Domestic Violence in the Latino Community: The Struggles Latina Women Encounter Due to
Societal and Geographical Disadvantages

By

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Abstract

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Domestic violence has been an epidemic in the United States since the colonization era. Public chastisement was deemed acceptable by law and Church because patriarchal views allowed men to treat women as their property. It was not until the 20th century, during the women's rights movement, that the law recognized public chastisement as an inhumane act therefore punishing any man who battered his wife. As the movement progressed, women began owning their own property and divorcing their abusive partners. The downfall in this movement was that the majority of the women who benefited from these changes were Caucasian women from the middle and upper class leaving those in the poor, minority groups with a problem to continue to face on their own, especially those in the Latino community. The majority of Latina women reside in poor, underprivileged neighborhoods (conditions are especially worse for Latina immigrants). These women lack the adequate economic resources, as well as suffer from cultural barriers (i.e. language), needed to escape their abusers – finding ways to escape can be even worse depending on the geographic location (Latina women living in suburban areas are isolated from family therefore it is difficult for them to find help). A domestic violence program director in Montgomery County was interviewed and a multivariate analysis of the 2010 National Crime Victimization Survey was completed to test the influences of geographic locations on domestic violence occurrences within the Latino community and whether the location impacted the Latinas' choice to contact crime victim agencies. The chi-square test showed that there was a statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and geographic location in seeking help from victim agencies. These results are vital in notifying human service agencies on the importance of aiding Latina women in underprivileged and socially isolated regions.

Preface

Domestic violence is a topic that is near and dear to my heart. While I was growing up, until right before the age of nine, I witnessed my father verbally, physically, and emotionally abuse my mother. The images I witnessed have stayed with me and are the reasons why I am a strong believer in advocating against domestic violence, especially in the Latino community. Witnessing a mother fighting to keep her family together despite the violence is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to raise the awareness that staying with an abusive partner. I hope to raise this awareness through this thesis by examining, and explaining, the ways in which ethnicity, geography, and culture can impact domestic violence in the Latino community.

Chapter one focuses on relevant research conducted in the past. It begins with the history of domestic violence, the ways in which the legal system began to shift to protect women, and how women began to break away from the abuse. Then the focus turns to domestic violence in the Latino community and how familial relationships, socioeconomic status, geographic location, and culture attribute to staying with an abuser. Chapter two describes the two methods (interview and data analysis of a national survey) used to test my hypothesis; that ethnicity and geographic location have an affect on domestic violence occurrence and services sought in victim agencies. Chapter three presents the results from the interview and multivariate analysis as well as states if a relationship exists between the variables tested. Chapter four combines the research presented in chapter one with the results from chapter three and offers a comparison. This is also where the study's limitations are discussed as well as suggestions for future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

Domestic violence has become an epidemic. This type of behavior is referred as violent physical acts or coercive behavior directed against a spouse or partner, including psychological or emotional abuse as well as physical violence; threats against personal property, pets, and other family members; destruction of belongings; and the imposition and economic dependence and isolation (Frias and Angel 2005: 552; Ferguson 2011: 227). The issue of domestic violence has been identified as an important public health concern by the U.S. government (Ferguson 2011: 227). In the United States, between two and six million women are abused annually (Frias and Angel 2005: 552). The most salient risk factor, of course, is gender; in 95% of cases of domestic violence, women fall victim to their male partner's abuse and the overall lifetime prevalence rates of victimization for women is approximately 20% (Frias and Angel 2005: 552; Ferguson 2011: 228).

According to Ann Jones (2000) domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women in the United States (87). Research done by the National Centers for Disease Control has shown that more women are treated in emergency rooms for intimate partner violence than for (nonmarital) rapes, muggings, and traffic accidents combined (Jones 2000: 87). Untold numbers of women suffer permanent injuries – brain damage, blindness, deafness, speech loss through laryngeal damage, disfigurement and mutilation, damage to or loss of internal organs, paralysis, sterility, and so on (Jones 2000: 87). This data is not on a particular ethnic group and this raises the question whether the incident report rates of domestic violence are different for all ethnicities present in the United States – specifically the Latino community.

Latinos generally live in low-income neighborhoods where resources are limited. In turn Latina women might experience greater trauma as a consequence of domestic violence compared to Caucasian women due to fewer available community resources (Ferguson 2011: 228). According to Frias and Angel (2005), women, especially Latin women, in low-income families are at elevated risk of victimization due to chronic poverty, which creates stress that can place minority women at an increased risk of violence (552-553). It is possible that language and cultural barriers might make accurate prevalence estimates of domestic violence difficult with Latino samples (Ferguson 2011: 228). Factors such as income level, use of alcohol, and age might moderate the relationship between domestic violence victimization and Latino ethnicity (Ferguson 2011: 228). Given the unique history of Latinos in this country, and the structural disadvantage they have experienced, race and ethnicity, combined with minority group status, affects almost all aspects of social and family life, including how one experiences violence (Frias and Angel 2005: 553).

Culture determines the way people define, interpret, and respond to problems such as intimate partner violence (Klevens *et al*. 2007: 142). Because individuals cannot be separated from their cultural context, it is important to understand cultural influences and processes (i.e. the manner in which the problem is construed and explained) to develop culturally appropriate programs (Klevens *et al*. 2007: 142). Latinos are described as sharing a variety of cultural characteristics such as having high regard for family unity; having respect toward others based on age, gender, and social position; having close personal relationships; and placing great importance on trust (Klevens *et al*. 2007: 142). With all that being said, community context as well as geographic location (urban, suburban, and rural areas) plays a major factor in the

resources available to the Latino community. Since trust is held with such high regards within the Latin culture, does this mean that incident report rates should be higher within this group?

The term "domestic" signifies that violence between partners is a private matter that needs to be dealt with within the home, but we've established that for the Latino community issues are not faced alone. How does the Latino community face domestic violence incidences when culture, socioeconomic status, and demographic location affect the possibility of seeking outside aid? Does immigration status play a role in the reports of domestic violence? Does demography affect a Latina's choice of seeking help? If so, what are the reasons behind the choice of seeking or not seeking outside help? Is it to keep society from further stigmatizing the man as a lazy individual who exudes the machismo attitude? Or is the Latina woman trying to keep her image safe so she will not be deemed a victim? Or is she afraid to shame her family? Or could it be that she does not want society to believe that she was asking for the abuse? Will these findings be statistically significant? This research paper will attempt to find the answers to these questions, and if they are not found then further research needs to be done in order to provide the adequate aid that Latina women have the right to utilize.

The History of Domestic Violence
Wife beating is "Ok"

In ancient times, men were deemed "privileged" to abuse their wives (Feder 1999) because they had to follow the cult of domesticity. For example, in the 8th century, the Romans established marriage laws whereby men were entitled, and expected, to discipline their wives, because she was mandated to obey (Feder 1999) the breadwinner. In other words, the husband was morally and legally allowed to control and punish his wife if she did not behave accordingly (Feder 1999). Even if the husband killed his wife while disciplining her it would be viewed as

accidental – she probably deserved the abuse anyway. This absurdity was not only pushed by society, but in the Church as well. For instance, with the "ascendancy of the Church, the husband's rule over his wife was explicitly written into the laws of the Church" (Feder 1999: 2). Physically harming another individual was not deemed a cardinal sin, perhaps it was due to the fact that men ruled the Church and believed it was their right to keep those below them (i.e. gender, class, etc.) in their "rightful" places. Even the legal system found no wrong doing in men publicly and privately chastising their wives because they were deemed as property.

Contemporary perceptions of domestic violence can only be understood if placed within the context of the state's historical response to domestic violence (Kohn 2007: 195). During this time, the law made a distinction between private and public affairs in which family issues were constituted as a problem for the husband not the government (Jones 2000). In the United States, during the Colonial period, the courts followed British law and gave men permission to control their wives by abusing them (Jones 2000; Kohn 2007).

Once the United States declared independence, it took almost two centuries for the courts to set limitations on chastisement against women (Kohn 2007). Other courts in the country decided that if a woman suffered permanent injury due to personal gratification (i.e. the husband finds pleasure in physically harming his wife) then the man would have to face the repercussions (Kohn 2007). Kohn (2007) found that the restrictions on the abuse did not stop it all together; all it did was reduce the amount of force administered. The new guidelines for abuse followed the "rule of thumb;" this entailed allowing men to use objects against women as long as the objects were not wider than their thumbs (Kohn 2007). But then there were court systems that saw no harm in physical abuse against women since their behavior probably called for the violence (Kohn 2007).

For someone to condone physical harm on another presents a poor representation of the society as a whole. This is why the cycle of abuse continues because young men are not being taught the proper actions to exhibit when interacting with women. All they know is the abuse they witnessed as children, which in their minds is equated to love. What made matters worse was since the court could not agree on how to manage domestic violence cases (it took the courts about 4 centuries to recognize intimate partner abuse as crime [Kohn 2007]), women had no legal standing against their abusers (Kohn 2007) therefore the possibility of seeking justice was nonexistent.

Time to End His Coercive Power

As women began to realize that the cult of domesticity was no longer an aspect of life that they wanted to live by, groups were formed that embarked on the path of feminism and reform for women's rights. So pivotal moments, such as the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, gave feminists the opportunity to conduct legal action against the community in hopes of allowing women the right to own their own property in which they can manage without their husband's control (Lentz 1999). But with this new legal status came the possibility of further aggravating the husband and introducing even more violence into the home. The beginning stages of the movement focused on dissecting the causes of domestic violence. The major factors that erupted were alcohol abuse and finances (Lentz 1999). The ordeal was often worse for women who had low socioeconomic status who tried to help provide for the family alongside the husband (Lentz 1999), but as the fight continued for equal rights women began to escape their batterers by seeking divorce.

Since the time of colonization, the married couple family was considered the norm and those who were living in single parent households would be ostracized because being unwed

with children or being a divorcee brought stigma to your name. This still existed in the latter part of the 20th century; therefore feminists felt that it was their responsibility to raise the awareness of the coercive control that men exhibited over their wives. During the 1960's, "the first wave of domestic violence advocacy efforts focused on opening shelters for battered women" (Kohn 2007: 196) where this later brought on changes to law policies due to an immense amount of lobbying.

Domestic violence shelters did not sprout out of the ground as soon as the woman's movement began. It took about a decade for the first shelter to open and it was not even in the United States. In 1971, Chiswick, England introduced the first battered woman's shelter and it was not until three years later that the United States opened up their first shelter in St. Paul, Minneapolis (United Family Services 2006). Women who joined the movement to provide safe havens for battered women strived to protect survivors because for some time they were staying in homeless shelters as well as shelters that catered to alcohol abuse victims (Colorado Bar Association N.d.). Those who began opening up the shelters were actually previous victims of domestic violence or witnessed the abuse as a child (Colorado Bar Association N.d.).

