek the narratives of the women so that they can understand more...getting to know and understanding the culture is important, because we come from different cultures and sometimes, precisely because of culture things happen, you know...things happen and I feel it’s because of culture.*

Song: *Culture plays a big part. Needs to be acknowledged that we have a culture context by where we form our self-identity. Things that matter to us are trivialized by others-women/police.*

The participants’ comments above, indicate that they too understand how culture and cultural ideologies that can lead to domestic violence in relationships. They also imply that researchers, community leaders, law enforcement, and others should seek to enhance their knowledge on the role culture, and by extension cultural ideologies, play in perpetuating domestic violence.

### *Control/Input and Use of Services*

The level of control and input clients perceive they have in how their cases are handled by service providers is also a factor in determining satisfaction with services (Friedman, 1985). The women in this study<sup>34</sup> perceived that they had ‘a lot’ and ‘some’ control/input<sup>35</sup> in the handling of their cases when working with the staff at the domestic violence program. The majority of the foreign-born women (22) and all of the U.S. born women reported having “a lot” or “some” control/input in how their cases are handled. The majority of the U.S.-born women (4) stated they had “some” control/input, whereas the majority of the Foreign-born (19) stated that they had “a lot” of control/input. The Mexican and Honduran women were more likely to report having more control/input in how their cases are handled than women in other sub-groups. Repeat use of services and recommending services to others were also indicators of satisfaction with services received. All of the women in the study reported that they “definitely would” or “probably would” use the domestic violence program again in the future should they have a need for it; they also reported that they “definitely would” or “probably would” recommend the domestic violence program to others who may be in need of services.

Data from gathered from the in-depth interviews with the women allowed for the exploration of themes that were not in the original study design. Some were already discussed

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<sup>34</sup> Two clients (U.S.- born/ Jenny and Taylor) were not included in the domestic violence program category because they were discussing services they were receiving at the domestic violence shelter where they were residing at the time of the interview.

<sup>35</sup> Control/input refers to the participant dictating the direction they want their case to go in as well as having final say in the suggestions they will follow and actions they will take as it relates to the factors associated with their domestic violence case. Actions include, but are not limited to, leaving the abusive relationship, filing a report with the police, cooperating with the District Attorney’s office, filing for orders of protection, etc.

above (coercive control and consequences associated with help-seeking); another concept that emerged from the women's narratives is the criminal justice response to domestic violence.

### *Criminal Justice Response to Domestic Violence*

The majority of the women in this study have had some contact with one or more agents of the criminal justice system (police, District Attorneys, and/or courts) during their help seeking process. One area of interest to this investigation is the level of perceived control when dealing with the police and officials of the District Attorney's Office. Their experiences with and their perceptions of those interactions are presented below.

### Perceived Level of Control/Input with Police and District Attorney's Office

As previously mentioned, a review of the crime victims' movement conducted by Friedman (1985), discusses the importance of giving victims a sense of control and power in addressing their victimization with legal agencies. According to Friedman (1985,) giving victims of family violence a sense of control in the handling of their cases can help them dispel any feelings of blame or culpability they may feel (p. 793). The women's perceptions of the level of control they had with the police and officials of the District Attorney's office are presented below.

About half (n=14) of the women (n=29) reported that they felt they had little to no control during their interactions with the police. A little more than half (n=14) of the women (n=25) who had interactions with officials from the District Attorney's (DA) office, also reported having little to no control during their interactions with them. However, some of the women reported that they perceived having "some" or "a lot" of control when interacting with the

police than when interacting with the officials of the District Attorney's office (n=14 and n=8, respectively).

U.S-born women (62%) were more likely than foreign-born women (47%) to report having little to no control in their interactions with the police, with Puerto Rican women reporting less control than women in other sub-group categories (perhaps this is due to having an expectation of services that should be rendered).

A little less than half of the foreign-born women perceived having little to no control when interacting with the police and the DA's office (n= 10; n=12 respectively); with Mexican women reporting less control when interacting with the police and DA's office more so than women in the other foreign-born sub-groups. Lack of police action contributed to some women feeling like they had no control over their current situations. Jarisbeth recalled how the police didn't enforce her order of protection:

*No porque, ya dos veces yo había llamado, y pues, la primera no me levantaron el reporte porque no había agresión física. La segunda vez, lo arrestaron pero no le dieron cargos y para mí era una violación, porque yo tenía una orden de protección. Pero ellos me dijeron que no...que no había agresión física y que no había una violación.*

*[Translation]: No because, twice already I had called, and well, the first time they didn't give me the report because there wasn't physical aggression. The second time, they arrested him but they didn't charge him and that was a violation, because I had an order of protection. But they told me no; no physical aggression, no violation.*

Other participants described feeling ignored by the police and like no one could help them:

Irma: *Yo me sentía que me ignoraban. [Translation]: I felt they ignored me.*

Maribel: *I felt hopeless.*

Some participants felt they had no control when working with the District Attorney's (DA's) office because they were being told how the process would work. Irma and Isabelle recalled their experiences:

Irma: *El abogado fue que me decía que 'esto se va hacer y así se va hacer' -en inglés y con una interprete. [Translation]: The lawyer –in English and with an interpreter- was the one who would say to me 'this is what is going to be done and this is how it's going to be done'.*

Isabelle: *They have all the control because they let me know what I need to know. I feel they have all the control.*

#### Repeat Use of and Recommendation to Police and DA for Services

Perceived level of control did not appear to have a great impact on whether the women would contact the police, or use the services provided by the DA's office, should they need to in the future. Twenty-eight of the women reported they probably or definitely would contact the police if needed, with the majority of them (n=23) reporting they definitely would. All of the foreign-born women (n=23) that had contact with the police, reported that they would contact the police again and five out of the eight U.S. born women said they would as well. Twenty –two foreign-born women reported they would use the services of the DA's office again, of which sixteen reported they definitely would. For the U.S.-born women, 5 out of the 8 women that had contact with the DA's office, reported that they would use them again if needed.

The majority of the participants also reported that they would recommend the police (n=29) and the services of the DA's office (n=19) to someone who may need their assistance. The majority of the foreign-born women (22/24) reported that they would recommend the police as a resource and more than half of the U.S.-born group (7/8) reporting they would do the same. There was little to no difference for recommending police services among the different sub-groups. The women provided similar responses for referring someone to the DA's office; the majority of the women in the foreign-group (15/21) and the majority of the women in the U.S.-born group (4/6) reported they would refer someone in need of legal services to the DA's office. As with recommending police services, there was little to no difference among the varied sub-groups.

As previously mentioned, the women's perceived lack of control with the police and DA's office did not seem to serve as a deterrent for future use and recommendation of those services to others. The women's need to document their victimization and desire to obtain the services, serve as possible explanations for their willingness to interact with the police and DA's office, as indicated by some of their comments below.

Huffy: *Definitely would- try to get papers to help me.*

Lucy: *Probably not (recommend)...yes, you have to. They have to make note of it...they have to come and make note of it.*

Giselle: *Definitivamente...yo le diría a una persona, que hay que ir a todas las oficinas, y que a veces uno se va encontrar obstáculos, y cosa...tú sabe cómo... una gente aburrída, una gente que no te quiera ayudar. Por eso no tiene que parar lo que tú estás haciendo. So definitivamente se tiene que ir a todo los lugares que pueda. [Translation]:*

*definitely, I would tell the person, that you have to go to all of the offices, and sometimes you will come across obstacles, and things...you know like...some disgruntled person, someone who doesn't want to help you. But that shouldn't stop what you are doing. So, definitely you need to go to all of the places you can go to.*

Maribel: *Definitely would (recommend) - to have a record and documentation, whether they are helping you or not, you need the documentation.*

Although Maribel would recommend the police to someone else- for documentation purposes- she expressed her reservations about using the police in the future:

*Probably would – being impartial, because I feel they take his side as soon as they know he's a cop. Once they know he's a cop I get a totally different treatment.*

Lucy's husband's relationship with the police officers in her neighborhood, and his abusive tactics, made it difficult for her to get the assistance she needed. As a result, she is unlikely to use the police in the future. She shared her experience below:

*Probably not...It is really hard to explain what it's like dealing with police officers in a situation like this because they come and they have to use their better judgment. There are no set rules on how to deal with the call...I guess that goes for robbery or mur...anything, anything. You have to use, you know, whatever you find evident...it's difficult, because, um, you know; I will give you one example. He is a white man. A white man with a lot of law enforcement in the family, especially in the precinct that we lived in. And he would play softball in the police league. So they would come and they would be like "ah, just keep your hands off her; stay away" they would give him that advice and leave and nothing would fucking happen... or he would start mentioning people and they*



would be like “oh!” and he would start manipulating the situation instantaneously. And since we always lived this district for the police where he knew everyone... it made it more difficult. It's like really? And then, you know, and sometimes I'm telling you, what the issues were that he was so, so smart, he's not your typical man that would get so angry and beat the crap out of me. No, he would grab my hair, he'll pull my hair, he would lock me in the room, he would do things. I couldn't leave the house. He would do things so that if I called the cops he would be like, “but I didn't touch her”... It was hard to show....

Due to the lack of empathy, the insensitivity and the unprofessionalism Esperanza experienced at the DA's office, she is unlikely to recommend their services to others as implied by her shared experience:

*Probably not- they are overwhelmed, um, from my first ADA that I had to meet was a total jerk. The person who I'm working with now, she's so overwhelmed so if it's not that I'm contacting her, and/or on top of my case, it's very sad to see the cracks...[I: what made the first ADA a jerk?] Um, nonresponsive, very, you could hear the judgment and the sarcasm. Um, downplaying all the information that was being presented by myself and the arresting officer. Um, not being, that was the place I was told that I was going to tell my story and that didn't really happen. Things were summed up. It was a weekend, it was a Saturday morning, and so I guess that might have been a triggering factor. But prior to that, that interaction, once the gentleman was arrested, I had to go there and um, I didn't have information on where he lived, his date of birth and they were very cold, very dismissive. And, um, I kind of had a mini breakdown there and then they brought me to the back. I was never brought to the back in regards to, there was no confidentiality I*

*had to want to say my story at the front desk and I think that's very disgusting. So, um, the ADA, who eventually the second time I went back and he was arrested, that guy was very cold; didn't look at me. I struggled with being a domestic violence victim and there was no humility there. I was pushed then to the domestic violence unit, and the person who I'm working with, and have been working with for the past month, um, she was very good. She did listen to my story, but I had to make a case for myself. I had to buy her time, kind of. Um, I followed all protocol, as told. But I have been on top of her to let her know that I am not a quiet voice that's not going to go away. I am not someone that's going to go away. And I have been very relevant with that. And I feel like that I got somewhat services and some satisfaction because of my approach to it, not because of them being from the office.*

### *Perceptions of Police Response to Domestic Violence*

Exploring police response to domestic violence is important, particularly when conducting research on help-seeking populations. Being able to understand how police response is perceived by victims/survivors can help to highlight what is working, what is not working, and what needs to improve. That being said, the participants' perceptions of police response to domestic violence will follow a brief review of the literature on police response to domestic violence.

### *Brief Review of the Literature on Police Response to Domestic Violence*

According to Sun (2006), most research on police response to domestic violence has focused on three general areas: 1) “effectiveness of police interventions”, 2) “police actions towards victims and suspects”, and 3) “uncovering factors that affect police officers’ attitudes and perceptions of domestic violence” (pp. 145-146). Despite the research focus mentioned above, like other inquiries and research, research findings on police response to domestic violence is mixed.<sup>36</sup>

Some research has found that police response is adequate and has improved (Johnson, 2007; Russell and Light, 2006; White, Goldkamp, and Campbell, 2005); and other research discusses differential treatment and inadequate police response due to factors such as police perception and attitudes about domestic violence as well as victim and offender characteristics (Ammar, Orloff, Dutton, and Aguilar-Hass, 2005; Fyfe, Klinger, and Flavin, 1997). Below is a brief look at some of the predictors associated with police response to domestic violence in the literature.

#### *Predictors Associated with Adequate and Inadequate Police Response to Domestic Violence*

According to Trujillo and Ross (2008), the level of fear of the victim plays an important role in how some police officers respond to the victim. They argue that fear may appeal to the officers’ “need to respond to the emotional distress that fear signals” as well as serve to legitimize the victims’ “accusation of assault” (p.466). Trujillo and Ross also list the abusers’ drug/alcohol abuse, protective orders, previous incidents, and progression of incidents as predictors that elicit an adequate police response (2008). Other scholars discuss how respect

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<sup>36</sup> Findings are based on victim satisfaction surveys and observations.

towards officer(s) (Sun, 2006) and viewing the victim as ‘deserving’ (Russell & Light, 2006) are also predictors associated with adequate police response.

