Domestic violence in Iowa: Exploring the experiences of Latinas with organizational response

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Domestic violence in Iowa: Exploring the experiences of Latinas with organizational response

by

Angelica Reina

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE

Major: Interdisciplinary Graduate Studies (Social Sciences)
Program of Study Committee:
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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
2010

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all Latinas who are victims of domestic violence.
For me you are more than victims, you are heroes.
To my wonderful parents Fabio Reina and Elena Paez, my brother Fabio Jose and my sister Paola
And to my friends and professors who helped me and supported me in any respect during the completion of my thesis project.
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AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I owe my deepest gratitude to Dr. Brenda Lohman and Dr. Marta Maldonado who were the ideal co-major professors and thesis supervisors. Their advice, insightful criticisms, and encouragement supported the writing of this thesis in numerous ways. I would also like to thank Dr. Anastasia Prokos and Dr. Diane Price Herndl whose committed support of this thesis was greatly needed and sincerely appreciated.
ABSTRACT

This feminist narrative study was designed to explore Latina victims’ experiences and perceptions of current organizational and advocacy responses to domestic violence interventions. Understanding how cultural and social factors influence Latina victims’ experiences with partner abuse is essential for the development of interventions and policies culturally appropriate to meet their particular needs. The primary data-collection method for this study was in-depth interviews, with a focus group used as a supportive method. The purposefully selected sample was composed of 10 Latina victims of partner abuse who had previously contacted an anti-violence organization in Iowa and had used its services. The data were coded and organized according to the research questions. Analysis and interpretation of results were organized by way of three categories based on the study’s literature review and theoretical framework: (a) barriers influencing immigrant Latina victims’ help-seeking behaviors, (b) immigrant Latina victims’ perceptions about and experiences with advocacy services, (c) perceptions of immigrant Latina victims about how advocacy services need to change so victims of domestic violence can satisfy their full range of needs. Findings demonstrate immigration status, fear of partner and the inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms, as major barriers keeping them from seeking help from formal advocacy agencies. Other impediments included the lack of knowledge of resources, lack of language proficiency in mainstream institutions, isolation and feelings of shame. In addition, results indicate that anti-violence services for Latina victims meet their full range of needs, yet there is a need for the development of more programs and services focusing on providing education/job-skill training to victims so they can achieve work and education-based self-sufficiency.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides an overview of the background and context for the study. It then outlines the research problems, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. I also include a discussion of the research approach, my research assumptions, and position on this study. The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the significance of the study.

Background and Context

While many Latinas who live in the U.S. experience domestic violence issues with their partners, few existing studies attempt to explore Latinas’ experiences within violent contexts. Many Latina victims stay in abusive relationships, but some look for help within community organizations. For those who seek help, there might be challenges associated with immigration status, language barriers, cultural beliefs about domestic abuse, lack of knowledge of resources and isolation. Once they connect with advocacy services, Latinas often continue to struggle, as services might not be adequate because of cultural differences (perceived or actual) that play out in service delivery in the U.S. (Baker, Nagy, Pavlos, Pratt, Reed, Siverman, Suri & Whitaker, 2007).

Each year, an estimated 8.7 million women are physically abused by a male partner, and about 2 million of these women are victims of severe violence (Roberts & Roberts, 2005). A great many of these victims are women that emigrate from Latin American countries. Concerning domestic violence across different groups, researchers have found Latino families to be at a greater risk for intimate partner violence than non-Latino/a White families (Straus & Smith, 1990). For instance, findings of a previous study indicate that 23% of Latinas in the U.S. report abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetime (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Similarly, in a national study, Kantor (1994) found that Latino/a families had a greater risk of wife abuse...
compared to non-Latino/a White American families, and the difference in the risk of violence was related to the effects of age, economic factors and attitudes towards violence. Furthermore, research reveals direct connections between cultural beliefs about marriage and how they exacerbate abuse in Latino/a families. Latinas are taught that males are entitled to dominance and control, while females are to serve as caretakers for others within the family system (Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994). Latinas who are victims of abuse may feel they have a duty to preserve and maintain the family as part of their obligations (Goldberg, Hodoka, & Ramos-Lira, 2007). These cultural beliefs may prevent Latina victims from leaving their partners and from seeking anti-violence services.