The activists who began the shelter movement did so because survivors of domestic violence had nowhere to go. Statistics show that in 1976 "New York City, with a population estimated at more than 8 million people, had 1000 beds for homeless men and 45 for homeless women" (Jones 2000: 9). Many women were beginning to speak out against their batterers, but this left them without a place to live (with such small availabilities in homeless shelters women were desperately seeking assistance on housing). In 1974, St. Paul, Minneapolis (this is where the first domestic violence shelter was built) had even fewer beds available for survivors because the need to offer support to them had not become a central issue (Jones 2000). Even more

striking statistics on shelters comes from 1973 Los Angeles when a survey disclosed that 4000 beds were available for men, but only 30 were designated for women and children (Jones 2000). Jones (2000) discovered "in various states, social service or religious organizations provided minimal programs or temporary housing for displaced persons, 'multi-problem' families…but there was no category" (9) for abused women as if they did not exist. It was still considered a private matter that society was not thrilled about getting involved in, but because of all the hard work that women activists put into the movement change began to take shape. The progress in constructing these shelters can be illustrated between the years of 1974 and 2000, where women worked together in "local communities establishing almost 2,000 shelters and programs and emergency shelters and programs and emergency hotlines…for battered women" (Colorado Bar Association N.d.: 1). As long as more women surfaced from under the rule of their batterers then others will continue to fight for their right to be heard.

With all the attention that feminists were bringing to the domestic violence epidemic, states began to listen to the voices that were being kept silent for centuries. Kohn (2007) discovered that "statutes established victims' rights to pursue civil injunctions against batterers to protect them from further violence and establish ground rules for separation" (197). Now that the courts legally recognized domestic violence as a crime, women could finally escape the shackles that were bound at their feet and walk out of their abusive relationships with a fresh outlook on life, free of stigma, but was this true for all women or just those deemed the dominant race?

Domestic Violence within the Latino Community

Domestic violence, also, referred to as intimate partner violence (IPV), among the minority group is viewed as part of a culture (Sokoloff and Dupont 2007). According to William Burger (2011) "culture controls our lives and defines reality for each of us, with or without our

permission and/or intentional awareness" (211). Burger (2011) also explained that "culture creates and shapes just about every aspect of a person's life, including language, beliefs, values, leisure activities, food consumption habits, clothing preferences, attitudes towards time, eye contact, gestures and body movements, facial expressions, and even attitudes toward life and death" (211). When it comes to domestic violence and culture the two are intertwined because if a person has been taught to value family no matter what it makes it difficult to seek outside help – the woman might be afraid that her batterer will get into trouble with the law. For Latino communities, family is extremely important because that is how they can survive in a society that stigmatizes their people.

Latinos are the largest minority group in the United States and composed 13.4% of the population in 2004 (Klevens 2007). Also in 2004, 54.9% had reported being in abusive relationships (Murdaugh et al. 2004). By 2010, the group composed 16.3% of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Previous research on domestic violence in the Latino community has resulted in conflicting data due to different sampling methods and analytical techniques (Frias and Angel 2005). The problem with a vast amount of research in this particular category is that Latinos are being categorized into one grouping. Every culture that speaks Spanish does not follow the same traditions nor is the language itself similar – there are many researchers who categorize Latinos as homogenous (Bassuk et al. 2006). Hence the widely used term "Hispanic." What is failed to be realized is that there are marginalized "Hispanics" in the Latino community (i.e. Mexican immigrants), but they go unnoticed because they are clumped into the same statistic. This is why society is under false pretenses regarding domestic violence in the Hispanic community.

Women from minority groups face a double oppression in society because of their gender and because of their ethnicity. For a Latina woman battling both a man who exudes the machismo attitude as well as his fear of being a poor breadwinner is a difficult task to conquer. When violence is thrown in to the mix it makes life even more stressful because she has to take blows from not only the man who claims to love her, but from the blows that society throws her way due to preconceived stigmas about her race and ethnicity. When it comes to reporting intimate partner violence it is all about how she views herself and how society views her based on her profession, skin color, socioeconomic status, and citizenship (Bograd 2007).

There are many factors that contribute to why Latina women are prone to end up in physically abusive relationships. Klevens (2007) discovered that "higher IPV rates among Latinos are associated with young age, urbanicity, low income, witnessing IPV as a child, psychosocial stress, mental disorders, power, and possessiveness or jealousy" (113). The last two factors are often most linked to intimate partner violence within the Latino community due to stereotypes that are attached to the men. For example, in a male dominated society, women have no voice in the home because patriarchy governs all. The male rules the home and the female must be the obedient housewife. Most of the time, specifically with families who are used to having just one parent working outside the home (the father), the male feels threatened if his position in the home is compromised. This rings especially true for Latino men because the culture requires them to be the sole provider – this can be brought back to the machismo characteristic – but generalizing that violence erupts because of women working outside the home would be a mistake. More research would have to be done in order to state whether or not jealousy and power plays a major role in intimate partner violence within this particular group.

Unfortunately there has not been enough research collected on all the factors to fully understand the reasoning behind domestic violence in this community.

Murdaugh *et al* (2004) conducted a study on Latina women residing in Southeastern America in order to analyze the kind of violence experienced, violence occurrence, obstacles faced in getting treatment, and programs needed by victims. They found that the women in their study had a hard time dealing with the violence due to "immigration, challenges of acculturation, language, legal, and economic pressures" (Murdaugh et al. 2004: 108). These are the reasons why there is lack of research on Latina immigrants – the women do not know about or take advantage of the services available to them (Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011).

The aforementioned factors have a great deal to do with the challenges a new immigrant faces due to language and cultural barriers, but lets say that some immigrant women are in abusive relationships because of emigration, what is the reasoning for the other Latina battered women who are citizens? What are the factors that keep them from leaving the home and seeking intervention? Klevens (2007) uncovered the answer to this question while researching the barriers Latina women faced and the lack of intervention being sought. Klevens (2007) results showed that the women usually stay with their batterers due to "economic dependence, fear of losing custody of their children, not wanting to separate the children from their father, believing that their partner will ultimately change, and love" (117); these barriers are similar to those of non-Latinas but the difference lies within culture (i.e. staying true to familismo). Women often stay with their batterers because they know nothing else and to leave with no means to escape (the batterer may use coercive power to maintain control over all monetary funds disabling the woman from trying to buy a one way ticket away from him) would be a difficult task especially if there is very little income coming into the household.

Socioeconomic Status and its Affect on Reporting

Prior research has shown that physical abuse against women and children is higher in low-income families or when the husband/boyfriend is unemployed or has a job that is of lower standing than his spouse (Bassuk et al. 2006). Along with the issues stated before, Bassuk and her associates (2006) found that the male's view on patriarchy coincides with his "economic circumstance" (388). In a heteronormative society, if a man's ego is in jeopardy he will then feel inferior to his wife. For Latino men, how others view them in the community is held in high regard because as young boys their parents teach them they have to be the "man of the house." So if that job is compromised it puts a major strain on the relationship.

Even though the largest ethnic minority in the United States is Latino, it still does not change the fact that the community is branded as the "Other." Ethnocentrism plays a factor in the labeling of the Latino culture because any race or ethnicity that is not of Caucasian descent is viewed as the inferior race. This belief can be attributed to class and socioeconomic background. When domestic violence is added to the equation, it makes it difficult for the women to seek outside help due to monetary barriers. For instance, women who are in the middle- and upper-class can afford to hire a private therapist to work with in order to keep their private matters private where as low-income women are not aware of the resources available or how they would be able to afford them.

A study done by Bassuk *et al.* (2006) showed that of a 16,000 representative sample from the National Violence Against Women Survey, 25% expressed being subjected to violence and of that percent two-thirds were poor or homeless. Women who live in dire circumstances often encounter "stressful life events, oppressive conditions (such as residential instability and homelessness), and lack of support" (Bassuck et al. 2006: 388) which usually goes hand in hand

with the risk of being physically abused. However, researchers have conducted different studies that have administered different results. When Bassuk (2006) conducted a study in 1997 she reported "in a sample of impoverished women, Latinas were at significantly lower risk of severe physical assault by a partner than non-Hispanic whites" (389). Then there are other studies that have shown that Latina "women who were 'bound by a norm of loyal motherhood' had longer histories of abuse and were hampered by language differences, immigration status, and less social capital" (Bassuk et al. 2006: 389). These women felt compelled to stay in their abusive relationships because not only did they have to remain loyal to their husband, but they also lacked the necessary means to escape. Various research has shown that the utilization of resources designated for domestic violence is very low among Latinas due to acculturation barriers (Lipsky et al. 2006). If barriers are present it is difficult to locate the proper services that will help the women escape.

Lipsky *et al.* (2006) showed various "social, cultural, and political barriers for abused Latina … women, including social isolation, language barriers, discrimination, fear of deportation, dedication to family, shame, and cultural stigma of divorce" (83). Just like Latino men, the women do not want to suffer from any social alienation within their community (especially if they are foreign born). For this reason and the factors stated above, when abuse develops the occurrence of seeking guidance is very low compared to those who are non-Latino (Lipsky et al. 2006). For Latinos, particularly those of Mexican-American descent, financial barriers are difficult to overcome because it bounds them from seeking and obtaining any available healthcare services (Lipsky et al. 2006). Most of the time this has to do with the middle class leaving an area (i.e. St. Louis' urban areas) and taking with them their "social, economic, and political capital…leaving the poor…even more socially isolated, and their communities even

further depleted of resources" (Miller 2008: 17). Circumstances such as these are difficult to overcome, especially for Latino immigrants.

Immigration Status and Domestic Violence

Emigrating is never easy for anyone, no matter the ethnicity or race, but for Latinos the journey is a bit more difficult due to the stereotypes that follow their name. Once a person becomes labeled an "immigrant" the word is automatically given a bad connotation and equated to the "Other" because the individual is considered outside of the norm – he or she disrupts our ethnocentric, heteronormative society. Society has an issue interacting with immigrants, so to acknowledge that an immigrant woman is being battered is unacceptable since people refuse to believe that they live in the neighborhoods in the first place (Dasgupta 2007). Dasgupta (2007) found that this attitude was apparent in "all spheres of society: the state constructs laws that generally are detrimental to the safety of immigrant battered women; the legal system does not know how to deal with them; battered women's agencies neglect to institute programs that address their specific needs; and citizen-neighbors pretend not to hear or understand shrieks ostensibly in foreign languages" (58). These women are more susceptible to abuse due to the "intersection of their race, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, religious and political orientations, and immigration status, which stimulates nationalistic anxieties and multiplies the effects of both interpersonal and structural violence" (Villalón 2010: 553). It is strange that some Americans feel uncomfortable associating themselves with immigrants, especially if it pertains to coming to their aid. But unfortunately they are considered "weird, bizarre, and subnormal" as if they are anything but human beings (Dasgupta 2007: 58). No matter the citizenship status of an individual, someone should always be helped during a time of need.