Russell and Light (2006), discuss the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ dynamics of police intervention in domestic violence (pp. 385-387). According to the authors, a victim is ‘deserving’ if “the assault was serious and there was no question of assailant culpability” (p.386). Once regarded as ‘deserving’, the police would treat the victim with respect and provide their full assistance (p.386). On the other hand, if the victim is perceived as taking part in the assault, not seriously injured, or has been a victim in the past, the police view the victim as ‘undeserving’ of their “full” assistance (Russell & Light, 2006). Given the obvious discretion used by police in how they address domestic violence, one might understand how some victims will not bring themselves to call on them for help. The belief that the police ‘can’t, or won’t do anything about it’, is one of the reasons used to explain why some victims do not seek help from the police (Wolf, Ly, Hobart, and Kernic, 2003). The aforementioned is supported by some of participants’ statements regarding the lack of police action:

Thalia: *...la policía se rieron de mí cuando yo llame y ellos vinieron y lo sacaron y le dijeron “oh, you will come back later” desde esa vez yo jure nunca llamar la policía otra vez [Translation]: ...the police laughed at me when I called and they came and they took him out and said to him “oh, you will come back later”. Since that time, I swore to never call the police again.*

Taylor: *Since they don’t do anything for me, it’s of no use. It took 2-3 hours to arrive. Refused to give the report because they didn’t see it.*

Nilsa: *Pues a veces la policía ayuda y a veces no. Porque yo fui a buscar una orden de*

*protección y me dijeron pues “no tienes golpes, no tienes nada, de que lo vas a acusar? Para tu obtener una orden de protección tienes que venir con golpes”. Yo le dije, “no es que me pone golpes, es que va a mi casa, se presenta a mi trabajo y para mí es un problema. Yo no puedo perder mi trabajo porque yo dependo solo de mi trabajo. Me dice, “si pero no se puede hacer nada”. [Translation]: Well, sometimes the police help and sometimes they don't. Because I went to get an order of protection and they told me “you don't have any injuries, you don't have anything, what are you going to accuse him of?” I told them, “It's not that he hits me, it's that he goes to my house, shows up at my job, and that's a problem for me. I can't lose my job because I rely on my job. He tells me, “yes, but nothing can be done”.*

*What works?*

According to the research, police and victims agree that the following make for good police responses to domestic violence: comprehensive and collaborative approach to handling each domestic violence incident (Russell & Light, 2006); listening to the victim (Russell & Light, 2006; Wolf et al., 2003); making an arrest when one is warranted (Johnson, 2007; Apsler, Cummins, and Carl, 2003); showing empathy and not blaming the victim (Russell & Light, 2006); providing information on community resources, shelters, and police/court interventions (Johnson, 2007; Russell & Light, 2006); following up with the victim and providing transportation when needed (Johnson, 2007).

### *What's needed?*

Although strides have been made in addressing domestic violence and providing services to victims of domestic violence, there are still issues and areas that need to be addressed. One area that needs to be addressed is that of a prompt response to 911 calls.

According to some of the participants in the present study, police response to emergency calls was less than adequate. Some of the participants disclosed calling the police several times to no avail; others disclosed that the police responded to their calls an hour to two hours after the call was placed. As a result, some of the participants were left with an impression that the police can't, and won't, do anything about their domestic violence situations. Given that some abusers tell their victims that "no one will help them" (recall Taylor's account of being berated by her abuser in a supermarket) inadequate police response can further exacerbate feelings of helplessness some victims of domestic violence experience.

Another area of concern raised by the participants in the current study was based on the lack of police response to their needs. Some participants disclosed how the police didn't make an arrest or provide a report because they felt the situation did not warrant it. Other participants disclosed how they had a difficult time obtaining police reports for their domestic violence incidents.

Esperanza shared how she had to activate her personal network (with obvious ties to the police department) in order to get the help that she needed as well as her report. She believed that she would not have been able to secure her report in a timely manner had she not reached out to the individuals she knew in the police department. Larissa recalled how she had to wait for some

time to get a copy of her police report and the indifference of the female police officer that assisted her.

Prompt response to 911 calls and adequate response to women's needs are only two areas that require improvement- as evidenced in the data collected in this study. Research findings in other studies identified additional areas that require police improvement.

Based on satisfaction surveys and research with police agencies and advocates, the following is still needed: improving responses to poor victims and understanding the importance of effective interventions (Sun, 2006), understanding the unique circumstances faced by immigrant women (Ammar et al., 2005), enforcing charges and penalties for domestic violence (Wolf, et al., 2003; Russell & Light, 2006), and more (and better) training to police officers on the dynamics of domestic violence (Russell & Light, 2006)- especially where risk is being determined (Trujillo & Ross, 2008).

#### *What's Available Now?*

Currently, there are several mechanisms in place to link victims, police, and social services in an effort to provide comprehensive services to victims of domestic violence. For instance, The Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence is now operating four 'Family Justice Centers' (Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx and Manhattan). There is also a Domestic Violence Response Team (DVRT) on Staten Island<sup>37</sup> and the New York City Housing Authority Domestic Violence Response Team (NYCHA DVRT), which provides comprehensive services

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<sup>37</sup> For a description of the services provided by DVRT see The Mayor's Office To Combat Domestic Violence information flyer  
[http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/downloads/pdf/Materials\\_FJC\\_OnePage\\_English.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/downloads/pdf/Materials_FJC_OnePage_English.pdf)

for domestic violence in 15 New York City housing developments.<sup>38</sup> The New York City Police Department now has domestic violence units/officers in most of their precincts and has also participated, and continues to participate, in some collaborative initiatives with local victims/legal service agencies as well as with local and city council members. The aforementioned highlights the concentrated efforts being made in New York City; however, research focused on police perceptions of domestic violence is still needed.

### *Participants' Perceptions of Police Response to Domestic Violence*

A recurring theme in the participants' narratives was police response time. Some of the participants shared their frustration with the slow police response and lack of response.

Nuve discussed how she didn't get police intervention until she went to work and they questioned her about her bruises:

*Ese fue el día que trato de matarme. Tuvimos relaciones como a las once de la noche. Estábamos bebiendo tequila y algo azul. Estaba mezclando mucho porque estaba bebiendo con los dueños del apartamento. Yo accedí porque no quería tener relaciones y accedí. Lo hice. A las tres de la mañana quería tener relaciones otra vez y no quería y me estaba esforzando. Le dije que se quedara tranquilo porque yo estaba durmiendo a lado de mi hijo. Allí me rompió las pantis y después se paró, y prendió la luz y la música, y me metió un trompón. Yo tengo un tumor en la cabeza, y si me da allí, me podía matar. Me metió un trompón que cayi de cabeza en el piso. Me estaba orcando, me hijo se despertó cuando cayeron los abanicos en el piso y se le tiro en sima y le estaba diciendo que*

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<sup>38</sup> For a description of the services provided by NYCHA DVRT see <http://www.nyc.gov/html/ocdv/html/help/dvrt-nycha.shtml>



*“leave my mommy alone” los dueños del apartamento oyeron y abrieron la puerta con un cuchillo y me lo quitaron de encima. Yo llame a la policía dos veces y no vinieron. El viernes empezó lo mismo. Empezó a tirarme, me partió el labio, yo lo arañe. Y el niño otra vez le dijo que me dejara quieta. La señora del apartamento entro y le dijo que dejara de pelear y que me dejara quieta. No llame a la policía esa vez porque no vinieron cuando yo los llames el viernes...cuando así era que lo necesitaba. De la escuela me mandaron a la policía. Una de las jefas del trabajo se fijó que yo estaba herida, me llevo al baño y vio todo. Fue donde la directora y me dijo “si tú no quiere que te quiten el niño, dilo tu primero. Vete ahorra mismo al XX, ahora mismo”. Me mando para el XX con dos muchachas. Le dije que yo llame dos veces el viernes por la madrugada y nunca fueron. Me preguntaron si yo tenía prueba que yo lo llame y le dije que sí. Saque el celular y se lo enseñe. Allí fue que una mujer policía me llevo para un cuarto y me saco las fotos de las heridas. Lo arrestaron ese día. [Translation]: That was the day that he tried to kill me. We had sexual intercourse around 11pm. We were drinking tequila and something blue. I was mixing a lot because I was drinking with the owners of the apartment. I acquiesced because I didn't want to have intercourse, but I acquiesced. I did it. At 3o'clock in the morning he wanted to have sex again and I didn't want to and he began to force me. I told him to relax himself because I was sleeping next to my son. Right then he tore off my panties, stood up, turned on the lights and the music and punched me. I have a tumor in my head and if he hit me there he could kill me. He gave me a punch and I fell head first on the floor. He was strangling me. My son woke up when the fans fell on the floor and he jumped on top of his and started to yell, “leave my mommy alone”. That's when the owners of the apartment heard it and opened the door*

*with a knife and took him off of me. I called the police twice and they never came. He started the same thing on Friday. He started to hit me, he busted my lip and I scratched him. And my son told him to leave me alone again. I didn't call the police that time because they didn't come when I called them on Friday...when I really needed them. They sent me to the police from school. One of the bosses from work noticed that I was injured, took me to the bathroom and saw it all. She went over to the director and told me "if you don't want them to take your son away, say it first. Go right now to XX, right now". She sent me to XX with two of the girls. I told them that I had called twice on Friday during the early morning hours and they never came. They asked me if I had proof and I told them yes. I showed them my cellphone. That's when the female police officer took me into a room and took pictures of my injuries. They arrested him that day.*

Isabelle and her parents called the police when her abuser showed up at her job and she had to flag down a police cruiser on the street:

*When my parents got there they started calling the police with me. My father told them everything and they told him that they are on their way. We called three times. We saw cop cars drive by, but didn't stop and the one's that did stop didn't even come out of the car. After I left my job, my job told me that the cops came...When I did get to talk to the cops that I stopped on the street and told them everything... he said all I can do is go to my local precinct and file a report. I went to the XX, they took the report, and told me that I should go for an order of protection.*

Jenny and Taylor shared their frustration and thoughts about the slow police response:

Jenny: *Like I said, "Cops are being called and they're kind of like, fine, fine here, if he shows up just call us again." I was like, "it took you an hour and a half to get here and*

*you want me to call you when he shows up again and tell him what? Wait here because they're coming for you?" And then I have an order of protection, so I asked them, "do I throw it at him?" Like, "I have an order of protection against you".*

Taylor: *The police, I think they should just not wait until the person is laying there bleeding, practically dead to actually do something. They should actually, if a person calls and says, 'you know this person is violating an order of protection' make it, you know a matter of minutes instead of hours.*

### *The Police Come When Children Call*

Larissa realized that the police responded quickly because they heard her daughter in the background:

*When I saw him eating there, I told my daughter "get your coat; get your coat; get your coat. We gotta get out; we gotta get out. By the time we ran outside there were like 3-4 cop cars...I used my right hand to call and they heard XXX crying, it was like a child so they came immediately. Because...they reported a person being raped and they came an hour and 40 minutes later...it was like 5-6 years ago...which I then went on ahead to reprimand them for.*

Nancy G. discussed how the police arrived when her daughter called them:

*Porque cuando esta ultima vez que me pego, me pego tan feo que me rompió...había mucha sangre...el me arrastro al piso...mi hija empezó a gritar, y dijo 'voy a llamar a 911'...el perdió el control y mi hija llamo...el corrió, y llego la policía a casa, llegaron muchas policía a casa, la ambulancia y todo.[Translation]: Because the last time he hit me, he hit me so hard that he broke...there was a lot of blood...he dragged me on the*

*floor...and my daughter started to scream, and said “ I am going to call 911 ” ...he lost control and my daughter called...he ran and the police arrived at the house, a lot of police officers came to my home, the ambulance and everything.*

*Police Response: Sometimes it's Who You Know.*

Esperanza discussed how she had to activate her network in order to get the help she needed from the police:

*I once, one time, had to wait 40 minutes for them (the police) to come to my house and I was totally lucky they showed up. At the end of it, when he was finally arrested the detectives that showed up at my house said “get into the car and let's find him”. Then he said, “who are you and who do you know?” and I said, my response was “I'm the bitch with the flu and I'm tired of living in fear” and I'm telling you that because I'm satisfied with the cops that I know. I'm satisfied with the feds that I know. I am satisfied with the calls that I was able to make and said, “yo run this for me cause I need this” and that's why he's in jail. Had I continued to call the police to say “hi, I'm being stalked or I have an order of protection on a phantom” ...um, and not many people have that. To this day the arresting officer, whom I didn't know when he got that call, he was in Manhattan and went to the Bronx to arrest him. He told me, “When I first met you” ... he took the complaint the first time, “I thought this guy was going to kill you.” And he said, “I haven't slept thinking about you”. That's another part of officers trying to do their jobs because of all the politics and the bullshit...and I have had other officers who were like “oh really, and rolled their eyes”. And I had people call this lieutenant and this sergeant and I had paper work filed the next day and some people wait weeks and that is sad to*

*me. I never met the detective from my precinct, she never... it was a woman and a Latina. I would call and it was, "oh she's not here". It was very nonchalant; it was nothing. I would leave messages and she wouldn't call me back...when I started calling my people and they called the sergeant of my precinct that's when she called me back. I was giving her all the information and she still wouldn't arrest him. When the detective came to my house, he tried to break into my house, that's how we ended up getting him. The question was "who are you and who do you know?" that shouldn't be relevant... because of whom I knew and they wanted the accolades for it; no one did the work.*

### *Positive Police Encounters*

Some participants shared their positive experiences with the police:

Esní: *Yo llame a la policía y les explique lo que había pasado y ellos me ayudaron. Yo fui la que dije allí todo lo que quería [Translation]: I called the police and explained to them what had happened and they helped me. I was the one that told them everything and what I wanted.*

Jessica: *Me dejaron hablar. Me preguntaron si yo quería que lo encerraran, y yo le dije que sí. Los policías que llegaron eran latinos y me hablaron en español. [Translation]: They let me talk. They asked me if I wanted him arrested and I said yes. The officers that came were Latinos and they spoke to me in Spanish.*

The participants' narratives show that police response time is inadequate. Their responses are in line with research listing quick police response as one of the areas that victims of domestic violence and advocates would like to see improve (Wolf, Hobart and Kernic, 2003).