The literature also shows how language barriers may prevent some Latinas from seeking help. In one study of help-seeking behaviors among battered Mexican, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican women, Latinas who sought help had greater proficiency in English (West, Kantor, & Jasinski, 1998). The lack of proficiency in English language skills might be a reason why Latinas experience difficulties connecting with advocacy agencies. Likewise, immigration status frequently prevents undocumented Latina victims from reporting domestic violence to authorities (Acevedo, 2000; Aldarondo et al., 2002). In one study, the Detroit police reported a large volume of calls from Latina women who had been victims of violence; however, many women did not want to prosecute the abusers because of fear of deportation (Maciak, Guzman, Santiago, Villalobos, & Israel, 1999).

Latino/as usually seek help from their families instead of through professional assistance. The family, then, provides a strong base of support; family members watch out for one another (Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994). If a woman decides to look for help outside the family, she may feel that she is betraying her own relatives. Sometimes Latinas do not even consider telling
anyone for other reasons. They may feel fear of their partners’ threats, or may remain silent out of respect for their own cultural values and beliefs in reference to marriage and family.

Studies also show that lack of knowledge about domestic abuse resources is a factor keeping Latinas from seeking help. A study conducted in Chicago with 491 abused women (22% Latinas) found that despite efforts by domestic violence service agencies to raise awareness, a large number of women lacked knowledge of domestic violence resources. These included women who did not know of any agencies, did not know who to contact, did not know where to go, or did not know how to contact an agency or counselor (Engel, Fugate, Landis, Naureckas & Riordan, 2005).

The literature also suggests that the situations of isolation experienced by victims of partner abuse may be a factor that keeps victims from seeking help. In a study about women’s health risk conducted in Chicago, researchers found that the most common reason for not talking to someone was related to isolation (48% of participants). Many of these women may have wanted to talk about their situation but did not have someone available (Engel, Fugate, Landis, Naureckas & Riordan, 2005). Results from another study on partner abuse and different ethnic groups revealed that Mexican victims were more likely than Anglo, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican women to look for help from friends and family, probably because of greater isolation as a result of their recent immigration status (West et al., 1998).

Although previous studies indicate that the rates of domestic violence are similar across rural and urban areas, scholars have long recognized that several factors contribute to differences among the two areas in regards to the prevalence of and response to domestic violence. Isolation, limited access to services, the absence of employment opportunities, insufficient housing, lack of public transportation, and tolerant attitudes toward domestic violence are
examples of factors that exacerbate partner abuse and intervention efforts for rural victims (Grama, 2000; Logan, Walker, & Leukefeld, 2001; Van Hightower & Gorton, 2001). Thus the challenges for Latina victims living in rural areas, such as those in many communities in Iowa, might be exacerbated because of those dynamics existing in rural communities.

Community responses to intimate partner violence have direct consequences for women’s safety and well-being (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan, 2004). According to Bonilla (2002), there has been extensive research on domestic abuse against women, and most literature has been focused on the experiences of Anglo-American women. The experiences of women from other cultures have been minimally explored, and sometimes even ignored. Given the prevalence of domestic abuse across ethnic communities, it is essential to revise existing perceptions and learn about the interventions and responses that are necessary to address effectively the needs of battered women from other ethnic groups (Bauer et al., 2000). According to some scholars, service agencies, hospitals, or the criminal justice system may not be adequate for Latinas because they are not culturally competent (Baker, Nagy, Pavlos, Pratt, Reed, Silverman, Suri & Whitaker, 2007). What Latina victims may need from advocacy agencies are services that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for meeting Latina needs.