Importance of Family and its Influence on Seeking Help

Silva-Martínez and Murty (2011) discovered that "among immigrant populations, domestic violence occurs alongside other disadvantages and it often intersects with the problems of being an undocumented immigrant" (224). When a family moves to a new country together all they have is each other. So when domestic violence is thrown into the equation it becomes unclear as to whom to turn to for help. This has a lot to do with cultural factors. Silva-Martínez and Murty (2011) found that Mexican women who have experienced domestic violence view "family, friends, and other informal support sources more accessible than formal support" (225). In this study formal referred to human service agencies. Family is the only support system (a concept formerly known as *familismo* [Vidales 2010; Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011]) that Latino families, especially immigrant families, are known to utilize for help. Another concept that is an important, and similar, cultural factor is *collectivism* (Vidales 2010). This belief "places group needs over individual needs" (Vidales 2010: 536) because family interaction and togetherness between members, both nuclear and extended, is held in high regard (Vidales 2010). This creates a stressful burden on whether or not a Latina should leave or stay with her abusive partner.

Since the women in this community are obligated to follow the rules of both *familismo* and *collectivism*, Latina immigrants feel an unrelenting reliance to their partners, especially if children are added into the equation. Vidales (2010) found that these women felt compelled to stay in their abusive relationships because their child(ren) needed their father. This has a lot to do with the emphasis on a "greater commitment of keeping the family together" (Vidales 2010: 536), therefore, the decision to leave is no longer an option. An example of this emphasis can be seen in an interview between Vidales (2010) and an immigrant Mexican woman in her study: "I thought that I was doing my children a favor by staying and providing a father for them. But, in

reality, they were the ones who were asking me to leave the situation" (536). Latina immigrants become so enthralled on their cultural upbringing that it clouds their better judgments because their "sense of loyalty, kindness, forgiveness, and respect makes them willing to tolerate the situation" (Vidales 2010: 536).

In this community, unity and solidarity are important cultural factors that non-Latino Americans cannot grasp due to the Western values they follow (i.e. individualism). It is for this reason that Latina immigrants find it difficult to access outside services – bringing outside attention to the family is not the norm. With so many barriers and prejudice against immigrants, Latina immigrants not only feel responsible for keeping their family name clear, but to keep their family members safe from the authorities as well; they use their barriers as an excuse to stay home because they do not have their extended families (Vidales 2010).

Barriers for Documented and Undocumented Battered Latina Immigrants

A major barrier that keeps battered Latina immigrants from seeking services is language. For instance, in Vidales' (2010) and Silva-Martínez and Murty's (2011) studies, the most common reason for the inability to finding services suitable for the immigrant women's needs was that of lack of communication, especially if a translator was not present at the agency. In Vidales' (2010) case, her participants (majority were Mexican American immigrants) felt worthless and uneducated because they were not fluent in English. When interacting with the law (i.e. police officers), the feeling reached higher levels because their reports were not taken seriously. So in other words, "the inability to speak fluent English often prevents Latinas from communicating their needs and determining what services are available" (Vidales 2010: 536), which in turn further keeps them isolated in their new society. When isolation and alienation

begin to take form then these women are not able to obtain any knowledge on services that help escape their batterers.

If a Latina is an undocumented immigrant there is a very small probability that she will report abuse due to the fear of being deported back to her home country (Silva-Martínez and Morty 2011). This constant fear, and threat from the batterer, has a deep influence on seeking services and putting a stop to the violence (Vidales 2010). A lot of the time Latinas may be undocumented, but their batterers might be citizens therefore forcing them to stay in the abusive relationship because his legal status is needed in order to stay in the country (Silva-Martínez and Morty 2011). Often times, batterers might even pull the illegal card in order to scare their wives from contacting the police or escaping (Silva-Martínez and Morty 2011). For example, Silva-Martínez and Morty (2011) found that a "battered immigrant woman with her immigration status at stake might realize that seeking help, from the police for example, could put not only herself, but her partner and children, at risk of being deported as well" (227). Again this ties back to the cultural responsibility to the family and keeping it intact, but even if these women were not afraid of deportation the majority of services available for battered women are not available to them.

Since the early 1990's, the government has implemented extreme restrictions on immigration, especially on illegal immigration (Vidales 2010). This has a lot to deal with terrorism scares, but also because of the massive influx of undocumented immigrants from Mexico and Central America. With all these discouraging and discriminating immigration laws, undocumented battered Latinas face even more challenges from escaping violence. For instance, California established Proposition 187 that "proposed to recant the eligibility for illegal immigrants to obtain public health care, public school education and social services (Vidales

2010: 538). More recent examples are Arizona's immigration law that basically allows law enforcemental to racial profile and send Latinos to a precinct if they cannot prove citizenship. With environment conditions such as these it "creates a new obstruction for immigrant Latinas seeking help as more uncertainties cloud the situation they face attempting to extract themselves from violent relationships" (539). Conditions such as these would dissuade any immigrant from working with the law, but when dealing with legal status accepting the violence seems to be the only option.

Steps to Saving A Life

In Vidales' (2010) study she found that over 14% did not report their abusive partners because they were unaware of their legal rights as U.S. citizens. This was evident after the women discussed the Mexican law *abandono de hogar* (abandonment of the home) that gave the state the right to take a woman's children away if she left for a certain period of time (Vidales 2010). Now when tying this in with the confusion of legal rights in the United States, battered Mexican immigrants had no idea that a law such as this did not exist in this country. With this lack of knowledge on legal rights and the discriminatory views of agencies that do not want to help documented and undocumented battered Latina immigrants, there is no wonder why immigrant women crawl under a rock and become invisible. If society would try harder to help this community, which is in such dire need of services, then these women could discover that there are regions, such as the nonprofit agency, OLA, in Texas, that offer services that cater to their exact needs and worries.

Villalón (2010) conducted a two-year activist research project at a Texas nonprofit agency that she called the Organization for Legal Assistance (OLA). For 8 years (2000 to 2008), "OLA was the only organization in Central Texas that provided free legal services to

underserved immigrants, identified as individuals with earnings below 125% of the officially

defined poverty line (that is, annual earnings lower than $17,500 for a household of two in

2008), and at the same time, it was the only organization providing these services that was not

affiliated with a religious group" (Villalón 2010: 554). The program was open to all

underrepresented people who needed services, but from an outsider looking in the program

purely worked towards giving battered undocumented immigrants an option. Villalón (2010) was

able to intern for the battered immigrant department where she assisted women with programs

that "consisted providing legal services free of charge to low-income immigrants who qualified

as applicants for citizenship status under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the

Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (VTVPA)" (553). With these acts, women

can leave their abusive relationships and seek their own legal status.

Villalón (2010) notified the battered immigrant women that if they were "married to an

undocumented immigrant, or were separated but not divorced from previous spouses while

engaged in the abusive relationship, she can apply for a U-Visa through the Victims of

Trafficking and Violence Protection Act" (554). This visa allowed the survivors temporary legal

status for about 4 years in which they work in the United States for a year, then, after 3 years of

surveillance they can apply for permanent residence (Villalón 2010). This entire project was

extremely beneficial because it "contributed to both the gender violence and the structure and

agency debates by uncovering the ways in which Latina battered immigrants are affected by

violence and negotiate specific intersecting structural forces in their search for less oppressive

conditions (i.e., not to live in a violent relationship and not to depend on their abusive spouses

for their survival and attainment of citizenship status)" (Villalón 2010: 553). If more services

such as the OLA in Texas existed then more battered Latina immigrants would have the courage to leave their manipulative abusers and obtain their own rights.

It is imperative that human service workers takes the time and make the effort to learn about the story of the client and the rights available to her. Silva-Martínez and Murty (2011) proposed different strategies that researchers and social workers can utilize in order to better understand cultural values when infused with domestic violence. The levels were presented in a seashell shape to display that all are interrelated: "(1) understanding of the Latino culture, (2) understanding of the ethnic subgroup culture, (3) understanding of the community culture, and (4) understanding of the participant's internalize cultural values" (Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011: 230). These strategies are vital to "social work's ethical values of respect and self-determination and matches the social work principle of 'starting where the client is'" (Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011: 229) because "what violence means for a Latina woman depends on who she is in her many roles as a woman – as a Latina, as a mother, as an immigrant, as a Spanish-speaker, and as a worker, for example" (Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011: 229). By bringing "cultural and ethical competence" (Silva-Martínez and Murty 2011: 224) to the forefront of human service professionals, the community can begin to grow culturally and acknowledge the needs of all women. But the only way this cultural and ethical competence can be achieved is through the cooperation of the community, and that can only be reached if services are available.

Urban vs. Rural vs. Suburban

Urban Life for Battered Women

When one thinks of urban regions, the image of tall buildings and highly populated streets come to mind. One would also think that domestic violence services, those ranging from

police interference to therapy sessions, would be easily accessible, but unfortunately this is not the case. For women who live in urban areas, especially minority women, it is difficult to get law enforcement on their side in regards to reporting domestic violence due to the unstable neighborhoods in which they reside in (Miller 2008; DeKeserdy and Schwartz 2009). Now compared to suburban areas, women who live in urban areas tend to be of low socioeconomic background so they stick together in order to protect one another from neighborhood crimes (DeKeserdy and Schwartz 2009). This observation has been supported by a growing body of research that demonstrates urban neighbors having a higher proportion of helping their fellow neighbors out where there is "high levels of collective efficacy than in those with low levels" (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009). Sampson *et al.* (1997) defined collective efficacy as "social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good" (918).

When relating collective efficacy to urban regions it describes the neighborhoods compliance in intervening for the common good of the community, but this willingness to help depends on "mutual trust and solidarity among neighbors" (Sampson *et al.* 1997: 919). This is integral because "collective efficacy of residents is a critical means by which urban neighborhoods inhibit the occurrence of personal violence, without regard to the demographic composition of the population" (Sampson *et al.* 1997: 919). The reason why urban communities help one another out, especially minority women who have been abused, could be attributed to lack of aid from the law. For instance, in Miller's (2008) study of gendered violence on adolescent African American females, she discovered that when law enforcement were contacted for domestic disturbances it took officers over an hour to reach the scene of the call. This was attributed to the high crime rate in the housing projects in St. Louis and the large amount of shootouts between drug dealers and police officers (there were occasions where officers were

killed); therefore, there was a lack of trust between the community and law enforcement (Miller 2008). In situations such as these, it is understandable that people in an urban community would come together to fight against the problems in their neighborhood, but is that the case in the Latino community?