## *Courts*

Some of the participants described the struggles they experienced when working with the courts. Larissa shared her perception of the power imbalance money introduces in the courts; for Larissa, money mattered more to the courts than the victim:

*... he was able to hire an attorney who gets paid \$800 an hour to go against a DA who's barely out of law school two or three years. It's not very equal....I'm being sued now, for \$50,000 for calling 911.*

*I went to Albany... And I told the senators and congressional people...they were like "oh, hello Dr. blah, blah, blah". I told them "I'm a survivor" and their mouth dropped. So one of the senators said "he needs to be taken out and get his ass kicked"...I told all the congressional people, "I am not asking for you to not drop the funding. I am in fact demanding that you increase it because the judicial system doesn't care." It didn't. It cares when it's someone who is here illegally. It cares when it's a minority against another poor person, it doesn't care when it's someone who has more money...*

Although Larissa is foreign-born, she didn't share the views held by the majority of the foreign-born participants as they relate to their perception of protections and availability afforded to American-born women. Larissa implies that the criminal justice system deceives victims of domestic violence, she states, *"In other countries you know you are not going to be able to prosecute the man; here in the US it's worse, they pretend they're going to."* Larissa's opposing views may be attributed to having lived in the United States for the majority of her life; as such, she may have higher standards and expectations for the criminal justice system. Maribel's views

on assistance for victims of domestic violence were similar to Larissa's. Maribel discussed the difficulty faced by some help-seekers:

*... It's a disappointment to see the resources that they claim that is out there, but it's not as easy as they think. They're quick to, "Oh here's this number"; "oh contact this person". But, when you go thorough those channels sometimes they don't even help you. It's like you're just another number; just another case. You're like "okay another one to the big pile that's there". So many people that need help but there's nothing actually being done. And only one out of ten actually get the help that they need. The rest go through frustration and they lose the hope and just pull away*

Maribel's frustration and disappointment was evident as she discussed feeling victimized by the court for being proactive in seeking help to address her domestic violence situation. As was discussed earlier (see Consequences of Help-Seeking section), Maribel lost custody of her children because she inadvertently disobeyed a court order when she went to a domestic violence shelter located in Westchester County. She described her experience below:

*...since the civil court refused me, the judge for our divorce refused us the order of protection, I went to family court. I got the order of protection. Now, when I got the order of protection, I didn't get to serve him properly, um, like the time you get, you only get a certain amount of time, well, I had to go back to renew it. And I served him properly, but then when I went to court to get it extended, this is when I went with XXXX (program), for advocacy, and the judge told me, um, basically that I should be ashamed of myself for being an "over-dramatical drama queen, taking advantage of a hardworking citizen like him". He went in with his attorney; I didn't go with an attorney because I didn't think I needed an attorney for this particular, um, procedure, since my attorney wasn't*

*advocating through the civil court...I need this. So um, I went on my own and did it on my own. So his attorney said that I was shopping around for an order of protection. Since the civil court wouldn't give it to me, the family court gave it to me, but then the judge wouldn't give it to me. Two judges gave it to me, but the third judge refused me and that was the one I was with XXXX (program) and she was like, "don't say anything because this is like a real nasty judge.". I was like "oh my God! I'm being victimized. I'm the victim here and they're portraying him like a hardworking citizen and he's the one that's stalking me and harassing me". So, I was like "Oh my God. I gotta do something about this." So I went and I started calling politicians trying to seek other help; somebody in a higher place to help me in this situation.*

Help-seekers are in a unique position to inform service providers, policy makers, and criminal justice agencies on what works and identifying areas that need improvement.

The previous section highlighted how the perceived levels of control/input the women felt they had in the management of their cases, collaboration with other agencies to meet their needs, the ability to speak freely, and service provision in their preferred language are factors that are associated with overall satisfaction with services. Based on the women's narratives and experiences, the following areas need to improve: police response time to 911 calls, empowering victims of domestic violence by letting them make decisions regarding the handling of their cases when working with the District Attorney's office, increased sensitivity when working with victims of domestic violence, and making services readily accessible to help-seekers after the fact (i.e., domestic violence reports and orders of protection ) as those services can serve to secure additional services and/or a safer environment (such as shelter placement and emergency housing transfers) for victims of domestic violence.



#### IV. Women's Voices

In an effort to further increase the production of knowledge on Latinas and domestic violence, the women were asked about their lived experiences with and perceptions of domestic violence, their wants and needs, advice they would give to women in the same situation, what they would say to those in a position of power to effect change about domestic violence, and what they felt is needed to address it more effectively. This section presents their discussions on the aforementioned as follows:

- Perception of society's response to domestic violence
- Living in the United States and perception of domestic violence
- Effects of domestic violence
- Wants and needs
- Advice to women
- Reflections: change
- What's needed to address domestic violence and help victims/survivors

##### *Perception of Society's Response to Domestic Violence*

In order to gauge the women's perceptions on society's response to domestic violence, they were asked the following question: do you think domestic violence is taken seriously? The women were split on the issue, with 15 reporting that domestic is taken seriously<sup>39</sup> and 14 women reporting that it is not taken seriously. Some of their comments are shared below:

##### Domestic violence is taken seriously

Irma: *Ahora sí, porque se han visto casos, en que, en que el hombre ha matado a la*

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<sup>39</sup> Four of the 15 women stated that domestic violence was taken somewhat seriously.

*mujer. Porque antes no. Yo me acuerdo si tu decía que tú eres una víctima de violencia doméstica y no te hacían caso. Ahora tú vas a la policía y se lo dice y ellos te ponen a alguien para eso. Antes no. [Translation]: now they do, because there have been cases where the man has killed the woman. Because before they didn't. I remember that if you said you were a victim of domestic violence they ignored you. Now you go to the police and tell them and they will assign someone to the case. They didn't do that before.*

Jessica: *Ahora se ha escuchado más eso, verdad, antes te daba miedo porque la policía no hacía nada. Yo escuchaba que la policía no hacía nada...te dicen que hay muchas ayudas, verdad, como por ejemplo cuando yo fui para el 'housing' ...me pregunto si yo tenía otro reporte...como si él me estaba molestando...a veces me decían "deje que te pegue y te ayudan con los papeles". Hay personas que no lo necesitan y han utilizado muchas mentiras y...ahora hay muchas preguntas. [Translation]: Now you hear more about it, you know, before you would be afraid because the police wouldn't do anything. I used to hear that the police didn't do anything...they say that there is a lot of help, you know, for example, when I went for housing...they asked me if I had another report...like if he (the abuser) was bothering me...sometimes they would say to me "let him hit you and you will get help with your papers." There are people who don't need it and lie a lot ... and today there are a lot of questions being asked.*

Julia: *Sí. Porque si no, pues no hubieran programas para ayudar a uno. [Translation]: Yes. Because if it wasn't, well, there wouldn't be programs to help.*

Carolina: *Si vas a la corte, le dicen que se tiene que alejar de ti. Si no tú puedes llamar a la policía. En México, se aguanta uno. [Translation]: If you go to court, they tell them*

*(the abuser) that he needs to stay away from you. If not, you can call the police. In Mexico, you need to deal with it.*

Theresa: *Sí, porque es un problema. Lo cogen seria ahora porque muchas mujeres han muerto. [Translation]: Yes, because it's a problem. They take it seriously now because a lot of women have died.*

Taylor: *I think they're pushing harder to make an effort. If they continue I would believe that it would become an issue the same way they've done with the cancer and the HIV.*

### Domestic violence is not taken seriously

Giselle: *...la gente no entiende. De afuera no entiende. Yo, no, no lo cogen serio, yo diría. Porque ellos dicen, "oh salte de allí; deja a ese hombre". Pero ello no está entendiendo las emociones, no tienen eso sentimientos, so ellos no saben. No conocen el verdadero sentido. Y dicen, "oh esa mujer que está cogiendo de ese hombre es porque ella quiere." [Translation]: ...people don't understand. Looking in from the outside they don't understand. I, no, they don't take it seriously, I would say. Because they say, "oh get out of there; leave that man". But they don't understand the emotional ties, they don't have the feelings, they don't know. They don't know the real meaning. And they say, "oh that woman is taking it from that man because she wants to."*

Nicole: *I think sometimes they don't care about it. Cause sometimes people don't understand what you are passing through...so if you try to talk to them... they don't understand you, they just say that you just want to get out of the house or whatever...you just don't wanna be having a family...they don't understand what we living, what we're going through.*

Jenny: *I think people think it's a joke- because so many females treat it like a joke. So, right now, they're not, for example, housing people. I guess, are not taking domestic violence cases seriously, because they were giving out so many apartments to domestic violence victims and the victims were bringing in their abusers a month later to live with them because it was all a scam. But then women like me come in, and I'm in need. And they're like "we aren't doing domestic violence anymore, we are only taking rape cases, or your lip has to be busted or your arm has to be broken." And, the woman that deals, the housing specialist, in the shelter, her words exactly were, "oh, um, your report is physical, but it's not like a real physical. Like, you didn't have a broken arm or a busted lip", you know. I was like, "yeah but I have pictures of me bruised up", and she was like, "it's not severe enough". And she said, um, she's like, "I'm not saying anything but I even had one woman one time go and provoke her abuser and he broke her arm and gave her 15 stitches, but she got her apartment". And I was like, "I'm going to disregard what you said, cause to me it kind of sounds like you are telling me to go and provoke him..." and then those are the services that is being handed out to us. So I feel like yeah, people, women take it like a joke..."oh I've been abused or whatever and, you know..."*

Some of the participants made reference to the police and the criminal justice system in their responses.

Nilsa: *No lo cogen muy seria porque si lo cogieran seria como es, ellos hicieran algo intervinieran, pero ello no intervienen hasta que hay una muerte o un accidente fatal. [Translation]: They don't take it very seriously; if they did they would do something to intervene but they don't intervene until there is a death or a fatal accident.*

Thalia...pues cuando mi hijo tenía 6 meses, yo pensé que no lo tomaran en serio, porque la policía se rieron de mi cuando yo llame y ellos vinieron y lo sacaron y le dijeron “oh, you will come back later” [Translation]: ...well when my son was 6 months old, I thought that they didn't take it seriously, because the police laughed when I called and they came, removed him and told him “oh you will come back later”.

Larrisa: No, because judicially speaking there are no laws to stop it. We hear about domestic violence when somebody succeeds that is a minority. It's always domestic violence is about those poor people, those brown people, those illegal people, those people that should be happy to be in the United States no matter what...why am I not hearing about my husband? Why am I not hearing about that? That's what was in the Post...and I was infuriated. I was like “it's not going to change”.

Nicole Two...not through the courts- in my opinion, they just want to arrest people. I think that abusers need help, not jail, well jail for what they do...but they need more help.

### *Living in the United States and the Perception of Domestic Violence*

One of the areas of interest in this research was to explore if foreign-born women's perception of domestic violence had changed since moving to and living in the United States. This was included in the study because it is believed that women would seek assistance for their domestic violence situations if they are aware that services are available and can help them. This is particularly true for immigrant women due to the possibility that there may not be a structured response to help victims of domestic violence in their country of origin or because the women may have been exposed to practices that generate a general mistrust of police and other service providers. As a result, they may believe that they have no other recourse but to remain in their

abusive relationships. (Reina et al., 2014; Vidales, 2010; Liang et al., 2005; Bent-Goodley, 2005; Kasturirangan et al., 2004; Raj & Silverman, 2002; Perilla, 1999).

The majority of the foreign-born women asked (15/16) discussed how their perceptions had changed since moving to the United States.<sup>40</sup> Their responses revolved around the availability of services to women and how women are valued more; that is, they seem to have more freedoms<sup>41</sup> and more protections available to them. They also discussed being able to discuss their experiences with domestic violence without having to live behind a shroud of secrecy because of the expectation that married women are supposed to suffer through anything and everything for the sake of preserving their marriages.

Terry, Jessica, Nilsa, and Nina discussed how their perception that women are protected in the United States has changed their perception of domestic violence:

*Terry: Lo que pasa es que en este país, la mujer es más escuchada, no que tenga más derechos, pero que simplemente es más escuchada. Y aquí te socorran. En otro país, desafortunadamente, te matan y huyen y se acabó el problema. [Translation]: In the country, women are listened to, not that they have more rights, but she is simply listened*

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<sup>40</sup> Foreign-born clients that lived the majority of their lives in the United States were excluded because they would not have lived experience in the country of origin to make the comparison. Those participants were included in the Living in US Changed Perception of Domestic Violence N/A.

<sup>41</sup> In this context, the women define freedom as being able to break free from the violent relationships without being reproached by members of the community. For instance, the majority of the participants from Mexico made references to ‘hablarias’ (gossip) based on what people would say if they were to leave their abusive partners or involve others in their marital problems because marriage is for life and it’s the women’s duty to stay in her marriage and deal with the good and the bad.

to more. And here they protect you. In other countries, unfortunately, they can kill you and escape and the problem is over.

Jessica: Eh, yo creo que sí, verdad, porque este es un país libre, verdad...nosotros en nuestro país era como un tabú, verdad, teníamos que quedarnos calladita, verdad...

[Translation]: Eh, I believe yes because this is a free country, right...in our country It's like a taboo, right... we had to stay nice and quiet, right.

Nilsa: Si. Pues aquí porque ayudan más a las mujeres y hay un poquito más de protección. En México no, porque en México... Yo siento que aquí hay más ayuda que en México. [Translation]: Yes. Well here (in the United States.) they help women more and there is a little more protection. Not in Mexico, because in Mexico...I feel that there is more help here than in México.

Nina: Claro que sí. Porque los EU es más libre y defienden a las mujeres y defienden a los niños. En México no; el hombre siempre tiene la razón. [Translation]: But of course. Because there are more freedoms in the United States and they defend women and defend children. Not in Mexico...the man is always right.

In addition to the above, Carolina, Theresa and Jarisbeth discussed how they no longer feel tied to cultural beliefs and practices that require women to remain in abusive relationships.