In summary, it appears that Latina victims of abuse experience challenges when connecting with advocacy services. Their immigration status (in the case of undocumented Latinas), lack of English proficiency, cultural beliefs about marriage, lack of knowledge of community resources and social isolation influence their seeking help behaviors. In addition, these women seem to experience struggles with current anti-violence responses probably because programs are focused exclusively on the needs of one specific group (White victims), and those
services are unlikely to meet the full range of needs that Latinas present. Therefore, this study seeks to explore Latina victims’ experiences, challenges and struggles with advocacy services.

**Problem Statement**

Research indicates that despite anti-violence organizations’ efforts, Latinas still face a number of obstacles when connecting to anti-violence organizations, and they experience particular challenges once they use advocacy services. There is little information as to why Latina victims’ experience those challenges particularly those who live in the Midwest.

**Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore and learn through a sample of Latina victim clients their perceptions of current anti-violence services provided by a non-profit organization. The study seeks to inform new and existing practices against domestic violence in Iowa, in particular with regard to the fast growing Latino/a immigrant population. I anticipate that the knowledge gained through this study can also help informs anti-violence work in other “new destinations” (Suro & Singer, 2002). To shed light on the problem, the following research questions are addressed:

1. What factors do Latina victims perceive as barriers to building effective connections with advocacy organizations, resources and networks in the state of Iowa?
2. How do participants perceive they are served by current anti-violence services?

**Research Approach**

With the approval of the board of directors of an anti-violence organization, I studied the experiences and perceptions of 10 Latina victims of partner abuse. These participants had previously contacted that organization and used its services. This investigation represents a feminist narrative study using qualitative research methods. I decided to use multiple methods
because I wanted to find out more about Latina lives through their experiences with advocacy services. As feminist researcher Reinharz (1992, p. 201) notes, “we can enhance our understanding by adding layers of information and by using one type of data to validate or refine other.” By using multiple methods, I was able to act as a flexible researcher looking for proper ways to expand information.

In-depth interviews and focus groups were the methods of data collection. The interview process began with one interview per participant. After each interview, I asked participants if they were willing to participate in a focus group with other Latinas who had received services from the same anti-violence organization. The results of the focus group supported the findings that emanated from the interviews and expanded the information. Each participant was identified by a numeric code, and the focus group and interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Data from the interviews and focus group were analyzed through a coding method. Coding features were developed based on similarity in participants’ responses. I separated the data into different categories to organize the ideas of all participants’ narratives; then I grouped similar responses together, identifying common features in question responses. After that, I made interpretations of participants’ responses based on the literature review and theoretical framework.

**Assumptions**

Based on my experience with a previous pilot research study, and on a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, I began this study with two primary assumptions. First, Latina victims who live in the U.S. and experience partner abuse face numerous obstacles when they seek help from formal resources such as anti-violence organizations. Those obstacles include
language barriers, immigration status, cultural believes, isolation and lack of knowledge of resources. Second, for those who look for help within community organizations, challenges might be related to the lack of services culturally adapted to meet their needs, including lack of bilingual employees, information available in Spanish, or interventions that are designed to meet the needs of White victims. For Latina victims who live in rural areas, their experiences with partner abuse can be exacerbated because of the lack of transportation, geographic isolation and limited access to resources.

**Rationale and Significance**

The rationale for this study emanated from my desire to give voice to Latinas not only because they struggle in coping with abuse, but because of their unique realities within a different social and cultural context. These women, who come from different backgrounds, may have the community resources needed to overcome abuse, but because of a number of obstacles they fail to build effective connections with advocacy organizations.