It is difficult to state whether or not urban Latinas, especially immigrants, are aided during their times of need against an abusive partner. This is a scary thought since Latina women are victims of abuse at a rate of 181 per 1,000 couples compared to 117 per 1,000 for Caucasian women and 166 per 1,000 for African American women (DeCasas 2003). These staggering statistics are attributed to risk factors (economic, social, and political) that put Latina women in greater danger of domestic violence. Again, low socioeconomic background can be attributed to the residence in urban regions. For example, in 2005 the Latino urban poor was at 28% (Ganong *et al.* 2009). In regards to comparing this statistic to rural and suburban areas: in the same year the poverty rate for rural Latinos was significantly less due to the majority of the rural poor being White (66.3%) and in 1990 the poverty rate for suburban Latinos was 40%, which has been increasing roughly 7% for the past couple decades (Ganong *et al.* 2009). Now to fast forward to recent statistics: in 2010 the poverty rate for the Latino population increased to 26.6 percent from 25.3 in 2009 and this equated to 13.2 million Latinos living in poverty in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

When people come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, the most affordable areas to live are housing projects in urban cities. This is where the majority of research has been done because these areas have a "large and longstanding Latino population" (Denham *et al.* 2007: 124) in which large samples can be tested for domestic violence. Since these communities tend to be large there are services available, such as the Safe Horizon agency in New York City that helps bring domestic violence victims from "crisis to confidence" (Safe Horizon 2011), all over

the city that victims/survivors can utilize. But, even though places such as Safe Horizon are available for the Latino community and they offer services for Spanish speakers, does not mean that many of the women will go against their families and cultural beliefs. The complexities of cultural and political barriers still dissuade this group of women from seeking out the services that will end up saving their lives.

Rural Life for Battered Women

DeKeseredy and Schwartz (2009) discovered that "rural crime, including male assaults on women, has ranked among the least studied social problems in criminology" (6) because women do not report the abuse since "the local police not only may be friends of their abusers, but also may refuse to arrest them on the grounds of this friendship" (9). There is a picturesque scene that is conveyed when society compares rural life to that of the urban setting. Since many would believe that those who live in urban cities witness more crimes because it is heavily populated with poor, low-income families, no one would expect rural areas to be the complete opposite. When people think of rural they associate everyone being friendly and living happily in a close knit community, but research has shown that this picturesque image of rural life is actually inaccurate (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009).

Studies on rural life have shown that "rural people are not necessarily more likely to help people they know, including relatives, neighbors, or friends" (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009: 6). The false image of a small, close-knit community protecting one another from harm is unfair to display because it makes it difficult for women who suffer from domestic abuse to obtain services. A fear might develop of not being believed because of the inaccurate image plastered all over the media about domestic violence not occurring in rural communities.

There is very little information on the variation prevalence rates when geographic location is taken into account when researching domestic violence in the Latino community. The research that is available, however, mostly focuses on women who live in urban areas. This raises the question of why there is little if any research reporting rates in rural and suburban areas? Or does the lack of research have to do with the outcome of battered Latinas being socially isolated and not having services nearby? Or is it related to the fact that the women are scared to report their abusive partner due to geographic location and the lack of aid that could rush to their sides if something were to go wrong? All these questions were all raised in Murdaugh *et al.* (2004) study on the needs and services in the Latino community in Southeastern United States.

Rural areas are generally in need of employees who are willing to work in strenuous conditions at low wages (Murdaugh *et al.* 2004). These types of jobs attract undocumented and documented immigrants therefore Murdaugh and her associates (2004) sought to find out the hardships that Southeastern Latinas face when dealing with domestic violence (i.e. barriers to services), the type of violence experienced, and the occurrence of the abuse. One would assume that in rural areas social isolation plays a major factor in Latina women, or any woman for that matter, deterring from seeking outside services to either stop the abuse or to escape it. In Murdaugh *et al.*'s (2004) analysis, the survey results displayed that the participants who lived in the Southeast found language as the biggest barrier in obtaining services, but the fifth barrier was transportation (lack thereof). Since the majority of the women in the study were immigrants who were not assimilated into U.S. western society, it is no surprise that the number one barrier was language, but it is surprising that transportation was not ranked in the top three since social isolation would appear to be the most important barrier to overcome in rural areas. Murdaugh *et*

al. (2004) should have focused a bit more attention on the issue of social isolation and how the lack of transportation availability affected the problem.

After questioning the issue regarding transportation availability, another question formed regarding support systems: where were the families of these battered women? Denham *et al.*'s (2007) study of battered Latinas in Eastern North Carolina found that of the 1,212 Latinas, African American, and White women, one-fourth (25%) of the Latina sample reported not having a support system (family or friend) that they could contact for help. In rural areas, keeping a partner away from family and friends is not a difficult task to overcome, especially if the family just emigrated. For instance, a battered Latina immigrant could have left all of her family and friends in her home country leaving her with nobody to turn to in the host country. This gives abusers the opportunity to "get away with battering when there are fewer support people to be aware of the abuse and intervene" (Denham *et al.* 2007: 133). This makes one wonder whether or not abusers purposely choose to reside in rural areas since large Latino communities are based in urban regions.

With the recent influx of immigrants in rural areas, "communities in the region might have fewer resources for the Latinos and a lower likelihood of having bilingual advocacy groups or bilingual staff at health, social service, or domestic violence agencies" (Denham *et al.* 2007: 124). Even though there has been an increase in population growth in rural areas (i.e. North Carolina experienced a 400% increase between 1990 and 2000 [Denham *et al*. 2007]), Latinos still make up a "relatively small proportion of the population, and because immigration to these communities has been relatively recent, there might not be as strong a Latino community to whom these women can turn for support" (Denham *et al*. 2007: 130). This is a huge problem when looking for human services options for these women because "immigration to these communities occurred recently so the social service infrastructure might be less prepared to

provide culturally and linguistically appropriate services, again increasing the vulnerability of this population" (Denham *et al.* 2007: 131). Another reason why the Latina population may be vulnerable is because there may be a lack of communication within the community on service availability specifically for immigrant communities.

Without proper education on how to work with this specific ethnic group, women will continue to deal with the abuse on their own. Denham and her associates (2007) suggested ways to help human service agencies better the programs available to Latina women: (1) availability of Spanish–language services, (2) utilize telephone interpreter services (i.e. crisis hotline numbers that have language lines), and (3) educational trainings on the cultural and legal standings that influence Latinas from seeking, and continuing, services. DeKeserdy and Schwartz (2009) explained that rural areas are not the friendly places that the media pegs them to be, therefore, "agencies that provide services to victims of domestic violence can both provide the instrumental support necessary to help socially isolated Latina women escape violence relationships and bring Latina women together to provide emotional support to each other" (Denham *et al.* 2007: 133) because in the end that is all they need.

Suburban Life of Battered Women

It was difficult to come across any data on suburban studies (other than studies finding increases in suburban housing not only determining the suburbanization of the Latino poor but rather job availability and affordable housing attracting this population [Howell and Timberlake n.a.: 25]) since this geographic area is somewhat similar to that of both the rural and urban regions it is safe to assume that Latinas who do live in the suburbs come across the same barriers in seeking domestic violence services. For instance, social isolation can be an obstacle that may be difficult to overcome since abusers purposely keep their partners disconnected from the outside world in order to maintain control. Also, when you incorporate the problem of domestic

violence being viewed as a private issue, neighbors are unlikely to get involved and help aid the woman in escaping the relationship especially if the bystander affect comes into play.

With the lack of research on Latina women who live in suburban regions and the barriers they might face, it makes one wonder as to why this particular region and ethnic group has not been studied. Is it because people who live in suburban regions embrace the policy of keeping their private life private? Is there not a sufficient Latino sample available in this region due to the population's high poverty rates? Or does social isolation again come into play?

Conclusion

There are many barriers that keep Latina women from seeking services that could eventually safe them from their abusive partners. Latinas grow up to be the best wife and mother because they are responsible to keeping families intact, but this is also the reason why these women feel compelled to stay in their abusive relationships. Familismo and collectivism are major cultural concepts that domestic violence advocates and social workers need to be understood prior to working with Latina victims. Cultural awareness will guide human services in the right direction in terms of starting where the client is as well as offering the proper support that will dissuade Latina clients from the agency. Other important aspects that human service agencies need to take into account when working with this particular group are socioeconomic status and geographic location. Depending on the client's socioeconomic status, and support system, she will either seek outside services or stay with her partner under the belief that he will change and her family will come to her rescue.

Research has shown that there is a lack of knowledge in regards to availability of free services including support groups that can give Latinas the strength and courage to stand up and obtain their freedom. This is especially true for documented and undocumented Latina immigrants because they do not know the legal rights for citizens or the services that can be

provided to those without papers. If human service workers make an effort to advocate in underprivileged and predominant Latino communities then more women will realize that their children and their welfare comes first. This group of women need to witness trust and support at its best and in order to do that people outside of their community need to take the initiative to show that they are not alone. But what is the best route to take when trying to take the first step in helping this particular community? Every aspect of a battered Latina life needs to be taken into account and examined that way human service workers as well as researchers can better understand the needs that should be addressed during the meetings. This now brings us to the next portion of the paper that introduces the steps and variables that this study aims to discover – does societal and geographic disadvantages affect the services available to Latina women and do these factors hinder their desires to utilize the help? By testing to see if these variables are statistically significant, the results can provide vital information to human service agencies on the importance of aiding Latina women in underprivileged and socially isolated regions.

Chapter Two: Methodology

This section of the paper describes the sample size of the two methodological approaches utilized in the study. A description of the procedure is given and the obstacles that developed along the way. This explains how participants were decided and how this paper took on both the qualitative and quantitative methods. A quick synopsis of the respondents profile is given as well as the explanation of the research instruments used and the ways in which the data was analyzed.

Sampling and Procedure

This thesis project takes on a different methodological approach. It encompassed both quantitative and qualitative methods where the results derived from two sources of data. The two sources were an interview with the domestic violence program director from Catholic Charities and a nationally representative survey of crime victims (the 2010 National Crime Victimization Survey). Although this form of methodology was unintended, it provided the following benefits: (1) a wider range of results to examine, (2) a deeper understanding between the variables ethnicity, geographic location, violent crime, and services sought from victim agencies, and (3) an opportunity to compare statistical data to the interviewees responses.

In order to examine whether socioeconomic status, geographic location, and ethnicity have an impact on a Latina's reluctance in seeking services, I designed a qualitative study where I planned on interviewing program directors at domestic violence organizations. Before contact could be made, I wrote a proposal for Union College's Human Subjects Review Board in order to receive approval to interview my potential participants. I needed to prove that my subjects would not suffer any physical, emotional, or mental harm and that their participation was voluntary. Once I was given permission to contact my subjects, I began researching potential agencies by using the *Queens Directory of Services…Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, Child Maltreatment & Elder Abuse*. This allowed me to locate domestic violence agencies that were in

all four New York City boroughs and also provided me with the appropriate directors to contact. I utilized the directory information to research the agencies on the Internet in hopes of finding websites that provided e-mail addresses and current employment information.

I contacted ten domestic violence agencies in the New York City region and one agency each from Schenectady and Montgomery Counties. Some of the organizations contacted were H.E.L.P Roads, Brides March, Safe Space, ALIANZA, Voices of Women Organizing Project (VOW), Sanctuary For Families, Violence Intervention Program, YWCA Northeastern NY, and Catholic Charities of Fulton and Montgomery Counties. The agencies I chose for this study were not randomly selected because specific credentials needed to be fulfilled in order to be included – the agencies had to offer services for Latinas and have bilingual service workers just in case clients did not speak English. The areas in which these agencies were located were Brooklyn, Manhattan, Queens, and the Bronx. The other two agencies contacted were from the Schenectady and Amsterdam regions. Unfortunately, I was unable to conduct my research the way I originally planned.