Carolina: Si, porque uno no, pues...que no tengo que estar con él porque así debe ser...bueno como estaba casada con él, antes de separarme mi mama me decía "te tienes que quedar con él para siempre, porque están casados; aunque te pegue, aunque te haga cualquier cosa porque él es tu marido y tienes que aguantar".[Translation]: Yes, because one can, well...that I don't have to be with him just because that's the way it's supposed to be...well, since I was married to him, before separating from him, my mother would tell

me “you need to stay with him forever, because you are married; even if he hits you, even if he does whatever to you, because he is your husband and you have to stay and deal with it”.

Theresa: Si. Porque aquí puedo valer por mí misma. Antes yo pensaba, “yo me case con él, no lo puedo dejar...es para toda la vida”...así nos crían allá (México). Si tuviera allá no lo iba poder dejar. Mi mama me decía “te casaste con el tienes que aguantar”.

[Translation]: Yes. Because here I am valued on my own merit. I used to think, “I married him so I can’t leave him...it’s for life”...that’s how we are raised over there (Mexico). If I were over there, I would not be able to leave him. My mom used to tell me “you married him, you have to stay and deal with it”.

Jarisbeth: Si, porque en nuestro país, desgraciadamente, tenemos cómo nos decían los padres, y lo abuelos, “te casas, es para toda la vida. Tienes que ser buena esposa, tienes que ser esto tienes que lo otro”...el más que nada ‘el que dirá’. Y aquí, la verdad, me acostumbre decir de qué dirá la gente “no me importa”... Porque siempre tuve que ser la esposa sumisa a lo que el hombre dijera, en nuestro país siempre es así. Es a acostumbrarte si el hombre te lleva tú vas. Si no, la mujer en la casa y el hombre en la calle. Así es en mi país, que la mujer tiene que ser muy de hogar, directamente a tu hogar, no puedes salir, no te puedes divertir porque eso es malo y la gente la va a criticar. Aquí no. [Translation]: Yes, because in our country, unfortunately, we had to, like our parents and grandparents told us, “you got married, it’s for life. You need to be a good wife, you need to do this and that”... and more than anything the ‘what will people say’. And here, right, I got used to saying “I don’t care” what the people might say...Because I always had to be the submissive wife to whatever the man said, in our country its always like that.



*You have to get used to following the man in the direction he takes you. If not, the woman in the house and the man in the street. That's how it is in my country, that the woman has to be a homemaker, limited to her household, she couldn't go out, couldn't go have fun because it's bad and the people will criticize you for it. Not here.*

The above comments support the importance of raising awareness about domestic violence as well as continuing outreach efforts to communities where women can avail themselves of programs and services addressing domestic violence. In addition, given that most Latinas, especially foreign-born Latinas, tend to be spiritual and religious (Perilla, 1999), it would be beneficial to reach out to clergy in predominately Latino areas so that they too can be educated on the consequences of treating domestic violence as a public versus a private matter.

It has already been established that giving women a voice is the most effective method of identifying what they want and need (Hague & Mullender, 2006). The remainder of this chapter presents the women's perspectives on how domestic violence has affected them, advice they would offer to other women in the same situation, as well as changes they would make (if any) regarding their current situation. The aforementioned will be followed by a presentation of the women's stated wants and needs as well as what they want policy makers, community leaders, and others in position of power to know about their needs and views on domestic violence.

### Effects of Domestic Violence

The violence experienced by victims of domestic violence can range from verbal abuse to serious injuries. As a result, the impact of the violence they experience can affect them in a variety of ways and have long lasting effects. There were three categories that emerged in the

context of how domestic violence had affected their lives: impact on future relationships, emotional impact, and possible effects on children.

### *Impact on Future Relationships*

Some of the participants described their fears and apprehensions about future relationships as well as how domestic violence has affected their ability to open up to and become intimate with other men:

*Lisette: Well, it has affected me to the point, you know, that's a very interesting question you know, not silly, it has affected me to the point that I have a wonderful man, you know. He's a church man, he's 49 years old, you know, I'm 44, just perfect! You know, and from him I've learned a lot but yet I have a wall....giving myself is a long way, and I don't think I'm ready or if it's going to happen... It marks you for life is basically what it is, when it comes to relationships.*

*Maribel: It got to the point that I was so detested by sex; I didn't want to be intimate with no one. It took me a while to be actually open and intimate with my current boyfriend. And I had to explain to him, "Look, it's like I don't, I'm not sexually aroused or anything because I was so traumatized by him that felt that I was not good enough for anybody else." So then it was like, I had to rebuild my self-esteem, and I said, "You know what, and I have to take a step back", and I said, "I have to take 5 steps, back instead of the normal two, to re-evaluate myself" and tell myself "you know what? You're not fat; you're not this and you're not that" everything that he was saying to the contrary of. So I had to rebuild my self-esteem and I went to return to one of my passions and that's how I*

*started to build up my self-confidence. So it's like, um, all I see is a re-enactment of my husband; so I'm always thinking, "oh, you're gonna be just like my husband. You are going to treat me just like my husband". So I had to reassert myself, and be like, "you know what, not everybody is the same." It took me a long while.*

Lucy: *You know when I noticed it became a problem? Is I like this guy and I'm having a hard time opening up to him. I don't trust, I don't know, I feel like I'm still confused about XXX; I am 100% sure that I am over him. Even though I miss him, I know nothing is going to change. And dealing with this individual I said to myself, "I need to talk to someone because I totally don't know how to treat a new situation because I still think of all the shit I went through with him." You know? Even to get intimate I think about the times he's made me. Uh, this guy has done something similar to what he's done, when he was angry, but this guy wasn't angry and I totally associated the two and it freaked me out.*

Irma: *...la violencia doméstica, a uno le cambia la vida. Te vuelves inseguro de mí mismo...Si me libere, pero si quedan las huellas. Y siempre vives con el temor que otra persona venga y estas en la defensiva; no vas a dejar que nadie...y tal vez no es lo que te están haciendo, si no que es que tú lo viviste y ya lo ve como agresión y no puedes ni formar otra relación con otra persona porque lo ves lo mismo. [Translation]: ...domestic violence changes lives. You become unsure of yourself...yes I freed myself, but the scars remain. And you always live with the fear that another person will come and you're on the defensive; you are not going to let anyone...and perhaps that's not what they're doing, it's just that you lived it and see it as aggression and you can't even have another relationship with someone else because you see them as the same.*

Bianca describes feeling guarded while taking the time to evaluate her experience:

*It has affected me a lot...emotional and spiritually. It shattered me, but at the same time it helped me learn the mistakes...to look back and see the signs for the near future...even if he curses at me and says sorry, I know he is not...right now I am protecting my heart. I told my mom “I don’t hate men, but right now I am not interested in meeting anyone”.*

Nancy described feeling apprehensive about future relationships as well as her fears of being victimized and/or becoming an abuser in the future.

### *Emotional Impact*

The participants discussed how the emotional scars of domestic violence remain long after the physical abuse has stopped:

Theresa: *En todo los sentidos... Físicamente tengo heridas que siempre me van a recordar. [Translation]: In every sense of the word...I have physical scars that will always remind me.*

Esni: *Eso se queda contigo siempre. [Translation]: It always stays with you.*

Other participants shared feelings of embarrassment, uselessness, and a need to re-evaluate themselves. Jenny discussed feeling embarrassed as well as a longing for the person she used to be before experiencing and living with domestic violence:

*I’m more embarrassed, not that I’m going to eat my words, but that the people who have been there to pick up the broken pieces, of what they’re going to say if I have to go back to him. I’m more embarrassed that I look in the mirror and I know that this is not the person that I used to be, I was much stronger. I’m embarrassed that people that have known me for a long time have to ...like, “what happened to you? “ you know, like*

*“when did you stop standing up for yourself? When did you lose your back bone? When did you stop being so strong?” ...yeah, that’s what’s more embarrassing for me.*

Huffy described feeling useless and worthless:

*They have affected me very bad. Um, right now, I feel like, um, all these things been happening to me for a minute now, ever since my first relationship with my daughter’s father. It brought me to believe that I wasn’t good enough. It affected in a way that, um, I feel, useless. Um, I never finish what I start. I wasn’t smart enough maybe because I wasn’t smart, maybe because I was stupid. It led me to think of all these things; that’s why all my relationships have treated me almost similar, because I wasn’t smart enough you know. I didn’t have what it takes.*

Esperanza discussed how her domestic violence experience has had an effect on different aspects of her life, but focused on how she is enjoying the change:

*I think um, he’s made me question who I am and reevaluate myself. I guess its okay to ask questions of others and not have to give responses myself. I found myself not pressing and not asking. I never asked of other people what I wasn’t willing to give. Obviously that wasn’t the right policy I guess.*

*I am working on me right now; I am enjoying the silence. I find comfort in spending time with my co-madre and the kids- spending more time with my family.*

### *Possible Effects on Children*

Some of the participants’ fears about the possible impact witnessing domestic violence could have on their children, focused on the possibility of their children becoming future abusers or victims.

Nicole Two: ...better parenting your kids on any kind of abuse...I refuse for my boys to be like their father...I would talk to them, show them what's right from wrong.

Lucy: don't want her to think that's okay, for a man to put his hands on you. And she totally saw, "but okay, he's sorry" and she totally had his back. And mentally, mentally that killed me because it is not okay for a man to put [his] hands on you. So to think that I'm raising a child that was going to think that's okay was destroying me.

Bianca: I want my son to be a better man than his father.

### Wants and Needs

One of the added aims of this research was to explore what help-seekers want and need to help them with their domestic violence situation. The majority of the participants in this study reported a need for stability and individual/group counseling.

### *Stability*

Stability encompasses assistance and access to services that include housing, healthcare, and employment, as well as an overall desire for well-being.

Nilsa: Pues un lugar para estar estable y no estarme moviendo me con mi hija cada rato.

[Translation]: Well, a home for stability, so that I don't have to keep moving with my daughter.

Nancy: Tener un apartamento donde puedo vivir y que pagará poquito [Translation]: To have an apartment, where I can live and pay little rent.

Song: Healthcare, housing, temporary help.

Nicole Two: *I just want to be strong. I want to be able to feel strong- not that I need him, but I do need him because of the family. I just want to be able to let go...and leave it in the past...I am not getting it yet...I don't want to go back to that again...I don't want to put my kids through that again.*

Lisette: *I need to get out of this city. I need peace of mind; I need a little house on the prairie (laughs), remember those things? I need a little car to take my son to school, a job...basically just peace of mind.*

Taylor: *... for him, just him, to keep away from me and not bother me or tell my children that he still loves me and wants to be with me, or have people watching me. That would be I guess my biggest thing. I don't want to walk the streets looking over my shoulders because he has people following me or he's actually following me.*

Although Jenny needed housing, she discussed how her primary concern was securing counseling services for her son:

*My main concern was getting some kind of therapy for my son and I. And, our housing situation. I was more concerned about therapy than the housing situation because, I felt like at the end of the day, I could always go to a shelter or you know, I'd find something, but I felt like, I didn't want to wait too long to get my son his therapy*

#### *Individual/Group Counseling:*

Nina: *Consejería y consejería para mi hijo mayor. [Translation]: Counseling and counseling for my oldest son.*

Esní: *Bueno, yo que necesito es, como hablar...para sanar esas cosas internas que tienes*

*adentro. [Translation]: Well, what I need is to talk...so that I can heal my internal wounds.*

Carolina: *Mas consejería. [Translation]: More counseling.*

Jenny: *...counseling is great because you know you get to talk to somebody and everything, but they...they, but we need extra help. Like I said, it's in my head all the time. I walk through the streets and I am thinking about it; and...I see someone who resembles him and I stop in my tracks because I'm not sure it's him or not.*

Overall, the participants expressed a desire and need for services that would help them move forward (i.e., housing, employment and counseling). The aforementioned would prove to be easier for U.S.-born participants as well as the documented foreign-born participants. Unfortunately, undocumented victims of domestic violence have a more difficult time securing permanent housing.

### Advice to Women

The advocacy component of this research allowed for exploring what the participants would say, or advice they would give, to women who may be living with domestic violence. The majority of the participants (n=24), said they would advise the women to seek help. Women also stated they would tell women to be strong, advise the women not to judge, and advise the women to leave the relationship. Some of their comments are included here.

### *Look for Help*

Telling women about the availability of services was important:



Thalia: *Le dirían que no están solas; que somos muchas, pero hay ayuda. [Translation]: I would tell them that they are not alone; that there are many of us, but there is help.*

Jessica: *...que hay programas que la puedan ayudar. Pero le diré que es como un proceso...no te desesperes. [Translation]: that there are programs that can help them. But I would tell them that it's a process...not to get desperate.*

Nicole: *I would say to start looking for help; or come here.*

Laura: *Que busquen ayuda en diferentes programas. [Translation]: To look for help in different programs.*

Julia: *Que buscara ayuda, porque ayuda hay...pero uno tiene que salir y buscar la ayuda; porque hay ayuda. [Translation]: To look for help, because help is available...but you have to go out and look for the help because help is there.*

Theresa: *Que hablen; que no se queden cayada...en este país hay ayuda. En mi país no. [Translation]: To speak-up; not stay quiet...in this country there is help. There is no help in my country.*

Nilsa: *Pues que hay lugares de apoyo que le pueden ayudar y si tu buscas a esa ayuda puedes salir adelante para el bien estar de tu familia. [Translation]: Well, that there are places that provide support that can help and if you look for that help, well, you can move on for the well-being of your family.*

Nancy: *Look for help. Report the abuse and call the police.*

Gina: *Que las mujeres no se dejen, así, este, con los hombres violentos. Uno tiene que hablar. Hablar, y levantar la voz en contra de él. No dejarse de que la golpeen. Si él no quiere hacer parar eso, pues uno le llama a la policía. [Translation]: For women not to*

*allow it, like, with violent men. One needs to talk. Talk and speak up against him. Not let themselves be beaten. If he doesn't want to stop doing it, then, one should call the police.*

### *Leave the Relationship*

In addition to advising women to look for help, some of the participants expressed the importance of leaving the relationship:

Nancy G: *Que, este, que no, que no se queden allí. ...que no esperen que le pase como yo.*

*[Translation]: That, um, that no, that they shouldn't stay there...that they don't wait for what happened to me to happen to them.*

Terry: *Definitivamente que busque ayuda; también decirle que esa relación no la va*

*llevar a nada bueno. [Translation]: To definitely look for help; also tell them that that relationship is not going to lead them to anything good.*

Nicole Two: *to get away...now that I see and I am going through...I feel like I failed as a*

*mother because I didn't put them first. I was thinking about my feelings... just to get*

*help...you don't need that, you deserve better...not to go through what I went through.*

### Reflections: Change

The participants were asked to reflect on their domestic violence experiences and asked if there was something they would change, or make better, about their domestic violence situation.