Increased awareness of the ways advocacy organizations work in the Midwest and increased understanding of Latina victims’ experiences with those services would not only reduce the incidence of partner abuse, but also would inform new and existing best practices against domestic violence that focus their attention on other minority groups. In addition, understanding how cultural and social factors influence Latina victims’ experiences with partner abuse may be essential for the development of interventions and policies that are culturally appropriate.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In light of the growth of the Latino population in the United States and the considerable economic, social and cultural diversity among Latinos, a serious discussion about domestic violence\(^1\) and organizational responses is opportune. Research on cultural characteristics of domestic abuse against women and how they vary among different ethnic groups is very narrow (Bonilla, 2002). The research on battered women has focused on the experiences of Anglo-American women, ignoring cross-cultural differences in issues surrounding the abuse of women (Straus & Smith, 1990). Although the United States is composed of many ethnic groups, community services have been developed to conform to Anglo-American values. Because interventions provided to different racial groups are mainly designed in accordance with the dominant culture, they may not be adequate or effective in helping Latina victims to cope with intimate partner abuse\(^2\) issues.

This study explores the experiences of participants with anti-violence resources available for Latina victims. Two major areas of literature are reviewed: (a) descriptions of anti-violence services, and (b) Latinas’ experiences with outreach and organizational responses in relation to intimate partner abuse. This literature review also surveys the history of organizational responses to domestic violence in the U.S., and outlines the work and contributions done by feminists and their interventions on behalf of battered women. A review of the literature on anti-violence services provides an understanding of the context and structure of services designed to help women victims of domestic violence (regardless of their ethnicity).

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\(^1\) Defines as the threat or infliction of physical harm among past or present partners irrespective of the legal or domiciliary status of the relationship in which domestic violence occurs (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996).

\(^2\) It is a type of domestic violence that refers to relationship violence between partners, and is not restricted to married couples or committed couples (Harway, 2001).
Latinas and Intimate Partner Abuse

The Latino/a population in the United States has grown dramatically in recent decades, increasing by 57 percent between 1990 and 2000, almost 10 percent from 2000 to 2002, and has now become larger than the African American population (Branton, 2007). It is estimated that Latinos may constitute up to 25 percent of the U.S. population by 2050 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000a). It is further estimated that by that same year, one out of every four women will be a Latina.³

Existing research suggests that intimate partner abuse is a significant concern in the Latino/a population. The National Violence Against Women Survey, based on a random sample in the United States, reported a lifetime prevalence rate of exposure to partner abuse among Latinos of 23.4% (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). Denham et al. (2007) report a somewhat lower lifetime prevalence (19.5%) among rural Latinas. However, some other studies show higher prevalence. For instance, Ingram (2007) found that half of the population of Latino/as reported being exposed to some type of intimate partner abuse. While many women may experience partner abuse at some point in their lives, Latinas face particular challenges that are related to their cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

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Latinas have been defined as female Latinos that migrate from Latino South, Central, and North American countries. It is important to note that not all Latinas who live in the U.S. are immigrants (born in the U.S. or Puerto Rico). In this research all Latina participants self described as Latina immigrants because they all moved from Latino countries. I have used the Latino term over the Hispanic one because of “the contemporary social location of Latinos in relation to the historical-structural dynamics which have made them racialized colonial subjects of the U.S system, and not in relation to their historical ties to the colonialism of Spain (Alcoff, 2005, p. 396).
The literature focused on intimate partner abuse experienced by women across ethnic groups suggests that domestic abuse in Latino/a communities is exacerbated by high poverty levels, underemployment, undereducation and cultural isolation (West, Kaufman, & Jasisnki, 1998). As Bonilla (2002) points out, the economic existence of Latina victims who live in the U.S. is often based on “underground” employment sources. The findings of her research reveal that battered Latinas are usually identified as unemployable at higher rates because of their lack of English language skills and other competencies. Therefore, the options available for Latinas in response to being abused and leaving home are few when compared to those available to White women.

Scholars of family violence have also discussed other dynamics that may increase the effects of partner abuse on Latino families. Perilla (1994) defines “machismo” as the set of beliefs about how Latino males should act. Positive characteristics attributed to machismo include honor, pride, courage and obligation to the family, but its negative traits include sexual prowess, high alcohol consumption and aggressiveness, which are the factors that contribute to the likelihood of partner abuse. Another dynamic increasing the risk of partner abuse in Latinas is “marianismo,” a set of beliefs which value women’s behaviors of submissiveness, deference to others, and self-sacrifice. For Perilla, the combination of machismo and marianismo in Latino cultures may increase the probability of domestic abuse for Latinas.