My initial contact process consisted of calling the agencies and speaking with either their executive director or the domestic violence program directors. If a phone conversation could not be completed, I left a voicemail with my contact information. For many of the agencies, I did not receive a phone call in return. The next route taken was e-mail correspondence in which I researched the appropriate people to contact. In the e-mails, I described the purpose of my thesis, its importance, what I wanted the results to achieve, and the type of participation needed. I explained that the data being collected was strictly statistics based and that I did not wish to obtain any information on clients' names or personal information. I notified each director that his or her clients would remain safe and confidentiality would be upheld. Unfortunately, that also led

to either unanswered messages or refusals. Out of the twelve agencies in which I contacted, I was able to complete only one interview with the Catholic Charities of Fulton and Montgomery's Amsterdam location. Before the interview could begin the domestic violence program director had to sign my participant consent form where she was notified on the purpose of my thesis, that no harm would come of her due to her participation, and that if she no longer wished to participate she was more than able to stop the interview at any point in time.

The interview consisted of 13 questions that addressed all three variables being studied (socioeconomic status, geography, and ethnicity). The interview was originally going to be done over the telephone since it was inconvenient for both the interviewee and myself to meet in person. Unfortunately, the program director felt that conducting a phone interview would also be an inconvenience therefore she requested having it done via e-mail. This portion of the study was discouraging because not only did I only receive one response back out of the twelve agencies contacted, but the program director at the Catholic Charities agency took roughly five days to get back in contact with me. At this point in time I began to lose hope and looked for alternative ways to test whether or not socioeconomic status, geographic location, and ethnicity influenced a Latina's reasoning for seeking services. While waiting to hear back from the program director, I researched national organizations that studied domestic violence. During this time, the program director of Catholic Charities contacted me and the interview was completed, but since the sample size (one agency) was too small it did not allow for a sufficient amount of data to be tested, therefore I had to execute another path to test my hypothesis – secondary analysis of survey data.

The survey that best fit the variables that I was testing was the 2010 National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVS). The investigators of this survey are the United States Department

of Justice, the Office of Justice Programs, and the Bureau of Justice Statistics. The purpose of the NCVS is to study four main objectives: "(1) to develop detailed information about the victims and consequences of crime, (2) to estimate the number and types of crimes not reported to the police, (3) to provide uniform measures of selected types of crimes, and (4) to permit comparisons over time and types of areas" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: ii). This survey focuses on two types of crime victimization – personal and property. For this study, only the "personal" crimes were analyzed because they included "rape and sexual attack, robbery, aggravated and simple assault…" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: ii). The survey consisted of four data file records (address, household, person, and incident), which held the specific variables that fit my study. The variables that worked best were located in two of the four data files (person and incident), but in order to run a test of statistical significance the two files had to be merged so all my variables could be in one data file.

Response Rate/ Respondent's Profiles

In 2010, the response rate for the NCVS surveyed 106,971 households and 167,444 individuals. The response rate for households was 92% and for persons interviewed it was 88%. Of the 167,444 people surveyed 64,994 were females. This constitutes 39% of the survey population. The 2010 NCVS is probably predominately female due to the likelihood that women are more likely to report crimes of victimization compared to men. When analyzing the frequency of the principal person's (both male and female) Hispanic origin 11.4% (n=9,359) responded that they were of Hispanic descent while 88.3% (n=72,350) stated that they were not (0.3% of the sample was coded "residue" which signified an incorrect or missing response). Of the number of cases that were female (n=64,994), 7,514 responded "yes" to being of Hispanic origin. This equated 11.6% of the female sample surveyed.

Due to the complications that developed in regards to sample size, socioeconomic status was no longer variable studied in the NCVS because the number of cases for this particular category was too small making it difficult to state a generalization on the larger population. Therefore, Hispanic origin and geographic location would be the main focal points. But for the purpose of this section, the profile of the respondents who were of Hispanic origin mostly resided in (S)MSA not city (suburban) areas (n=3,688). These Latinas represented 49.1% of the population whereas the Latinas who lived in the city of (S)MSA (urban) composed of 44% (n=3,308) and those who lived in not (S)MSA (rural) areas composed only 6.9% (n=518) of the sample. Later on in the study you will find a shift in the numbers after the violent crime variable is introduced demonstrating which areas Latina women suffered the most domestic violence.

Research Instrument

Interview

The interview administered to the domestic violence program director of Catholic Charities consisted of closed- and open-ended questions. The questions asked in the first half of the interview revolved around the demographics of the agency (i.e. highest population served, services offered, etc.). The second half focused on the Latina population served in the agency and whether culture, geography, and socioeconomic status impacted this particular group's reasoning for not seeking services. Overall, there are 2 demographic questions, 3 geographic questions, 2 familial/emotional support questions, 2 socioeconomic questions, 2 services offered questions, and 2 questions that are based on the clients' fears of reporting.

The two demographic questions allowed for an overview on the population served at the agency. These consisted of closed (yes or no) and open-ended responses. Examples include:

Question 1: What is the highest population or ethnic group served at your agency? Do these numbers stay roughly consistent? Why do you think one population is more likely to report or seek help over others?

Question 11: Does the agency address the needs of battered Latina immigrants? What percentage of your Latina clients are immigrants?

These two questions enabled the respondent to inform the interviewer on the highest population served at the agency as well as a deeper discussion of why one population seeks services in domestic violence where others do not. The second question focuses more on a specific group due to studies conducted by other researchers who discovered that Latina immigrants are least likely to seek out services than those who are citizens.

There were three questions that focused solely on geographic location. The format for these questions was closed- and open-ended. Examples include:

Question 3: In which geographic location do the majority of your Latina clients reside? Urban, Suburban, or Rural areas?

Question 4: Has geography been brought up as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship? Does this make the client more apt to stay with the partner?

Question 5: Have the Latina clients ever mentioned geographic location as an issue when seeking services? If so, which region has been disclosed as the biggest problem? As a human service professional, in what ways can geographical barriers be addressed?

The main goal of these questions was to see whether geography plays a role in keeping Latinas from seeking outside services and if so which areas present to be the biggest problems. This also allows the opportunity to examine if geography can be deemed a barrier for survivors/victims of domestic violence.

The next section of questions focused on support from familial relationships when deciding on whether or not to report an abusive partner and seek services. The same format applies to these two questions as well (closed- and open-ended questions). Examples include:

Question 7: Have familial concerns been raised in their reluctance to leave their abusive partners? If so, what are they? If she has children, do they play a role in her leaving or staying?

Question 8: Is lack of emotional support an issue?

In the Latino culture, it is important to keep private matters in the home therefore these questions aimed to examine the extent to which Latinas view familial relationships as a barrier to seeking services. The goal was to analyze if family members keep their loved ones out of harms way.

The next two questions revolved around socioeconomic status. These involved open-ended as well as closed-ended (yes or no) questions. Examples include:

Question 9: Do clients who seek help from your agency come from different socioeconomic backgrounds? Are some more common than others?

Question 10: Do the Latina clients fall commonly in the low-income class category? In your opinion, do you think this plays a factor in whether or not this specific group of women seeks outside help?

Research has shown that low-economic status plays a factor in Latinas reluctance in seeking services because their abusive partner handles all the monetary funds. These two questions examine the range of socioeconomic status presented at the agency as well as the most prominent status that appears most frequently. The second question (question 10) aims to discover the reasoning behind socioeconomic status straying Latinas away from leaving their abusive relationships.

The following two questions reflect on services offered at the agency. The first question is open-ended and the second consists of both closed- and open-ended questions (the responses for the closed-ended portion of the question consisted either *yes* or *no*). Examples include:

Question 2: What are the different kinds of service programs available to the clients?

Question 13: If possible, can you disclose whether the agency works with undocumented workers? How are deportation fears addressed? Does the agency provide

programs that aid undocumented Latina women in receiving citizenship status?

The service provided allows the interviewer to observe whether the programs offered are exhaustive, or in other words, if the programs met the needs of women from all ethnic backgrounds. By inquiring about undocumented battered Latina immigrants it enables the opportunity to examine if different agencies help Latinas not only escape a violent relationship, but in achieving status as well.

The last two questions focus on the clients' fears when seeking domestic violence services. The format for both questions is open-ended. The first part in question 6 is closed, but then asks for clarification for the yes or no response. Samples include:

Question 6: Do the Latina clients often appear hesitant when looking to utilize your services? If yes, why do you think that is?

Question 12: What are their biggest fears when deciding on whether to leave their abusive partners?

The purpose of these last two questions is to look past cultural expectations to the underlying beliefs that keep Latina women from leaving. These questions are vital to understanding the influences that cause Latina women to stay in abusive relationships. If these questions can be answered then steps can be taken to save them from dire situations.

National Crime Victimization Survey

When examining the NCVS data, the research instrument used was the longitudinal National Crime Victimization Survey of 2010. The sample was a stratified multistage cluster that utilized a "rotating panel" design in order to choose from a large sample size of households. This means that "households were randomly selected and all age-eligible individuals become part of the panel" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: 7). The data was weighted in order to count for any variances that might occur during the longitudinal study. The data was collected through a three-

year span where every 6 months interviews were conducted totaling seven interviews. The first and the fifth interview were done face-to-face and the rest of the interviews were done over the phone (some were facilitated by individuals while others were done by CAPI [computer-aided telephone interview]). Once the last interview was conducted, the household was removed from the "rotating panel" allowing for another unit to join the sample.

The three types of research instruments used to gather the data for the 2010 NCVS were the control card, screen questionnaire, and the crime incident report. The control card contains "the address of each sample unit and the basic household data, such as the names of all persons living there and their age, race, sex, marital status, education, etc" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: 8). The screening questionnaire has "a set of questions used to elicit reports of crimes against the household and its members" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: 8). The final instrument, the crime incident report, includes questions "used to gather details (e.g.: location of incident, relationship of victim to offender, extent of injuries and/or economic loss) on crimes reported in the Basic Screen Questionnaire" (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2010: 8).

In order to test if a statistical significance existed between the variables in this study, I focused on multiple variables that related to my study. I examined the statement that questioned Hispanic origin (V2041) where the values 01 and 02 represented yes or no (Hispanic, not Hispanic), respectively. The next variable examined was sex (V2036) with the values 01 and 02 signifying male or female, respectively. The variable V4245 questioned the respondents' relationship to the offender; this variable was recoded to *intpartner* to only include the relationships in which I was interested in studying. The values were originally broken down into two sections, relative and non-relative. The recode only included value 01 (spouse at time of incident), 02 (ex-spouse at time of incident), and 07 (boyfriend or girlfriend, ex-boyfriend or ex-

girlfriend). To examine whether services were sought out I examined the variable V4467, where the assigned values 01, 02, and 03 signified yes, no, and don't know, respectively. To examine geographical areas, I evaluated the responses for the V2129 variable, which focused on MSA status. The values assigned to this variable were 01, 02, and 03 where 01 represented Central city of an (S)MSA, 02 represented in (S)MSA but not in Central city, and 03 represented Not (S)MSA. Value 01 was correlated to urban areas, the second value was correlated to suburban areas, and the last value correlated to rural areas.