Their responses centered on changing laws and policies, making different choices, and

embracing their experiences.

### *Change Laws and Policies*

Giselle: ...algo come que, es un poco chocante, pero son complicao' porque son leyes. Como que tú no puede hacer na' porque no tienes prueba. Y a veces pasan las cosas, y la prueba no está allí todo el tiempo...Pero que tenga otra alternativa. Como poder decir "mira tú no tienes prueba pero podemos hacer esto..." [Translation]: ...something that, is a little challenging, but they are complicated because they're laws. Like you can't do anything because you don't have proof. Sometimes things happen, and the proof is not always available...But there should be an alternative. Like to say, "look, you don't have any proof, but we can do this..."

Larissa: Laws. More transparency at the D.A.'s office; I would expect them to say, "We won't do anything for you, but we will provide support services". I would be like "that sucks, but okay."

Tatiana: ...wish so much proof wasn't needed. It makes it hard.

### *Make Different Choices:*

Some of the women shared they would have left the relationship or done things differently.

Bianca: To leave before it's too late. If he would have hurt me before I was pregnant, I would have left him.

Nicole Two: Walked away (started crying), because I never got my family...it wouldn't have changed anything, but he would have been there and have my kids...I wouldn't be alone.

Nilsa: *La violencia...porque la violencia es una situación muy difícil... [Translation]:  
The violence...because violence is a very difficult situation.*

Jenny: *I would have stopped this the first time he hit me. That I would have changed. Or maybe I would've changed it before that; I would've changed it when the arguments started escalating. That I would have changed. I would have tried to go a different route so it wouldn't have escalated so bad.*

Maribel: *...I should've read things more carefully, and been more fully [knowledgeable] of what the situation was because if I had known that I was going to lose my children for going into a domestic violence shelter, I would have never done it.*

### *Embracing Their Experiences*

Where some women shared they would make different choices, other women shared how they embrace their domestic violence experiences.

Theresa: *...lo que me paso a mí, pues nada. Porque me salí de esa situación [Translation]: ... what happened to me, well nothing. Because I removed myself from that situation.*

Esperanza: *...nor can I say I want to... I think this has been very enlightening for me.*

Taylor: *Honestly, I don't think I would change anything or make it better because it has made me what I am today- very independent and empowered.*

### What's Needed to Address Domestic Violence and Help Victims/Survivors

As previously mentioned, one of the specific aims of this project was to advance knowledge on Latina victims of domestic violence as well as give the participants a voice on

what they feel is needed to help address domestic violence. The participants were asked what they would say to someone in a position of power, such as a legislator, funder, or community leader, about what Latinas living with domestic violence need. The majority of their responses were collapsed into four categories: support, cultural competency, evaluation of domestic violence services, and funding programs. It is important to note the majority of the responses fell into the ‘support’ category.

### *Support*

Laura: ...le diría que se necesita apoyo y más programas como este, y ayuda con residencia. [Translation]: ... I would tell them that support and more programs like this are needed and help with housing.

Nina: ...más apoyo; y más ayuda con la emergencia, porque las mujeres le dan miedo y no se quieren ir. [Translation]: more support; and more help with emergencies, because women get scared and don't want to leave.

Thalia: Ayuda; apoyo para que no se sienta sola. Ayuda para refugios para gente que necesita un lugar salvo. Que sean reales; que no les ayuden a quitar a los niños, pero ayudar que se queden (las madres) los niños. [Translation]: Help; support so that you don't feel alone. Help with shelters for people who need a safe place. Be real, don't help them take the children away, but help them stay (with the mothers).

Esni: ...de más apoyo a mujeres que están sufriendo esto. Más doctores y psicólogos para ayudar. Ensenándole a la mujer que no permita ese tipo de abuso a su persona...preparar a la persona para que ella conozca a esa persona...y saber que se puede vivir sin hombres. [Translation]: ... give more support to women who are suffering

*with this. More doctors and psychologists to help. Teach the women not to allow this type of abuse...prepare people to recognize such a person...and to know that you can live without men.*

*Alex: Que nos sigúan apoyando y también que demuestren programas para hacer pensar a la mujer que si denuncian al que le están haciendo la violencia que no le van hacer afectadas... muchas mujeres no quieren reportar porque piensa que van a perder a los niños, o que van a ser deportadas a su país de origen.[Translation]: That they keep supporting us and to also give us programs that make the women think that if they report they are being abused, that they will not be affected...many women do not want to report it because they feel they are going to lose their children, or are going to be deported to their countries of origin.*

*Nicole: I guess, hmm, most of us need money... help with school and also money, because when we get out of the situation we need money to get back on our feet.*

*Nicole Two: ...more support... I mean our voices are not heard, like we are just in the back burner and no one really pays attention because, you know, domestic violence, it happens, and then us women, we go back with the partner and they feel probably like, "oh,...they're going to go back to it and..."To listen to us when we are saying that we are being abused... in my case I retaliated and I am still getting in trouble. There must be a reason for the women getting in trouble; there must be a reason... a history...just look into it.*

*Lucy: Better support because I feel like we're judged. Especially, especially...it's funny that you are doing this on Hispanic girls, because I feel they think it's typical Puerto Rican girls to get their ass beat or for Spanish men to be abusive.*

Huffy: *A little bit more support in, um, and guidance, um, not half way, you know? Um, um, to see us through; see us through it.*

### *Cultural Competency*

Cultural competency is important, particularly to immigrant women who are monolingual and value cultural concepts such as *familismo* and *confianza*. Although the majority of the women discussed the need for support and continued support to address their domestic violence situations, some women discussed the importance of culturally competent services.

Giselle: *El idioma. Porque a veces, uno no puede desenvolverse en el inglés.*

[Translation]: *Language. Because sometimes one cannot explain themselves in English.*

Irma: *Bueno, que primero pongan más personas que hablan el español y nos ayuden. Y que siempre no echen in cuenta. Porque a veces uno van a organizaciones y porque son latinas, o más si eres mexicana no te ayudan...bueno por el idioma. [Translation]: Well, first, to hire more people who speak Spanish to help us. And to always take us into account. Sometimes one goes to organizations and because they're Latinas, or even more so, if you're Mexican they won't help you...well, because of language.*

Jessica: *... es importante conocer y entender la cultura, porque todos venimos de diferentes culturas... [Translation]: ...it's important to know and understand culture, because we all come from different cultures.*

## *Evaluation of Domestic Violence Services*

Jenny and Maribel shared how they would let those in positions of power know how services currently in place to help victims of domestic violence are inadequate and/or seemingly unattainable:

Jenny: *I think that they need to put another foot forward in researching what's really happening on the services that are quote-unquote being given to you. Um, like I said, more personnel, more...just more help in general, just with everything. Um, there has to be, every boss has a boss, so there has to be somebody overlooking, you know, these services, these shelters, all these places.*

Maribel: *That it's a disappointment to see the resources they claim that is out there, but it's not as easy as they think. It's like you're just another number; just another case.*

## *Funding Programs*

As discussed earlier, the majority of the participants stated they were satisfied with the services they were receiving in the domestic violence programs. Given that, it was not surprising to learn that some of the participants would inform others of the need to continue funding programs that help women with their domestic violence situations.

Nancy G.: *...le pediría que siguieran dando fondos para muchas más víctimas; que no somos ni una, ni cien... somos miles allá fuera. [Translation]: I would ask them to continue funding for more victims because we're not one or a hundred... we're in the thousands out there.*

Giselle: *... no quitar todos los fondos y dejar fondos aquí. [Translation]: ... don't cut funding and keep the funding here.*



Isabelle: *I think I would tell them that, um, that putting money in organizations like these is not a waste of time. That little by little, they are helping; they are helping women like me especially, give us that little push that we need to be a little more strong and stand up for ourselves...I would tell them you are actually helping someone; helping women and kids start a new life.*

Larissa: *Legislators need to further fund the support services. They need to create more integrated housing.*

The women's narratives, and their comments above, help to inform policy makers and domestic violence service providers on what women *need* in order to address their domestic violence situations. What becomes apparent in their narratives is the need to be understood, respected, validated, and ultimately, *helped* as they attempt to access and navigate services to address their situations.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **Strengths, Limitations and Future Research**

One of the strengths of this project was its focus on help-seeking Latina victims of domestic violence that were actively seeking services for their domestic violence situations at the time of their interviews. Given the women were currently enrolled in a domestic violence program, they were able to provide information on the services they were receiving as well as their help-seeking experiences with ease and limited recall. Another strength of this project was that of recruiting participants from programs that provided additional services to their clients, which allowed for the recruitment and inclusion of participants requiring services other than those usually associated with domestic violence programs (i.e., disability services; legal services and advocacy; culturally sensitive program services).

As previously discussed, one of the limitations of this project was the sample size ( $n=32$ ); as a result, the findings of this research are not generalizable to all help-seeking Latina of victims of domestic violence. However, given the intention of the current study was not to generalize, but to advance production of knowledge on help-seeking Latinas, the sample size provided an opportunity to revisit the data provided by each participant several times in an effort to identify emerging themes that may have been missed with a larger sample.

One important limitation is that the participants were recruited from three of the five boroughs in New York City, thus excluding Latinas from Brooklyn and Staten Island. However, it must be mentioned here, that attempts by the researcher to recruit from programs in Brooklyn and Staten Island proved difficult. In the spirit of full disclosure, however, after several months and half way into the recruitment process, the researcher was able to obtain access to the clients

of a Staten Island program. However, with the damage caused by Super Storm Sandy, that access was revoked in the interest of providing the space and time needed to address the needs of Staten Island residents who were affected by the storm. In addition, discussions to obtain access to a Brooklyn program came to halt (shortly after a tour of the facility) when the researcher informed the program's director that a letter granting access to their clients would be needed in order for her to recruit clients from the program. It is this researcher's hope that future research on Latinas victims of domestic violence, in New York City, will be facilitated by access to programs in each of the boroughs.

Despite the sample size, and the issue of generalizability, the findings of the present research have implications for future research.

As previously mentioned, it would be useful to explore the use of shaming, criticisms and ostracizing women by relatives and community members, as coercive control tactics used on women who attempt or leave their abusive husbands. It will also be useful to explore if abusive men from Latino cultures perceive the belief systems in their cultures as beneficial in maintaining male dominance and privilege in their relationships.

Resilience was a theme that emerged while exploring the consequences associated with help-seeking; focus of future research in that realm could focus on how Latinas move beyond domestic violence as well as how women who ascribed to traditional cultural beliefs such as "married for life", cope with the possible loss of family support while trying to build a life free and apart from their abusers.

During the recruitment process for this project, the investigator received several calls from program staff who were inquiring if they could participate in the study because of their own lived experiences with domestic violence. Research on survivors of domestic violence that are

working in the field as advocates can be approached from what Patricia Collins calls “the outsider within” status (1986). That is, the focus can be on exploring the perceptions of what I will call ‘survivor service providers’ (domestic violence survivors who work in domestic violence programs and/ or as lobbyists for change) and how those perceptions shape how they approach service delivery to victims of domestic violence as well as their roles as advocates for change. In addition to the above, research on the participants’ perceptions on the criminal justice response to domestic violence can serve to highlight gaps in services in the agencies that are ultimately charged with ensuring their rights and overall safety.

In keeping with giving victims/survivors of domestic violence a voice in order gain a greater understanding of their wants and needs, future research on Latina victims of domestic violence should focus on directly asking Latina participants if “being Latina matters”. Given the current literature on the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and sexual orientation (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005; Mooney, n.d.), it would be important to explore if Latinas identify with being “Latina” first or “women” first. The aforementioned can have implications for how Latinas not only perceive themselves, but how they expect others to perceive them.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Conclusion**

This was an exploratory and advocacy based study that aimed to explore differences that might exist between foreign-born and U.S.-born help-seeking Latinas victims of domestic violence.

The results show that there were minor differences between the foreign-born and U.S. born women in their lived experiences with domestic violence, except where specific cultural ideologies regarding marriage and family were explored. The majority of the participants were satisfied with the services they were receiving, felt their programs were helpful, and shared that they were able to discuss their experiences with abuse freely.

The use of feminist standpoint theory and intersectionality as an analytical lens facilitated the process of identifying common trends in the participants' narratives about their perceptions about domestic violence as well as their domestic violence experience. The participants' narratives supported the discussion of the public and private spheres that are central to most feminist theories of violence. They specifically highlighted the cultural ideologies that appear to be present in the Mexican families, which serve to maintain women's domain in the private sphere and, as a result, contributes to the current view that domestic violence is a private matter. In addition, some of the narratives revealed that any attempt of deviation from the cultural gendered scripts, especially leaving or attempting to leave an abuser, was treated with harsh punishment in the form of gossip, shaming, and even ostracizing the woman. In addition, the women's narratives also provided a greater understanding of and insight to the extent of their abuse as a result of the coercive tactics of their abusers (an emerging theme) and the violence some of the women experienced as a result of challenging male privilege. As indicated by the

discussion of the former, it is quite possible, and should be explored, how family members can be viewed as extensions of coercive control in cultures that uphold patriarchal ideologies that oppress women.