**Domestic Violence in Latino/as’ Countries of Origin**

While Latino/a intimate partner abuse is prevalent throughout the United States, there are studies that also demonstrate a prevalence of this issue in Latino/as’ countries of origin. For instance, in a study of family characteristics associated with spouse abuse across five Latin American countries, Flake and Forste (2006) found that the prevalence of spousal violence in all
five countries is high, ranging from 16% in Haiti to 39% in Peru. The authors supposed that percentages could be much higher, as some women deny and underreport abuse. Research findings also indicated that several risk markers for abuse are shared between Latin American and more developed countries. These include marital status, partner alcohol abuse, family size, socioeconomic status, education and decision-making power. The results from this study and the studies conducted in the U.S. suggest that the profile of the abused Latinas living in Latino countries appears quite similar to the profile of abused Latinas who migrate to the United States.

When immigrants move to the shores of the U.S., they do not leave behind the socialization and conditioning they have already learned in their countries of origin. The patriarchal cultural structures in which they grew up have already trained the majority of immigrants in gender roles that are inherently unequal. However, in the United States the complexities of the dynamics of abuse increase in multiple ways (Dasgupta & Warrier, 1996).

**Historical Background**

In 1885, one of the most important advocacy agencies of the nineteenth century was established. The Chicago Protective Agency for Women and Children was an organization that provided legal aid, court advocacy and personal assistance to help women who were victims of domestic abuse. Battered women were able to stay at a shelter for 4 weeks and received help attaining an equitable amount of property in divorce agreements. Later, between 1915 and 1920, other protective agencies were established in 25 cities in the United States. By the 1970s, shelters, 24-hour hotlines, and volunteer networks were developed to assist abused women throughout Canada, Great Britain, and the United States. Data reveals that by 1977, there were 89 shelters serving battered women in the U.S., and the 24-hour hotlines located at shelters received over 110,000 calls from victim women. Some of the strengths of these services included
the assistance from shelters, peer counseling, court advocacy and the work done by volunteers and staff members. Unfortunately, problems such as overcrowded shelters, lack of funding, and rapid turnover of staff and attrition of volunteers emerged as major weaknesses of service programs (Roberts, 2002).

In the year 1995, programs were developed that focused on domestic violence prosecution, case management and technology solutions at courts, support groups and transitional housing with the purpose of helping victim women and their children. In addition, healthcare settings implemented services at local hospital emergency rooms and hospital-based trauma centers, offering emergency psychiatric and pastoral therapy services (Roberts, 1995). In some communities, emergency services for battered women were extended and included parenting education workshops, employment counseling and job placement for the women and group counseling for the batterers. Today, all these services are well known as community-based domestic violence services. These types of services exist throughout the country, and seek to provide shelter, emotional support, crisis intervention and many other forms of assistance to battered women and their children (Saathoff & Stoffel, 1999).

**Feminist Responses to Partner Abuse**

Feminist activists, scholars and practitioners have been the force behind the Battered Women’s Movement in the United States, making great contributions towards effective treatment approaches for female victims (Lee, 2007). In the 1970s, the Battered Women’s Movement and feminist activists developed domestic violence shelters in a “grassroots” effort to provide supportive social services (Knox & Garcia, 2007). But for those who were working with victimized women and their families, domestic violence was too complex to be solved exclusively by the shelters (Goodman & Epstein, 2005). Society’s attitude about women
battering changed, and many victims and survivors sought help from the few advocacy services available at that time. Advocates’ efforts towards changing legislation and the way communities and the criminal justice system were responding to family violence paid off. Public awareness grew along with a growing perception that domestic violence was an unacceptable social problem (Knox & Garcia, 2007).