The last variable examined was V4529, which questioned the type of crime committed. The crimes included personal and property theft therefore a recode was done to focus solely on intimate partner violence; the new variable was called *violcrime*. The values ranged from 01 to 59, but for the purpose of this study only values 01 through 04 (completed rape, attempted rape, sexual attack with serious assault, and sexual attack with minor assault), 11 through 16 (completed aggravated assault with injury, completed aggravated assault with weapon, threatened assault with weapon, simple assault completed with injury, sexual assault without injury, and unwanted sexual contact without force), and 18 through 20 (verbal threat of rape, verbal threat of sexual assault, and verbal threat of assault) were assigned new values in the recode.

To test the data gathered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics research, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was utilized to run tests of statistical significance. In order to utilize the NCVS dataset, the sample size needed to be weighted to inflate the numbers in the study to represent the population as a whole.

Data Analysis

      After merging the accurate data files into one dataset, I used SPSS to run frequency and crosstabulation tables to analyze number of cases as well as to test the level of statistical significance between certain variable relationships. I used Chi-square at the 0.05 significance level as the reference point to state whether or not geographic location and ethnicity has a statistical impact on a Latinas ability to seek domestic violence services. In the following chapter, there will be a breakdown of the Latina women's responses to type of crime committed, relationship to offender, services sought, and reasons for not reporting. These responses, along with the responses from the interview with the program director of Catholic Charities and a previous NCVS study, were then utilized to find any correlation between geographic location and ethnicity.

Chapter Three: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there was a relationship between geographic location and domestic violence services sought by Latina women. The effects of the relationship to the offender and if domestic violence was experienced were studied as well. In order to study these effects a multivariate analysis was conducted through the use of chi-square crosstabulations.

Demographics of the Sample

Before presenting the results on whether the influences of geographic location and ethnicity have an impact on a Latina woman's choice of seeking domestic violence services, there are variables that need to be introduced that are important to this study. These variables are sex, crime, and offender relationship. These three demographic variables allowed for a deeper examination on whether geographic location plays a factor in seeking services. The control variables were sex, MSA status (geographic location), and Hispanic origin. When studying services sought, an extra control variable was added, violent crime. The dependent variable was help from crime victim agencies and the independent variable was relationship to offender (an intimate partner). When studying violence, the known offender was the dependent variable and crime was the independent variable.

Geographic Location As A Barrier

When dealing with questions regarding domestic violence it is difficult to study the factors that contribute to not only the violence, but also the differences in intimate partner violence occurrences among various ethnicities as well. During the interview with the Catholic Charities domestic violence program director she was asked if geography has been brought up as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship and her response was, "Yes. Women in rural areas

often have a difficult time finding transportation to seek services." After this response was made

a comparison was examined between the program directors response to the statistical data done

between 1993 and 1998 by the NCVS on intimate partner violence victims living in different

areas. The areas studied were *home owned*, *home rented*, *urban*, *suburban*, and *rural* and were

correlated against the rate of nonlethal violence per 1,000 females and males (NCVS 1998). For

the purpose of this study, only the results for the females were observed. For the rate of nonlethal

intimate partner violence per 1,000 females who resided in urban, suburban, and rural areas was

9.5%, 7.8%, and 8.1%, respectively. According to the NVCS (1998), "among females, intimate

partner violence rates differ at the 95%-confidence level between urban and suburban areas and

at the 90%-confidence level between urban and rural areas" (no page number was given). Even

though these results are statistically significant in this particular survey, it did not break down the

results by ethnicity so while suggestive of support for my hypothesis, it is not definitive. The rest

of this chapter will present results on violence that Latina women suffered by intimate partners

who resided in three different regions (urban, suburban, and rural) during the time of the abuse.

Later on, services sought, coded as *help from victim agencies*, was tested alongside the variables

violent crime and *intimate partner*. But first, the results for *violent crime* and *intimate partner* are

discussed.

Victimization and Geography

When studying the relationship between *violent crime* and *intimate partner* in the 2010

NCVS, the control variables sex, MSA status, and Hispanic origin were used in order to observe

whether these factors have an influence on domestic violence. Table 1 below attempts to

demonstrate how one factor, geographic location, can affect whether intimate partner violence

occurs across ethnicity boundaries. The first geographic location examined in comparison to

ethnicity was the *City of (S)MSA*; this was equated to urban areas.

Table 1: The Rate Intimate Partner Violence by Ethnicity and Geographical Location (%)

	Latina	Non-Latina	Total
Urban	9.42*	16.40	15.09
Suburban	14.86*	10.25	10.93
Rural	45.98	12.19	13.14
Total	13.44	12.40	12.55

*Results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level where χ^2 critical value = 3.841

The first observation focused on the Latinas who experienced intimate partner violence (the offender was a current spouse, ex-spouse current boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend [value 1]). The table showed that among urban women, the Latina participants had lower rates of intimate partner violence than non-Latina participants (9% of urban Latinas experienced intimate partner violence and 16% of non-Latinas experienced violence). This means that urban non-Latinas have a higher risk of intimate partner violence than Latinas. When analyzing the column percentages, overall, urban women were at higher risk of intimate partner violence than suburban and rural participants with a total of 15% of urban women stating that they experienced intimate partner violence. When evaluating statistical significance between sex, MSA status, Hispanic origin, intimate partner, and violent crime the chi-square value showed that this relationship was statistically significant at the 0.05 level (χ^2 = 1330, p=.000), chance, experiencing domestic violence from an intimate partner is less than 5 times out of 100. Therefore, I am 95% sure that a relationship does exist.

The relatively large difference between urban results could be attributed to the fact that the number of Latinas who lived in urban regions was smaller than those of the non-Latinas or that the Latina participants were biased when answering the question in fear that their intimate

partner would get into trouble. Yet, the difference could also be attributed to cultural influences and expectations (such as the value of marriage and having to keep the family together) that Latina women must face to keep from not only disappointing their families, but to stay economically secure as well. They could fear the possibility of poverty therefore keeping the abuse private.

Evidence of this fear was exhibited in the interview with the domestic violence program director at the Catholic Charities organization. When she was questioned if her Latina clients appeared hesitant when looking to utilize the agency's services she stated, "Yes. They are taught not to tell 'agencies' what happens at home. They consider that 'snitching." When asked a follow-up question regarding familial relationships and if they cause reluctance in leaving abusive partners the program director stated, "Yes. They don't want to break up the family, especially if she grew up without her father." This demonstrates that without emotional support from family members it causes a moral dilemma for the victim influencing her decision towards the unsafe choice – staying in the abusive relationship to keep the family together. To see this evaluation in number form: in 1993 the Bureau of Justice Statistics conducted a longitudinal study (1993-1998) with the National Crime Victimization Survey that focused on the trends of intimate partner victimization. The survey reported the number and percentage of victims who contacted the abuse to the police, by race and ethnicity (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000). The results for the female Hispanic group displayed that 65% (n=50,650) reported abuse. The overall number of Latina victims was n=78,390, which means that the other 35% of this sample did not report intimate partner violence.

The next geographic region under observation was (S)MSA not city, which signified suburban areas. These results showed that approximately 15% (n=19,025) of Latinas who resided in a suburban area experienced a violent crime by a current or ex-intimate partner. When

examining the results from the non-Latina group, of those who reported experiencing violence by their current or ex partner, 10% (n=75,947) lived in suburbia. These results signify that suburban Latinas are at higher risk of intimate partner violence than suburban non-Latinas. Overall, of the females from this sample who responded "yes" to experiencing domestic violence by an intimate partner, 11% (n=94,972) were located in suburban regions. After running the chi-square test of significance, the relationship was found to be statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($\chi^2 =$ 8,647.017, p=.000).

For the Latinas who resided in rural areas, roughly 46% (n=2,797) experienced domestic violence by their intimate partner displaying that they are more at risk of intimate partner violence from the Latinas who reside in urban or suburban areas. When examining the non-Latina participants who experienced violence from their partners, 12% (n=25,498) resided in rural areas during the time of the survey. Since the non-Latina sample size was greater than the Latina group, it was evident that a greater number of non-Latinas lived in rural areas, as in the other geographic locations examined in this study. This could mean that an unequal number of Latinas participated in the survey or chose not to respond to the question. What ever the case was, every Latina participant in this particular area stated that they experienced domestic violence. However, despite the fact that rural Latinas have higher rates of intimate partner violence, it is not certain that there was a difference between rural Latinas and non-Latinas in riskiness due to the Latina sample size being relatively smaller.

As for whether or not the relationship between violent crime and the intimate partner is statistically significant in rural regions, unfortunately could not be determined. When the test of significance was conducted, the χ^2 value for *Not (S)MSA* appeared as .r which bears no numerical meaning; this could probably be attributed to missing data files or a miscalculation made by the

survey, but the reasoning was still unclear. Therefore, a test of significance could not be

evaluated for the rural Latinas.

When evaluating the total percentage of Latinas who experienced domestic violence by

an intimate partner through the study of geographic location, violent crimes committed were

highest for them than for the non-Latina participants. The Latina participants totaled

approximately 13% (n=30,702) of the female sample that experienced intimate partner violence

by geographic location. The statistics for the non-Latina participants was roughly 12%

(n=168,573). Even though the number of cases was larger for the non-Latina group, the Latina

participants had a larger percentage of their sample that fell victim to intimate partner violence.

However, overall those who experienced domestic violence by an intimate partner by geographic

location was 12 percent. Now lets take a look at the number of Latina participants who sought

out domestic violence services from agencies.

Help From Domestic Violence Agencies

There are a number services available to all women no matter their ethnicity. For

example, the Catholic Charities organization offers crisis intervention and safety planning, 24-

hour hotline service, legal advocacy, shelter/safe occupancy, support group, and transportation to

Department of Social Services (DSS) and court. They also have bilingual, bicultural staffing for

specific groups such as immigrants. But with all these available services, do women, specifically

Latina women, actually take advantage of the help?

In order to test whether or not the relationship between ethnicity and geographic location

influenced the Latina participants' decision on seeking help from victim agencies, a multivariate

analysis was conducted. In order to keep the study consistent the same control variables (sex,

MSA status, and Hispanic origin) used in the examination of known offender and violent crime

was also administered in the help from victim agencies test. However, there was a difference for

this study because the variable *violent crime* was added as a control variable in the examination

between *help from victim agencies* and *intimate partner*. The resulting data can be found in

Table 2 below.