The value placed on cultural concepts embraced by Latinos (familism, respect and trust) were evident during the participants' discussions on their perceptions of staff interactions with them, perception of the amount/level of control or input the participants felt they had in the handling of their cases, ability to speak freely, use of preferred language, and overall satisfaction with program services. The majority of the women used descriptive words such as '*confianza*' (trust), and '*cómoda*' (comfortable) and phrases such as, '*me hablan bonito*' (they speak nicely to me) and '*me siento como estoy en mi casa*' (I feel as if I am home) served to emphasize the cultural factors that are important in the Latino culture.

The participants' discussions on their perceptions of the criminal justice response to domestic violence highlight areas that require improvement; such as, police response time to 911 calls, empowering victims of domestic violence by letting them make decisions regarding the handling of their cases when working with the District Attorney's office, increased sensitivity when working with victims of domestic violence, and making domestic violence reports and orders of protections readily accessible.

Domestic violence appeared to have the greatest impact on 'future relationships'. Some of the participants discussed having difficulties opening-up to and becoming intimate with other men; one participant shared her fear of being victimized again and/or becoming an abuser. Feelings of worthlessness, uselessness and embarrassment were used in the descriptions of participants discussing the emotional impact of domestic violence.

Stability and individual/group counseling emerged as the top two things the participants wanted or needed most. Securing housing and employment were important aspects of stability.

The majority of the participants discussed how they would advise women who are living with domestic violence to seek help as well as inform them that there are services available to help them with their domestic violence situation. Some of the participants also discussed how they would advise women to be strong so that they can find the strength to leave the relationship and others discussed how they would advise the women to leave the abusive relationships.

The participants in the present research are not representative of all Latinas, nor are they representative of all Latina help-seekers from New York City; as such, the findings of this research are not generalizable. However, the findings of the present study should be considered for future research on Latina victims of domestic violence; particularly to further explore the use of coercive control tactics by members of Latino communities.

The findings of this research lend support to the research on the importance of culturally sensitive services in programs that serve Latina victims of domestic violence (Antshel, 2002; Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994).

The participants' narratives contained descriptions and language that tied language use to the overall satisfaction with program services. Cultural concepts such as, *familismo*, *confianza*, and *respeto*, were evident in the description of their perceptions of and descriptions of their interactions with program staff.

Given the importance Latinos place on cultural concepts like the ones identified above, programs- including criminal justice agencies (police, officials of the District Attorney's office)- should incorporate those concepts in their service delivery approaches. Providing services to

monolingual Latinas in their preferred language will help facilitate delivery of services and likely increase client cooperation in the service exchange. Empowering victims of domestic violence to make decisions regarding the handling of their cases while working with the police and officials of the District Attorney's will likely help to increase confidence in the criminal justice system as well.

Although strides have been made in addressing the needs of victims of domestic violence, more work is needed in order to address the various challenges faced by Latina victims of domestic violence. The women in this study have shared the need for support while they take steps and navigate services to address their domestic violence situations. They need emotional and financial support as well as assistance in securing housing. They do not ask for these things as a form of charity; they ask for these things because it will help them as they move toward living violence free lives.

The women's narratives have also highlighted the barriers faced by some of them in seeking services. Some have shared the desire for laws and policies to change in order to meet their needs, while others discussed their frustration in not being able to access the services that are supposed to be readily available.

Policymakers, community leaders, funders, and researchers alike, have a responsibility to ensure that services (domestic violence services, the criminal justice response, police response, laws, and policies) developed to address the issue of domestic violence and to help victims of domestic violence are indeed helpful; that is, that they meet their intended recipients' needs, are adequate, and effectively help women. Domestic violence programs can help by continuously evaluating their outcomes; policy makers and community leaders can help by advocating for and implementing laws that affect and change how victims of domestic violence are treated and have



access to services that facilitate the difficult journey of leaving an abusive relationship and starting over- sometimes without the support of family and friends. The criminal justice system should evaluate their current methods of addressing domestic violence and how women are treated. Police and court personnel should be trained in the dynamics of domestic violence as well as in cultural competency so that victims can view them as helpful and not fear another form of oppression and victimization when utilizing the services therein. Lastly, researchers need to continue conducting research that continues to produce and advance knowledge on women and domestic violence.

## APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



Human Research Protections Program  
CUNY UI-IRB 2

DATE: August 22, 2012

TO: Yolanda Ortiz-Rodriguez, MA; MPhil  
FROM: CUNY UI-IRB 2

PROJECT TITLE: [339323-2] Response/Revisions Help-Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence and the Programs that serve them in New York City.

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision (to package #339323-1)

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: August 17, 2012

EXPIRATION DATE: June 13, 2013

Study RISK LEVEL: No Greater than Minimal Risk

Package REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review of modifications required to secure approval, per 45 CFR 46.110(b)(2)

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The CUNY UI-IRB 2 has APPROVED your research (pending modifications), at its 08/14/2012 meeting. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and assurance of the participant's understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant.

Please note that any modifications/changes to the approved materials must be **approved by this IRB prior to implementation**. Please use the appropriate modification submission form for this request. All **UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS (UPS)** involving risks to subjects or others, **NON-COMPLIANCE** issues, and **SUBJECT COMPLAINTS** must be reported promptly to this office. All sponsor reporting requirements must also be followed. Please use the appropriate submission form for this report.

This research **must receive continuing review and final IRB approval** before the expiration date of June 13, 2013. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for the IRB to conduct its review and obtain final IRB approval by that expiration date. Please use the appropriate continuation submission forms for this procedure. PLEASE NOTE: The regulations do **not** allow for any grace period or extension of approvals. *Future reviews are eligible for expedited review procedures, per 45 CFR 46.110(a), expedited-research category #7.*

If you have any questions, please contact Bernardica Sculac Stern at (212) 794-5704 or [bernardica.sculac-stern@mail.cuny.edu](mailto:bernardica.sculac-stern@mail.cuny.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

*This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within the City University of New York's records.*

## **APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER (ENGLISH)**

### **ATTENTION**

#### **Help-Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence**

Domestic violence affects families and communities of all racial and ethnic backgrounds. I am doing a study to complete my doctoral degree in Criminal Justice at the City University of New York- John Jay College of Criminal Justice. I am interested in speaking to Latina women about their experiences in looking for help for the violence in their intimate relationships. This study is an opportunity to raise your voices and be heard. No agency is involved in this study. Would you like to participate?

If you participate in this study, you will take part in a confidential interview with me that will last approximately one hour and a half. **Your identity and all identifying data collected from you will not be used in any way. All of your responses will be kept confidential.**

**You will be paid \$25.00 for your participation in this study.** Upon request, I can share a summary of the results with you once the research is completed.

To participate you only have to :

- 1) Be Latina (born in the U.S. or other country).
- 2) Be 18 years of age and older.

**You do not need to speak Spanish to participate in this study.**

Your contribution to this study could help other Latinas that find themselves in your situation and could also help agencies better understand the needs of Latina victims and survivors of domestic violence. If you prefer, you can call me at **646-342-0688** to discuss the study or to make arrangements to interview you.

I hope to speak to you soon.

Thank you.

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Yolanda Ortiz-Rodríguez, M.A. (Doctoral Student)

CUNY – John Jay College of Criminal Justice

## APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT FLYER (SPANISH)

### ATENCIÓN

#### Latinas Buscando Ayuda para la Violencia Domestica

La violencia domestica afecta familias y comunidades de todas razas y etnias. Estoy haciendo una investigación para completar mis estudios en Justicia Criminal en el John Jay College of Criminal Justice un universitario de la Ciudad de Nueva York. Estoy interesada en hablar con mujeres Latinas de sus experiencias sobre su búsqueda de ayuda para la violencia en sus relaciones íntimas. Este estudio es una oportunidad para levantar sus voces y ser escuchada. Ninguna agencia está envuelta en esta investigación. ¿Le gustaría participar?

Si participas en este estudio, tomara parte en una entrevista confidencial conmigo que duraría dentro de una hora y media en total. **Su identidad o datos que la identifiquen no serán usados de ninguna manera. Todas sus contestaciones son confidenciales.**

**Su participación en este estudio será pagada con \$25 dólares.** Además, si lo deseas, puedo compartir un resumen de los resultados con usted al final de la investigación.

Para participar solo tienes que:

- 1) Ser Latina (nacida en los Estados Unidos o en otro país).
- 2) Tener 18 años de edad o más.

Su contribución a este estudio podría ayudar a otras mujeres latinas que se encuentren en su situación y también podría ayudar agencias comprender mejor las necesidades de víctimas y sobrevivientes Latinas de la violencia doméstica. Si usted prefiere, me puedes llamar al **646-342-0688** para discutir el estudio o para ser arreglos para entrevistarte.

Espero que podamos conversar pronto.

Gracias.

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Yolanda Ortiz-Rodríguez, M.A. (Estudiante Doctoral)

CUNY – John Jay College of Criminal Justice

## APPENDIX D: CLIENT PARTICIPATION (ENGLISH)

### Letter of Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in an advocacy based research entitled “*Help-Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence and the Programs that Serve Them in New York City.*” The purpose of this research is to explore differences that may exist in the experiences of Help-Seeking U.S born Latinas and Help-Seeking foreign- born Latinas as it relates to their victimization and services sought. In addition, this study will explore the network connections of the domestic violence programs in the New York Metropolitan Area. I plan to enroll approximately 50 women for this study.

Your participation in this study will include a face to face interview with me where I will ask you questions about your experiences with domestic violence and the services that you are receiving. In addition, I will ask you to complete a short questionnaire that asks about the language you prefer to use at home and if your friends are also Latinos. With your permission your interview will be tape recorded and transcribed. If you do not wish to have the interview tape recorded I will take written notes. You will have an opportunity to review the audio-tape at the end of the interview. Your interview should take approximately one hour and a half and will be completed in one day. Your name and all identifying information collected from you will be protected by changing names, dates, and any other information that can be used to identify you. Any quotes that will be used will be confidential. The only form that will contain your name is the one you sign agreeing to be a participant in this study. This form will be kept separate from your interview in a separate and locked filing cabinet at John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Once the information has been transcribed and all identifiers removed, the tapes will be erased. All of the information gathered from you, including the transcriptions and interview notes, will

be secured in locked filing cabinets in the offices of John Jay College of Criminal Justice. No one but me and my research advisors will have access to the information.

All of the information collected from you will be used to fulfill the doctoral research requirement for Yolanda Ortiz-Rodriguez. However, the results of the study may also be used in later publications of the researcher.

All of the information collected from you will be confidential and not revealed to anyone but me and my research advisors. The only time that the researcher will share any information about you is if a child's safety is at risk.

There are minimal foreseen risks associated with your participation in this study. Some of the questions are sensitive and may cause you some discomfort. If that should happen I will be available to discuss your reactions to the interview, and if you wish, I will refer you for appropriate professional help. Your participation in the study may serve to help other Latina victims of domestic violence as well as help victim services programs better understand the needs of Latina victims and survivors of domestic violence. Upon request, you may also have a summary of the findings once this study is complete. You will be paid \$25.00 for participating in this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have a right to refuse to answer any questions and to withdraw your participation from this study at any time without consequences. If you decide not to participate in this study your decision will not affect your relationship with John Jay College or the program where you are receiving services. In addition, if you refuse to answer any questions or decide to withdraw your participation from this study your decision will not affect your relationship with John Jay College or the program where you are receiving services. If you decide to withdraw your participation all information gathered from you will be



destroyed (documents/notes shredded; tapes erased; any data entered will be deleted from the server) and will not be used in the study. In addition, upon completion of this study, all of the documents containing information gathered from you will be destroyed. If you have any concerns or questions regarding this study you may discuss them with me or contact my research advisor, Dr. Jayne Mooney at 212-237-8000, ext. 2660.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant in this study you may contact the Chairman of the John Jay College Institutional Review Board at 212-237-8961. By signing below you are confirming that you have read (or had read to you) all of the information included in this consent form. You will also be confirming that you have been given the opportunity to discuss this study with the researcher. Your signature on this form also confirms that you agree to be a participant in this study.

I will give you a copy of this form after you have signed it. However, if having this copy may cause you any problems you do not have to take it. You can initial the line that says you decline to take a copy for safety reasons.

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to have my interview tape-recorded.

Participant's Signature:

---

I decline to take a copy of this form due to safety issues. \_\_\_\_\_ (Initials)

## APPENDIX E: CLIENT PARTICIPATION (SPANISH)

### Consentimiento de Participación

Estas invitada a participar en una investigación advocaría titulada “*Victimas Latinas de Violencia Doméstica Buscando Ayuda y los Programas que le Proveen Servicios en la Ciudad de Nueva York.*” El propósito de esta investigación es para explorar las diferencias que podrán existir entre Latinas nacidas en los Estados Unidos y Latinas que nacieron fuera de los Estados Unidos que están buscando ayuda para su victimización y servicios que han solicitado. Además, este estudio también intenta explorar las conexiones que existen en los programas de violencia doméstica en el área metropolitana de Nueva York. Se espera inscribir a aproximadamente 50 mujeres para esta investigación.