Table 2: The Rate Survivors of Intimate Partner Services Who Sought Services by Ethnicity and Geographic Location (%)

	Latina	Non-Latina	Total
Urban	3.69*	3.53	3.56
Suburban	4.89*	2.40	2.78
Rural	0.00*	6.61	6.26
Total	4.18	3.45	3.55

*Results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level where χ^2 critical value = 3.841

The first analysis composed of Latina women who resided in urban areas (*city of MSA*),

who experienced domestic violence by an intimate partner, and who sought help from victim

agencies. The results showed that approximately 3.7% (n=1,470) and 3.5% (n=7,997),

respectively, of the Latinas and non-Latinas living in urban areas who experienced intimate

partner violence by an intimate partner contacted victim agencies for aid. Overall, 3.6% of

women who experienced intimate partner violence sought services. What this means is that more

than 96% of women who experienced domestic violence but did not contact agencies. Urban

Latina women in the sample were slightly more likely than their non-Latina counterparts to seek

help (the reason for this difference will be questioned in the final chapter). The relationship

between geographic location and services sought was statistically significant so I am 95%

confident that the relationship between urban Latina dwellers that have experienced domestic

violence by an intimate partner and sought services from victim agencies existed.

The next analysis consisted of Latinas who resided in suburban areas (*MSA not city*) that fell victim to domestic violence by an intimate partner and sought help from victim agencies. From this group of suburban Latinas who experienced domestic violence from their intimate partner, 5% (3,055) contacted victim agencies and 95% (n=19,034) did not seek help. As for the non-Latina group who were victims of domestic violence by their partner, roughly 2% (n=8,536) contacted victim agencies for their services. When evaluating the total percentage of suburban Latinas and non-Latinas suffering from domestic violence just 3% fell into the seeking help category. As for the final examination of geographic location and services sought, the results for the rural Latinas once again presented interesting data. According to the survey responses, none of the rural Latinas who experienced domestic violence by an intimate partner sought help from victim agencies (100% n=2,797). This totaled to 46% (n=2,797) of rural Latinas within the *help from victim agencies* category. Now, on the other hand, 7% (n=7,332) of the non-Latinas who experienced domestic violence by their partner contacted agencies for help resided in rural locations. The total percentage for both Latina and non-Latina rural residents who requested help was roughly 6 percent.

When evaluating the total percentage of Latinas who resided in urban, suburban, and rural areas who experienced domestic violence by their intimate partner and sought help from victim agencies the results showed that 4% asked for help and 3% of the non-Latinas, who resided in the same areas, sought agency help.

Conclusion

In conclusion, without taking ethnicity into account, 13% (n=199,275) of women who resided in urban, suburban, or rural areas experienced domestic violence from an intimate partner. Broken down by ethnicity, 13% (n=30,702) of Latinas experienced violence from an intimate offender whereas 12% (n=168,573) of the non-Latinas fell victim to intimate partner

violence. Even though the cases are larger for the non-Latina group, the results between the two categories displayed that a greater percentage of Latinas experienced domestic violence by an intimate partner in these geographic regions compared to non-Latinas. When examining the breakdown within the ethnicity category, rural Latinas were at a higher risk of intimate partner violence at 46% with suburban Latinas being the second highest at 15% and urban Latinas having the lowest risk of intimate partner violence at 9 percent. When analyzing the total percentages for the geographic location most at risk of intimate partner violence, urban women had a higher rate with 15% compared to the risk of rural (13%) and suburban (11%) women. However, a generalization could not be made as to whether a relationship existed between violent crime and known offender for rural Latinas because chi-square results did not compute a numerical value.

A total of 3.5% (n=28,390) of the female participants who experienced domestic violence from an intimate offender actually contacted victim agencies. With the introduction of ethnicity, 3.7% (n=4,525) of the urban Latina sample sought help whereas only 3.5% (n=23,865) of the non-Latinas contacted agencies. For the suburban group, Latinas (4.9%) were more likely to contact victim agencies than non-Latinas (2.4%). As for the rural group, the non-Latina (6.6%) survivors were more likely to contact victim agencies than the Latina (0.0%) survivors. When analyzing within the same ethnic group, among Latinas those residing in suburban areas were most likely to contact victim agencies with urban Latinas being second most and rural Latinas being the least likely to seek help. The reverse was true for the non-Latina survivors with rural survivors being the most likely to seek help and the urban survivors being the least.

The results from this multivariate analysis (rate of Latinas who sought help from victim agencies by geographic location) were similar to the violence experienced analysis where a greater percentage of Latinas sought help from victim agencies despite the non-Latina sample

having a larger number of participants (the multivariate test for the rate of Latinas who experienced intimate partner violence by geographic location resulted in higher percentages of experienced violence for Latinas than non-Latinas despite the large difference in number of cases). This realization was different from the results obtained from other researchers. Many found that Latinas are less likely to seek outside help whereas this study showed that a greater percentage of Latinas contacted victim agencies in comparison to non-Latinas. There could be many reasons for this difference in data results (such as an unequal number of cases between the Latina and non-Latina groups) therefore more research should be conducted.

To reiterate the important aspects of the findings, results demonstrated that there was a statistical significance between the relationships with Hispanic origin, geographic location, and experienced domestic violence and also in geographic location, Hispanic origin, and agency help. This information signified that in order to help Latinas, geographic location needs to be factored in because, according to the Catholic Charities domestic violence program director, geography can be deemed a barrier in leaving an abusive relationship, especially for women leaving in rural areas due to lack of transportation and knowledge on service programs. The interviewee also proposed that these problems could be addressed if better publicity was made and the women knew that agencies could supply transportation.

This chapter reviews the results from the interview and the multivariate analysis of the 2010 National Victimization Survey. It also goes into a deeper examination of the factors that might have affected the results of the study and the possible connotations behind them. This section will also address limitations found in the methodological process. The conclusion will then consist of suggestions for further research.

Summary of Research Question

The purpose of this study was to observe whether geographic location had an impact on a Latina woman's decision on seeking help from violent crime agencies when the offender was an intimate partner. According to my informant, this relationship was important to examine because culture and ethnicity can negatively influence a victim's decision on obtaining services from agencies if she does not want to bring shame to her family. It is difficult to imagine disappointing family members by inviting strangers into personal affairs therefore it is imperative that social agencies are knowledgeable about the values and beliefs that different ethnicities follow. When these factors are taken into consideration, and then geographic location is introduced into the equation, a service worker must begin to question whether residence plays a role in violent, sexual abuse in which forms a barrier to help.

Intimate partner violence, or commonly referred to as domestic violence, has been studied since before the feminist movement began, but little research has been conducted on Latina women and whether geographic location hindered their decisions to contact victim agencies. The aim of this paper was to determine whether a relationship existed between ethnicity, geographic location, services sought, and domestic violence by interviewing a

domestic violence agency that works with Latina clients (qualitative approach) and through the analysis of a national crime victimization survey (quantitative approach).

Addressing the concerns that Latina women face when obtaining victim agency services allows the opportunity for human service workers to go through proper training skills that can help them address the needs of this specific group of women. This paper also addressed how culture plays a factor in the Latina population and how it persuades them to stay in their abusive relationships. The results showed that barriers such as ethnicity and geography affect Latina women's decision on seeking help from victim agencies if their offender was an intimate partner.

Summary of Qualitative and Quantitative Results

Interview Results

Research has shown that culture plays a vital role in prevalence rates for Latina women who fall victim to domestic violence (Ferguson 2011: 228). Culture explains how an individual or group interacts not only with his or her own people, but with those outside their culturally group as well. As aforementioned in an earlier chapter, "given the unique history of Latinos in this country, and the structural disadvantage they have experienced, race and ethnicity, combined with minority group status, affects almost all aspects of social and family life, including how one experiences violence (Frias and Angel 2005: 553). Based on this history, one could interpret these disadvantages as a factor towards why minority groups might feel marginalized. With this feeling comes the reasoning behind why ethnic groups turn towards their culture and their own for guidance. The interview with the domestic violence program director of Catholic Charities helped solidify these findings.

Although the largest population served at the informant's agency was that of the Non-Hispanic group, the agency did, however, interact with Latina clients. When questioned if the

population majority ever shifts or remains constant, she stated that this majority remains constant

due to cultural differences despite the vast array of services that can be provided to all ethnic

groups. It would seem that the agency was aware of the disadvantages that this specific group

faced because they hire human service workers who are not only bilingual but bicultural as well.

The reason for this being is due to the fact that Latina women, from what the informant has

witnessed, are hesitant on reaching out to victim agencies because they are not allowed to

disclose information of the situations that occur within the home to any outsider. If they do reach

out to an agency this would be considered snitching and causing a rift in the home and this would

be deemed unacceptable since the Latino culture consists of holding the family in high regard as

well as holding onto close relationships (Klevens *et al*. 2007).

      The Catholic Charities informant disclosed that without emotional support from the

family, it causes the victim to stay in her abusive relationship. The factors that contributed to her

staying with her abuser was keeping the family together (focused mostly around allowing the

children to have their father especially if she herself did not have a relationship with hers) and

fear of her intimate partner getting in trouble with the law. Sometimes, if the survivor seeks help,

the fear that develops after "snitching" can be attributed to an anxiety of the abuser possibly

finding her and committing more violent crimes against her. This fear is supported by previous

research, which has shown that prevalence rates are high within in this ethnic group when power

and possessiveness were challenged (Klevens 2007).

      When the interview turned towards the topic of geographic location, the majority of the

Latinas who sought out help from the Catholic Charities agency were from the surrounding

areas, so they were urban dwellers therefore for this particular group geographical barriers were

not a problem since the agency was in a convenient location. However, these observations did

not coincide with the statistics described in the literature review. The studies mentioned in earlier portion of this paper found that since Latina women did not have faith in law enforcement that the Latina women either chose to accept help from their neighbors (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2009; Sampson *et al*. 1997) or face the abuse alone so they did not disappoint their families and go against their cultural beliefs. The responses from the informant regarding urban Latina dwellers coincided directly with my hypothesis that those in city areas were more likely to utilize help services over the Latina domestic violence victims who resided in other geographical regions whereas the results from previous studies did not.

The Latina women they were least likely to come into contact with were those who resided in rural areas. According to the program director, the women who lived in this area found the location of their home to be a barrier because they could not afford nor find transportation to the agency. Based on past research, this group found the lack of transportation as one of the biggest barriers in obtaining services (Murdaugh *et al*. 2004), which correlates with the barriers that the informant discussed about during the interview. She also mentioned lack of emotional support being a factor in Latina women not reaching out to the agency, which can easily happen since abusive intimate partners can keep victims away from family and friends while residing in an isolated area. This is a major problem for the Latina community because family is a major cultural aspect in their lives and without the proper support to fight for their survival then escaping the abuse becomes a difficult task.

In the interview, the program director did not touch upon Latina clients who lived in suburban areas. This is largely due to the fact that the agency is considered located in a city surrounded by a rural region. Because of this there were not many conclusions that could be made about this particular group of Latina women, therefore generalizations could only be made

from the multivariate analysis examination. The lack of information presented by the informant also appeared during my research process. There was very little data found on suburban Latinas who experienced intimate partner violence. However, the 2000 National Crime Victimization Survey conducted a national longitudinal survey that showed that between 1993 and 1998, 7.8 per 1,000 females (this included women from all backgrounds not Latinas specifically) experienced intimate partner violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000). Based on previous research, I concluded that Latinas who resided in urban and rural areas would exhibit higher rates of domestic violence compared to suburban Latinas due to external factors such as community and resources (economic status), and the results found by the NCVS in 2000 supported this belief since 9.5 per 1,000 women who lived in urban areas suffered from violence and 8.1 per 1,000 women who lived in rural areas were abused (Bureau of Justice Statistics 2000).

National Crime Victimization Survey Results

By examining the NCVS (2010), a quantitative analysis was conducted in order to discover whether a relationship existed between geographic location, ethnicity, domestic violence, and seeking agency help. The results showed that when evaluating the relationship between domestic violence and the offender being an intimate partner, it was statistically significant when ethnicity, geographic location, and gender were controlled. Gender was considered a control variable in order to focus on the female sample because only Latina women were being examined. With the introduction of geographic location, the Latina women who experienced intimate partner violence who resided in urban, suburban, and rural areas were roughly 9%, 15%, and 46%, respectively. Each of those percentages, minus the rural Latinas, allowed the opportunity to offer a population generalization that this relationship was significant. This means that geographic location plays a factor in whether Latinas experience intimate partner violence. Unfortunately, a generalization could not be made for rural Latinas because the

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chi-square results do not produce a numerical value, therefore, a statement could not be made about whether or not residing in rural areas was a factor on Latina women experiencing intimate partner violence by her spouse, ex-spouse, boyfriend, or ex-boyfriend.

Since geographic location has an impact on the occurrence of domestic violence, the next question was whether it also had an affect on Latina women's decision to seek out services from victim agencies. The informant verified that culture plays a major factor in staying in an abusive relationship because family is held at such high regard, but since there were Latinas in the 2010 NCVS who experienced violence by an intimate partner (those living in rural areas experiencing domestic violence the most) the percentage differed in services sought depending on their residence. The results showed that 4% of urban Latinas sought help from intimate partner services, 5% of suburban Latinas sought help, and 0% of rural Latinas in the sample sought help from services.

This information presented that the majority of Latinas who actually reached out to victim crime agencies were those who were located in urban regions. The highest percentage landing in the urban category was not surprising since this geographic area has greater access to transportation as well as having the convenience of contacting close friends, family, or neighbors who live in locations that are nearby. Since the chi-square results came back statistically significant for all three regions studied this means that geographic location has an impact on a Latina woman's decision to seek help from intimate partner services. It was, however, surprising to find that with the 0% of rural Latinas who did not seek help from agencies that a relationship existed between geographic location and services sought. This might be due to the fact that the data needed to be weighted in order to increase the representative sample size.

Methodological Limitations

Sampling Size

This study faced a few complications that limited the opportunity of obtaining more data on Latina women who experienced intimate partner violence while residing in different geographical regions. Since it was difficult to obtain interviews with agencies that cater to domestic violence victims, the sampling size for the qualitative portion of the research was small. This hindered any possibility of providing generalized statements on geography affecting this particularly ethnic groups decision on staying within an abusive relationship and not seeking help from agencies. Although taking on this research question in both the qualitative and quantitative approach allowed for a broader view of the topic, the sample, however, did not allow for a diverse group of agencies present in this thesis. If more than one interview had been conducted, and completed, then a larger set of data would have been collected which would have allowed for an analysis on the most dominant region in which Latinas set up residence and whether the data found in Chapter One correlated with the findings.

When it came time to examine the 2010 National Crime Victimization Survey, the original numbers studied were relatively small, especially when evaluating socioeconomic status (the sample size for this variable could not be studied because the numbers would not have been an accurate size to examine therefore could not be added to study whether socioeconomic status impacted this ethnic groups exposure to experiencing domestic violence as well as seeking help from agencies). It made it difficult to state whether or not there would be a possibility of running a test of significance on the independent, dependent, and control variables. Due to this limitation, the variables had to be weighted because the inflated numbers would be representative of the population as a whole. With this inflation the data became relatively large for the non-Latina group compared to that of the Latina category. This discrepancy with the sample size could have

played a factor in the rural Latina participants who experienced domestic violence by an intimate partner did not compute a chi-square value. Also, with the limitation of the original sample size, the weighted numbers could also have distorted the percentages computed by SPSS. In other words, the chi-square results might not have resulted in statistical significance if the original sample size had been used.

Interview and Question Format

The interview presented an issue in regards to the formatting of the questions as well as the interview process itself. The initial goal was to visit the agency and conduct a face-to-face interview, but due to lack of transportation opportunities it could not be done. The next option was to conduct a phone interview, which became difficult because the informant could not find a viable time in her schedule to speak with me. This resulted in the interview being done via e-mail, which did not allow me to assess the informant nor allow the opportunity to ask follow-up questions to her responses. Had a face-to-face or phone interview been able to take place then more information, and statistics, would have been able to be collected. Also, I was unable to go into elaborate details on the significance of the questions due to the scheduling conflicts that both the informant and myself faced. Some of the responses could not be examined because she did not fully understand the context of the question.

After the interview was completed, I realized that the interview questions should have been formatted differently. For instance, some of the questions, such as geographic location being expressed as a barrier to leaving an abusive partner, had multiple sub questions that could have been asked on their own. This could have attributed to the informants confusion on that question and a few questions with the similar format. Another question limitation was the type of questions presented. There should have been a greater number of open-ended questions since the

interview was conducted via e-mail. The interview consisted of close-ended questions (under the pretense that the interview was going to be done face-to-face) which resulted in one word responses which could not be asked to be further elaborated since I was not able to ask follow-up questions to the statements that needed further explanation.

Practical Implications of the Study

With both the interview and the multivariate analysis of the 2010 NCVS, the results of this study implicate that geographic location impacts the Latina population decisions on escaping a violent intimate partner and becoming a client at a victim agency. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the disadvantages Latina women face when it comes to overcoming their fear of going against their culture and being free from their abusive partner. By bringing their challenges to the forefront, agencies can realize how imperative it is to hire and train human service workers on the best strategies (such as understanding the importance of one's culture and using the norms to weigh out the cons of staying in the abusive relationship) to utilize when working with diverse populations. Once these strategies are taught then the service worker can be objective during, for instance, the intake process and offer the Latina woman options rather than offering a single way out. For example, the service worker could explain the cons of staying with her abusive intimate partner and the ways in which she can overcome her fear of disappointing her family by breaking up the home and turning to an "outsider" for help.

It is difficult to take an objective approach on a stance that you know is immoral and dehumanizing. With that being said, by evaluating, and weighing out, the variables that negatively affect a Latina woman's choice to stay with her abusive partner, then the proper steps can be taken in hopes of keeping her safe. This may entail making special arrangements for transportation if the client has difficulty getting to the agency. By knowing that Latina women

viewed geographic location as a barrier to seeking services from crime victim agencies, agencies can find ways to implement new programs that will work in the favor of these women. Also, by evaluating the percentage of Latinas that experienced violence from an intimate partner and examining its frequency within certain geographical regions, agencies that do not have bilingual staff or bicultural programs could then implement such services in order to cater to this ethnic group.

Future Research

Due to the limitations presented earlier in this chapter, I would suggest that other scholars should further examine this topic. In Chapter One, I discussed there being very little statistics on Latinas who experience intimate partner violence and the rates of occurrence by geographic regions. With more time, and a larger sample size, a more detailed and thorough examination could be done on the variables tested in this study. Another way to study if geography plays a factor in experiencing domestic violence and seeking help from intimate partner agencies can be interviewing Latina women and asking them directly about the barriers they faced while living with their abusive partner. This could allow for the opportunity to learn about other barriers that this group of women face other than cultural norms and geography. A comparative study could also be conducted through an ethnographic approach where the researcher can participate in field work in order to obtain a greater knowledge on the hardships that Latina women face after surviving domestic violence (this could also allow for the study of Latina immigrants and their concerns of seeking help from agencies).

Another suggestion for further research could be conducting the same study, but adding socioeconomic status has another variable. If a woman is residing in low-income household and is either unemployed or works at a minimum wage job, then she could feel dissuaded from

seeking help because not only would she not have the money to get to the agency, but she might also be under the assumption that the services are not free. If this research was conducted with this additional variable then this examination could possibly lead to community outreach programs for Latina women who could not travel to the agencies. This would allow service workers to bring awareness to the community on the opportunities available for Latina victims of intimate partner violence and the steps to take in starting a new life as a free and independent woman because these results are essential in notifying victim agencies on the importance of supporting Latina women in underprivileged and socially isolated regions.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Informed Consent Form

Hello, my name is Jennifer Rodriguez, class of 2012, and I am currently a Sociology major at Union College. I am conducting a research project for my thesis that involves domestic violence in the Latino community. I will reach out to domestic violence agencies in the New York City, Queens, Brooklyn, Bronx, and Schenectady areas in order to gather statistics on the Latino population that is served at each agency. From gathering a profile on this specific population a test of significance will be utilized in order to state whether there is a statistically significant relationship between socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and geographic location in the availability of resources to Latina women. No psychological or physical harm will be brought to any of the participants during the interview.

If you do not wish to continue to participate in my thesis project you can return this consent form back to me and your agency will not be included in the study. If you do wish to be part of my study, please sign at the bottom of this page.

Again, if at any point you no longer wish to participate you are free to disclose this information and the interview I will immediately stop.

Thank you for your time.

Jennifer Rodriguez '12

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____

Name of Researcher   Date

Appendix B – Interview Questions

1. What is the highest population or ethnic group served at your agency? Do these numbers stay roughly consistent? Why do you think one population is more likely to report or seek help over others?
2. What are the different kinds of service programs available to the clients?
3. In which geographic location do the majority of your Latina clients reside? Urban, Suburban, or Rural areas?
4. Has geography been brought up as a barrier to leaving an abusive relationship? Does this make the client more apt to stay with the partner?
5. Have the Latina clients ever mentioned geographic location as an issue when seeking services? If so, which region has been disclosed as the biggest problem? As a human service professional, in what ways can geographical barriers be addressed?
6. Do the Latina clients often appear hesitant when looking to utilize your services? If yes, why do you think that is?
7. Have familial concerns been raised in their reluctance to leave their abusive partners? If so, what are they? If she has children, do they play a role in her leaving or staying?
8. Is lack of emotional support an issue?
9. Do clients who seek help from your agency come from different socioeconomic backgrounds? Are some more common than others?
10. Do the Latina clients fall commonly in the low-income class category? In your opinion, do you think this plays a factor in whether or not this specific group of women seeks outside help?
11. Does the agency address the needs of battered Latina immigrants? What percentage of your Latina clients are immigrants?
12. What are their biggest fears when deciding on whether to leave their abusive partners?
13. If possible, can you disclose whether the agency works with undocumented workers? How are deportation fears addressed? Does the agency provide programs that aid undocumented Latina women in receiving citizenship status?