Su participación en este estudio incluye una entrevista cara a cara conmigo donde te haré preguntas sobre sus experiencias con la violencia doméstica y los servicios que estás recibiendo. También te pediré que llenes un formulario que contiene preguntas sobre el lenguaje que prefieres hablar en tu casa y pregunta si tus amistades también son Latinos/as. Con su permiso su entrevista será audio-grabada y transcrita. Si no deseas que se audio-grabe la entrevista yo apuntaré sus respuestas. Además, se te daría la oportunidad para revisar la cinta al final de la entrevista. La entrevista durará aproximadamente una hora y media y se completará en un día. Su nombre y toda información que se podría usar para identificarte serán protegidos cambiando nombres, fechas, y otra información que podría servir para identificarte. Cualquier comentario que hagas durante la entrevista será confidencial. El único formulario que tendrá tu nombre es el que firmes para aceptar participar en este estudio. Este formulario se mantendrá separado de su entrevista en un archivero bajo llave en la Universidad John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Cuando la información este transcrita y toda información que te pueda identificar removida, las

grabaciones serán borradas. Toda información colectada de ti, incluyendo grabaciones transcritas y notas de la entrevista, será asegurada en archivero bajo llave en las oficinas de la Universidad de John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Sólo yo y mis asesores de investigación tendrán acceso a la información.

Toda información colectada de ti será usada para completar el estudio doctoral de Yolanda Ortiz-Rodríguez. Sin embargo, los resultados pueden ser usados en futuras publicaciones de la misma sobre el tema.

Toda información colectada de ti es confidencial y no será revelada a nadie solamente a mí y mis asesores de investigación. El único caso en el cual la investigadora podría revelar su nombre sería si la seguridad de un niño o menor fuera en peligro.

Hay riesgos previstos asociados con su participación en este estudio. Algunas de las preguntas son sensitivas y te podrían hacer sentir incómoda. Si eso llegara a pasar, yo estaría disponible para discutir sus reacciones a la entrevista, y si deseas, te referiría a un profesional apropiado para ayudarte. Tu participación en este estudio podría servir para ayudar a otras víctimas Latinas de violencia doméstica y también a apoyar programas que proporcionan asistencia a comprender mejor las necesidades de víctimas y sobrevivientes Latinas de la violencia doméstica. Si lo deseas, usted puede recibir un resumen de los resultados cuando se termine el estudio. Tu participación en este estudio será pagada con \$25 dólares.

Tu participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Tienes el derecho de rehusar a contestar cualquier pregunta y de retirar tu participación en cualquier momento de este estudio sin consecuencias. Su decisión de no participar en este estudio no afectará su relación con la Universidad de John Jay College ni con el programa donde estás solicitando ayuda. Además, si te rehúas a contestar alguna pregunta o a dejar de participar en el estudio, tu decisión no afectará

su relación con la Universidad de John Jay College ni con el programa donde estás solicitando ayuda. Si decides a dejar de participar en el estudio toda información colectada será destruida (documentos/notas serán triturados; las grabaciones serán borradas; datos que fueron incluidos en el estudio serán cancelados) y no será usada en este estudio. Además, toda tu información será destruida cuando el estudio se termine. Si tienes preguntas al respecto, las puedes discutir conmigo o con mis asesores de investigación, el doctor Jayne Mooney, al 212-237-8000, ext.2660.

Si tienes preguntas acerca de tus derechos como participante en este estudio te puedes comunicar con la oficina de investigaciones, el Institutional Review Board, John Jay College (CUNY) al 212-237-8961.

En firmar abajo, estás confirmando que has leído (o te leyeron) toda la información incluida en este formulario de consentimiento. Además, estás confirmando que has tenido la oportunidad para discutir este estudio con la investigadora. Tu firma en este formulario confirma que das consentimiento para participar en este estudio.

Te daré una copia de este formulario después que la firmes. Sin embargo, si teniendo esta copia te pueda causar algunos problemas no la tienes que coger. Simplemente escribe tus iniciales en la línea que dice que prefieres no llevarte una copia por razones de seguridad personal.

Nombre del Participante: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Nombre de la Investigadora: \_\_\_\_\_ Fecha: \_\_\_\_\_

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Consentimiento continuado)*

Consentimiento de tener mi entrevista audio-grabada.

Firma: \_\_\_\_\_

Rehúso llevarme una copia de este formulario por razones de seguridad personal. \_\_\_\_\_

(iniciales)

## APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW TOOL (ENGLISH)

# \_\_\_\_\_

### Help Seeking Latina Victims of Domestic Violence Study

This interview is about help-seeking Latinas of domestic violence in New York City. I am interested in hearing about you and the services you have sought and are receiving. I will be asking you questions about your experiences and opinions. Your participation is voluntary and you do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. All of your answers are confidential. Your participation is very important to the study. Thank you for taking the time to talk with me.

#### **Demographic/SES**

- I will begin by asking you general questions about yourself

1. What year were you born?

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2. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the highest level of education you achieved?

- 1) No formal schooling
- 2) 1<sup>st</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade
- 3) Some High School
- 4) High School Diploma
- 5) GED
- 6) Vocational, Technical, or Business School
- 7) Some College
- 8) Associates degree
- 9) Bachelor's degree
- 10) Master's degree or higher
- 11) Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you currently enrolled in school or training program? Y/N

5. Are you currently employed? Y/N

1. Full -Time
2. Part-Time

*If answer is yes, go to Q.7*

6. What is the main reason why you are not working?

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7. What is your primary source of income?

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8. What, to the best of your knowledge, is your annual income?

- 1) Less than \$5,000
- 2) \$5,000 – under \$10,000
- 3) \$10,000- under \$15,000
- 4) \$15,000- under \$20,000
- 5) \$20,000- under \$25,000
- 6) \$25,000- under \$30,000
- 7) \$30,000- under \$35,000
- 8) \$35,000- under \$40,000
- 9) \$40,000- under \$45,000
- 10) \$45,000- under \$50,000
- 11) \$50,000- under \$80,000
- 12) \$80,000- under \$100,000
- 13) Over \$100,000
- 14) Don't know
- 15) I don't want to answer

9. Do you have any children?

Yes / No

10. How many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_

11. How old are your children? (List)

12. Who lives in your household?

1. Husband
2. Partner
3. Children
4. Siblings
5. Relative (specify)
6. Friend
7. Other non-relative (specify)
8. Your partner's children
9. No one



13. How many children live with you in your household? \_\_\_\_\_

14. Which one of the following best describes your immigration status?

1. U.S. Born
2. Foreign- Born

**If born outside of the U.S...**

15. What is your country of origin? \_\_\_\_\_

16. How long have you been living in the United States?  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. How long have you lived in New York City?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Intimate Relationships**

I am now going to ask you questions about your intimate relationships. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, please let me know.

18. Are you currently in an intimate or romantic relationship? Yes / No

19. How long have you been in this relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

20. Are you currently living with this person? Yes / No

**Use of Services**

I am now going to ask you questions regarding domestic violence services. I do not have any knowledge of why you are seeking services. So I will ask you questions regarding some of the issues that have brought you to seek services. I will also ask you questions about the services you are being provided.

21. Is this the first time you are seeking services for domestic violence? Yes / No

*If answer is yes, go to Q.23*

22. How many times have you sought services for domestic violence incidents?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

23. Is this the only program where you have sought services? Yes / No

*If answer is yes, go to Q.25*

24. Where did you seek services for your previous domestic violence incidents? (indicate if domestic violence program or battered women's shelter)

\_\_\_\_\_

25. Is this your first domestic violence incident? Yes / No

*If answer is yes, go to Q.27*

26. Can you tell me why didn't seek services for the previous incident(s)?

27. How did you hear about this program?

1. Outreach (media/flyers/posters/public service announcements)
2. Hotline
3. Word of Mouth
4. Workshop/Presentation
5. Referred by police
6. Referred by District Attorney's Office
7. Referred by another program
8. Other

28. How long have you been enrolled in this program?

\_\_\_\_\_

29. What type of services are you receiving in this program?

- |  |          |
|--|----------|
| 1. Case Management   | Yes / No |
| 2. Individual Counseling   | Yes / No |
| 3. Group Counseling  | Yes / No |
| 4. After Care Services   | Yes / No |
| 5. Independent Living Skills   | Yes / No |
| 6. Legal Advocacy (protective orders/custody/visitation/divorce/immigration) | Yes / No |

7. Safety Planning Yes / No

8. Crisis Intervention Yes / No

9. Services for your children Yes / No

10. Other \_\_\_\_\_  
(specify)\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

30. Are the services provided to you in English or in Spanish? Eng / Spanish / Both

31. What language would you prefer to have the services provided?

English \_\_\_\_\_ Spanish \_\_\_\_\_ Doesn't Matter \_\_\_\_\_

*If answer to Q. 30 is Spanish, follow up with:*

32. **\*\*Are you pleased with the services being provided to you in Spanish? (If yes, ask participant to elaborate)\*\***

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33. Are you satisfied with the services you are receiving in this program?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Refused

*If response to Q. 33 is either 1 or 3 skip to Q. 35.*

34. What services are you not satisfied with? What would make it better?

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35. What services would you like to see offered by this program?

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36. To your knowledge, is program staff working with other agencies to meet your needs?

Yes / No

**A.** which other agencies (specify)?

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B. If no, would you like program staff to work with other agencies to meet your needs? Which ones?

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37. How would you rate program staffs' interactions with you?

1. Positive
2. Somewhat Positive
3. Somewhat Negative
4. Negative
5. Don't Know
6. Refused

38. Are you able to speak freely about your experience(s) with domestic violence in this program?

1. Yes
2. No

*Ask client to elaborate on her answer.*

39. How would you describe the overall helpfulness of this program in meeting your needs?

40. Are you receiving other services outside of this program for your domestic violence situation?

- A. Yes
- B. No

*If no, continue to Q. 42.*

What services are you receiving?

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41. Are those services being provided to you in Spanish?                      Yes / No

42. Can you tell me what types of services you have used in the last 12 months?

- 1. Any services Yes / No
- 2. Victim Services Only Yes / No
- 3. Legal Services Only Yes / No
- 4. Victim Services and Legal Services Yes / No

43. How would you rate the amount of input you have or amount of control you have in the handling of your domestic violence situation when working with ...

	A Lot	Some	A Little	None at All	N/A
Domestic Violence Program					
Battered Women's Shelter					
Law Enforcement					
DA's Office					

**Protective Orders**

44. Do you currently have a **valid** order of protection? Yes / No

45. Have you ever had an order of protection for any other domestic violence incident?  
Yes /No

**Repeat Use of Services**

46. How likely are you to use the following services if you should need to in the future?

	Definitely Would	Probably Would	Probably Not	Definitely Not	N/A
This Program?					
Law Enforcement?					
DA's Office?					

47. Would you recommend the following programs or services to someone you know?

	Definitely Would	Probably Would	Probably Not	Definitely Not	N/A
This Program?					
Law Enforcement?					
DA's Office?					

**Types of Abuse**

I am now going to ask you some questions about the type(s) of abuse you experienced.

In your relationship with your partner has he/she ever...

**Physical Abuse**

48. Hit you with a fist, open hand, or with an object? Yes / No

**\*\*\*If participant states that she was hit with an object ask her to elaborate\*\*\***

49. Pushed, shoved, slapped, or grabbed you? Yes / No  
 50. Can you tell me about an instance where you experienced physical abuse?

**Emotional Abuse**

51. Call you names to make you feel bad? Yes / No  
 52. Humiliate you? Yes / No  
 53. Threatened you with an object? Yes/ No

*\*\*\*If participant states that she was threatened with an object ask her to elaborate\*\*\**

54. Can you tell me about an instance where you experienced emotional abuse?

**Economic Abuse**

55. Prevent you from getting or keeping a job? Yes / No  
 56. Threaten to withhold money from you? Yes / No  
 57. Can you tell me about an instance where you experienced economic abuse?

**Sexual Abuse**

58. Forced you into any sexual activity against your will? Yes / No  
 59. Can you tell me about an instance where you experienced sexual abuse?

60. Can you tell me when these incidents of abuse (physical, emotional, economic, sexual) began in your relationship? Did they begin...

- 1) in the beginning of the relationship
- 2) within 6 months of the relationship
- 3) after 6 months but within the first year of the relationship
- 4) later in the relationship

(specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*For foreign- born participants only\*\*\**

61. Did the violence in your relationship begin...  
 1) Before coming to the U.S.?  
 2) Once you arrived in the U.S.

*\*\*\*If answer is '1' go to Q. 63\*\*\**

62. How long after you arrived in the U.S.? \_\_\_\_\_

*\*\*for all participants\*\**

- 63. Can you tell me anything else about the onset of the abuse in your relationship?**

**Reflections and Perceptions**

64. How do you describe domestic violence?  
 65. What behaviors do you associate with the term domestic violence?

66. How do you feel domestic violence is treated? For example, do you think it is taken seriously?  
Please explain.

67. When did you decide to seek services in a domestic violence program and why?

68. How do you feel about talking to me about your domestic violence experience?

\*\*\*foreign born participants only\*\*\*

69. Do you think that living in the United States has changed the way you think about domestic violence? Why or why not?

\*\*\*all participants\*\*\*

70. Why do you think some partners use physical violence against their partners?

71. Many women whose partners use violence against them do not leave the relationship. What do you think prevents them from doing this?

72. Is there anything else you'd like to tell me about your situation or how the incidents have affected you?

### ***Social Support***

We are almost done with the interview. Just a few more questions.

73. Who do you ask for help when you need it?

74. Who do you talk to about your problems?

75. Who do you share your joys and sorrows with?

### ***Other Comments***

76. Do you now feel empowered?

77. What would you say to other women who are looking, or not looking, for help for their domestic violence situation?

78. What is it that you need, or want, to help address your domestic violence situation? Are you getting it?

79. What would you say to those who may have power (community leaders, legislators, funders) about what Latinas who are living with domestic violence need?

80. Have you spoken to your mother or father about your situation? What was there response?

81. If there was one thing you could change, or make better, about your situation, what would it be?

Those are all the questions I had for you. Thank you very much for your participation in this study. Your contribution is very important.



## APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW TOOL (SPANISH)

# \_\_\_\_\_

### Estudio de Víctimas Latinas de Violencia Doméstica Buscando Ayuda

Esta entrevista es sobre Latinas en búsqueda de ayuda por violencia doméstica en la ciudad de Nueva York. Estoy interesada en escuchar sobre usted y los servicios que ha solicitado y está recibiendo. Le estaré haciendo preguntas sobre sus experiencias y opiniones. Su participación es voluntaria y no tiene que contestar ninguna pregunta que le haga sentir incómoda. Todas sus contestaciones son confidenciales. Su participación es muy importante para el estudio.

#### **Datos socioeconómicos**

- Comenzaré con preguntas generales sobre usted

1. ¿Cuál es su fecha de nacimiento?

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2. ¿Qué edad tiene? \_\_\_\_\_

3. ¿Cuál es el grado académico más alto alcanzado por usted?

Ninguna educación formal

1<sup>ro</sup> – 8<sup>vo</sup> grado

Algunos grados de Escuela Superior

Diploma de Escuela Superior

Certificado equivalente a Escuela Superior

Escuela Vocacional, Técnica, o Instituto

Algunos estudios universitarios

Grado Asociado

Bachillerato

Maestría o un título más alto

Otro \_\_\_\_\_

4. ¿Está actualmente matriculado en una escuela o programa de adiestramiento?      Sí / No

5. ¿Tiene actualmente un empleo?      Sí / No

a. ¿Tiempo Completo?

b. ¿Tiempo Parcial?

*Sí la respuesta es sí, adelante a C.7*

6. ¿Cuál es la razón principal por la que no tiene un empleo? (solo Sí contestó “No” a la pregunta 5)

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7. ¿Cuál es su fuente principal de ingreso?

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8. ¿Cuál es a su mejor entendimiento su ingreso anual?

1. Menor de \$5,000
2. \$5,000 – menor de \$10,000
3. \$10,000- menor de \$15,000
4. \$15,000- menor de \$20,000
5. \$20,000- menor de \$25,000
6. \$25,000- menor de \$30,000
7. \$30,000- menor de \$35,000
8. \$35,000- menor de \$40,000
9. \$40,000- menor de \$45,000
10. \$45,000- menor de \$50,000
11. \$50,000- menor de \$80,000
12. \$80,000- menor de \$100,000
13. Mayor de \$100,000
14. No lo sé
15. No Quiero responder

9. ¿Tiene niños?

Sí / No

10. ¿Cuántos niños tiene? \_\_\_\_\_

11. ¿Cuáles son las edades de sus hijos?

12. ¿Quién vive en su hogar?

- a. Esposo
- b. Compañero
- c. Niños
- d. Hermanos

- e. Pariente (especifique)
- f. Amigo(a)
- g. Otro no emparentado (especifique)
- h. Hijos de su pareja
- i. Nadie

13. ¿Cuántos niños viven con usted en su hogar? \_\_\_\_\_

14. ¿Cuál de los siguientes describe mejor su estado de inmigración?

- a. Nacido en E.U.
- b. Nacido fuera de los E.U.  
Sí nacido fuera de los E.U....

15. ¿Cuál es su país de origen? \_\_\_\_\_

16. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha estado viviendo en los Estados Unidos?

\_\_\_\_\_

17. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha vivido en la ciudad de Nueva York?

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Relaciones Intimas**

Ahora voy a preguntar sobre sus relaciones íntimas. Sí se Siente incómoda en cualquier momento, por favor déjeme saber.

18. ¿Tiene actualmente una relación íntima o romántica? Sí / No

19. Por cuánto tiempo ha estado en esta relación? \_\_\_\_\_

20. ¿Está actualmente viviendo con esta persona? Sí / No

### **Uso de Servicios**

Ahora voy a preguntarle sobre servicios de violencia doméstica. Yo no tengo conocimiento alguno de por qué usted está solicitando estos servicios. Así que le haré preguntas acerca de algunas de las situaciones que la han llevado a solicitar servicios. Le haré también preguntas sobre los servicios que le están proveyendo.

21. ¿Es ésta la primera vez que solicita servicios por violencia doméstica?

Sí / No

*Sí la respuesta es sí, adelante a C. 23*

22. ¿Cuántas veces ha solicitado servicios por incidentes de violencia doméstica?

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23. ¿Es este el único programa que ha utilizado para solicitar servicios? Sí / No  
*Si la respuesta es sí, adelante a C. 25*

24. ¿Dónde ha solicitado servicios para sus incidentes previos de violencia doméstica?  
(indique Sí es un programa de violencia doméstica o refugio de mujeres maltratadas)

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25. ¿Es este su primer incidente de violencia doméstica? Sí / No

*Si la respuesta es sí, adelante a C.27*

26. ¿Podría decirme porque no has solicitado servicios para los incidentes previos?

27. ¿Cómo escuchó de este programa?

- a. Servicios de alcance (revistas/promociones/afiches/anuncios públicos)
- b. Línea de Emergencia
- c. Comentarios de otras personas
- d. Taller/Presentación
- e. Referida por la policía
- f. Referida por la Oficina del Fiscal de Distrito
- g. Referida por otro programa
- h. **Otros** \_\_\_\_\_

28. ¿Por cuánto tiempo ha estado matriculada en este programa?

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29. ¿Qué tipo de servicios está recibiendo en este programa?

- a. Manejo de Casos S/N
- b. Consejería Individual S/N
- c. Consejería Grupal S/N
- d. Servicios de Cuidado Posterior S/N
- e. Destrezas de Vida Independiente S/N
- f. Asesoría Legal (órdenes de protección/custodia/visitación/divorcio/inmigración) S/N
- g. Elaboración de un plan de seguridad S/N
- h. Intervención de Crisis S/N
- i. Servicios para sus niños S/N
- j. Otros (especifique)\_\_\_\_\_

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30. ¿Le están proveyendo los servicios en inglés o en español?    inglés / Español / Ambos

31. ¿En qué idioma prefiere obtener estos servicios?  
Inglés\_\_\_\_\_ Español\_\_\_\_\_ No importa

***Si la respuesta para cuestión 31 es “Español”, sigue con lo siguiente:***

32. \*\*¿Está satisfecha con los servicios provistos en Español? (Sí es así, pídale a la participante que elabore)\*\*Si / No

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33. ¿Está usted satisfecha con los servicios que está recibiendo en este programa?  
a. Si  
b. No  
c. No quiso contestar

***Si la respuesta de cuestión 33 es A o C, adelante a C.35.***

34. ¿Con cuáles servicios no está satisfecha? (Haga una lista de los servicios)  
¿Cómo podrían mejorar?

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35. ¿Qué servicios le gustaría que este programa ofreciera? (Haga una lista de las respuestas)

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36. En su mejor conocimiento, ¿**están las trabajadoras de este programa trabajando o comunicándose** con otras agencias para satisfacer sus necesidades?      Sí / No

a) Sí es así, ¿qué otras agencias? (especifique)

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b) Sí no, ¿le gustaría que las **trabajadoras de este programa trabajaran o se comunicaran** con otras agencias para satisfacer sus necesidades? ¿Cuáles agencias? (Haga una lista de las respuestas)

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37. ¿Cómo clasificaría la interacción de las trabajadoras de este programa con usted?

- a. Positiva
- b. Algo Positiva
- c. Algo Negativa
- d. Negativa
- e. No lo sé
- f. No quiso contestar

38. ¿Puedes hablar libremente de sus experiencias acerca de su victimización en este programa?

- a. Si
- b. No

*Pida que la clienta elabore su respuesta.*

39. ¿Cómo describiría la utilidad de este programa para satisfacer sus necesidades?

40. ¿Está recibiendo otros servicios fuera de este programa para su situación de violencia doméstica?

A) Si

B) No

*Si la respuesta es no, adelante con C. 41*

¿Cuáles servicios está recibiendo? (Haga un listado de los servicios)

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41. Le están proveyendo esos servicios en Español?

Sí / No

42. ¿Puede decirme que clase de servicios ha utilizado en los últimos 12 meses?

a. Cualquier servicio

Sí / No

b. Servicios de Víctimas solamente

Sí / No

c. Servicios Legales solamente

Sí / No

d. Servicios de Víctimas y Servicios Legales

Sí / No

43. ¿Cómo clasifica la cantidad, o capacidad que tienes en control, de cómo manejar tu situación de violencia doméstica, cuando trabajas con...?

	Mucha	Alguna	Poca	Ninguna	N/A
Programa de Violencia Doméstica					
Refugio de Mujeres Maltratadas					
Fuerzas del Orden (La Policía)					
Oficina del Fiscal de Distrito					

### Órdenes de Protección

44. ¿Tiene actualmente una orden de protección válida?

Sí / No

45. ¿Ha tenido alguna vez una orden de protección por cualquier incidente de violencia doméstica? Sí / No

46. ¿Cuán probable es que usted utilice los siguientes servicios si tuviera necesidad en el futuro?

	Definitivamente	Probablemente	Probablemente No	Definitivamente No	Definitivamente	N/A
Este Programa						
Fuerzas del Orden (La Policía)						
Oficina del Fiscal de Distrito						

47. ¿Recomendaría los siguientes programas o servicios a alguien que conoce?

	Definitivamente	Probablemente	Probablemente No	Definitivamente No	Definitivamente	N/A
Este Programa						
Fuerzas del Orden (La Policía)						
Oficina del Fiscal de Distrito						

### Clases de maltrato

Ahora voy a hacerle algunas preguntas acerca de las clases del maltrato que usted sobrepasa.

En su relación con su compañero o compañera, ¿Alguna vez ...

#### Abuso Físico

48. Le ha pegado con el puño, la mano abierta, o con algún objeto? Sí/ No

\*\*\*Si la participante dice que algún objeto fue utilizado, pídale que elabore\*\*\*

49. le abofeteó, empujó, o la tomó por la fuerza? Sí / No



50. ¿Me puedes contar de un incidente de tu experiencia con el abuso físico?

Abuso Emocional

51. le llamaba por sobre nombres para hacerla sentir mal? Sí / No

52. le ha humillado? Sí / No

53. la amenazo con un objeto? Si / No

54. ¿Me puedes contar de un incidente de tu experiencia con el abuso emocional?

**Abuso Económico**

55. le ha proveído de obtener o mantener un trabajo? Sí / No

56. la amenazó con retenerle su dinero? Sí / No

57. ¿Me puedes contar de un incidente de tu experiencia con el abuso económico?

**Abuso Sexual**

58. la forzó a tener alguna actividad sexual en contra de su voluntad? Sí / No

59. ¿Me puedes contar de un incidente de tu experiencia con el abuso sexual?

60. ¿Me puedes decir cuando comenzaron estos incidentes de abuso (físico, emocional, económico, sexual) en su relación? Comenzaron...

5) desde el comienzo de la relación

6) en los primeros 6 meses de nuestra relación

7) luego de los primeros 6 meses pero durante el primer año de nuestra relación.

8) Comenzaron más tarde en la relación (especifique):

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**\*\*\*Solamente para participantes nacidas fuera de los E.U. \*\*\***

61. ¿Cuándo comenzó la violencia en su relación?

Antes de llegar a los E.U.?

Sí / No

Al llegar a los E.U.?

Sí / No

**\*\*\*Si la respuesta es '1', sigue a C. 62\*\*\***

62. ¿Cuánto tiempo después de llegar a los E.U.? \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\*Para todas\*\*\***

**63. ¿Me puedes decir algo más de cuando comenzó la violencia en su relación?**

### ***Reflexiones y Precepciones***

64. ¿Cómo describes la violencia domestica?
65. ¿Cuáles son las actitudes que usted asocia con la violencia domestica?
66. ¿Cómo crees que tratan la violencia domestica? Por ejemplo, ¿crees que la tratan como una situación seria? Especifique por favor.
67. ¿Cuándo decidiste a solicitar servicios en un programa que ayuda a víctimas de la violencia doméstica y porque?
68. ¿Cómo te sientes de hablar conmigo sobre su experiencia con la violencia domestica?

### **\*\*\*Solamente para participantes nacida fuera de los E.U.\*\*\***

69. ¿Crees que viviendo en los Estados Unidos ha cambiado como piensas sobre la violencia domestica? Porque o porque no?

### **\*\*\*Para todas\*\*\***

70. ¿Por qué crees tú que algunas parejas usan violencia contra sus parejas?
71. Muchas mujeres que tienen parejas que son violentos con ellas no se dejan de la relación. ¿Qué crees tú son las razones que ellas no dejan las relaciones?
72. ¿Hay algo más que le gustaría decirme sobre su experiencia o incidentes que le han afectado a usted?

### ***Conexiones de Apoyo***

73. ¿A quién le pides ayuda cuando la necesitas?
74. ¿Con quién hablas de sus problemas?
75. ¿Con quién compartes tus alegrías y tus penas?

Ya vamos terminando. Solo algunas preguntas más.

76. ¿Te sientes autorizada?
77. ¿Qué le dirías a otras mujeres que están buscando, o no están buscando, ayuda para su situación de la violencia domestica?
78. ¿Qué es lo que usted necesitas, o quieres, para ayudarte con su situación con la violencia domestica?
79. ¿Qué le dirías a personas que puedan tener algún poder (líderes de la comunidad, personas con el poder de cambiar o crear leyes, o esos que pueden ayudar con dinero) sobre las necesidades de Latinas viviendo con la violencia domestica?

80. ¿Has hablado con su mamá o papá sobre su situación con la violencia doméstica? ¿Cuáles fueron sus respuestas?

81. Si hubiera alguna cosa que usted pudiera cambiar o mejorar sobre su situación con la violencia doméstica, ¿qué sería esa cosa?

Ya terminamos con la entrevista. Muchas gracias por su participación.

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