The recognition of domestic violence as a severe, widespread problem connecting different levels and systems was a major influence contributing to the progress made in the past 25 years (Mears & Visher, 2005). Thanks to the work done by feminist activists and scholars, public policies are now addressing domestic violence issues. For instance, feminist organizing through coalition building has been instrumental in the passage of the Violence Against Women Act (1996), the development of domestic abuse service delivery systems, community education and state laws and policies to protect victim women and their children (Brownell & Roberts, 2002). The main task of coalitions is to organize and empower functional state agencies and local communities. Members of coalitions focus on advocacy for social justice, including policy changes that promote acceptance and inclusion of their chosen issue. Their efforts to build political power and influence for economically marginalized and vulnerable women have made important strides on behalf of victims and survivors of domestic abuse (Weil & Gamble, 2002).

One major functional advocacy organization is the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), with locations in 50 states. Its members include domestic violence advocates, self-identified battered women, professional workers, nurses, attorneys, service providers and lobbyists. The tasks of the NCADV include: educating about domestic violence; monitoring and influencing state and federal legislation about domestic abuse; technical assistance in developing state and regional coalitions; building national networks of shelters for
battered women; developing and securing funding for resources for services providers and recipients; and providing guidelines and consultant services in budgeting (Brownell & Roberts, 2002).

Violence against women is an insidious social issue that deserves attention and consistent response from the government and from advocacy agencies within the community. Research demonstrates an increasing recognition that the degree to which communities respond effectively to intimate partner violence has direct consequences for women’s safety and well-being (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan 2004). Sullivan and Bybee’s (1999) research on advocacy services demonstrated that women who worked with community advocates had a higher quality of life, were more effective at accessing needed community resources, had greater social support and experienced less violence than women who did not work with advocates.

There may be effective treatment approaches for female victims and legal remedies for dealing with domestic abuse; but, extensive research data reveals the degree and prevalence of domestic violence in the United States. Although substantial progress has been made in strengthening services and interventions for domestic violence victims, much remains to be done in terms of adequately accommodating the needs of particular women from different ethnic groups through services and programs. I recognize that there is an urgent need to understand and learn about how interventions and practices accommodate women from diverse cultural backgrounds. Because research on the cultural characteristics of domestic abuse against women and how they differ among ethnicities is limited (Bonilla, 2002), and the emphasis of advocacy services is based on the experiences of White female victims, Latina victims’ experiences with domestic abuse remains overlooked. Through this study I intended to expand the understanding
about Latinas’ experiences within violent contexts, and learn their perceptions of the utility and effectiveness of current interventions.

**Latinas experiences with Anti-violence Services**

According to Bonilla (2002), the issues and experiences of battered Latinas have not been taken into consideration in the human services and social work communities or by direct social services providers in governments. She feels that adequate responses incorporating cultural factors are a critical component for approaches to helping battered women from all ethnic groups. A study of the availability of domestic violence services for Latina survivors (Rivera, 1997-98), found that Latinas were not being properly served, and in extreme cases were being rejected from programs without proper referrals. Because of unequipped programs with insufficient staff to provide bilingual/bicultural services, Latina victims received few, if any of the services mandatory under appropriate laws and regulations. Results suggested that the ability of providers to furnish bilingual and bicultural services is critical to the safety, security and well-being of Latinas who need them.

Community partnerships and interventions that focus on the resources that abused Latinas need, whether immigrant or not, are also essential. According to Ingram (2007), these interventions should be linguistically and culturally appropriate and take into consideration factors facing abuse victims in general and cultural minorities specifically. Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan (2004) conducted a study on survivors’ needs and their efforts to mobilize community resources to meet those needs once they exit a shelter. The data included African American, White, Latina and Asian American battered women. Survivors’ needs included housing, employment, education, transportation, legal assistance, childcare, material goods and services (e.g., electricity, gas, water). The results provided evidence that programs that focus exclusively
on one domain of service delivery are unlikely to meet the full range of needs that women present (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan 2004). These results also stress the importance of victims’ participation in the process of identifying their needs, so advocates can increase the accessibility of resources to meet those self-identified needs. Further research on Latina victims and the assistance needed after leaving an abusive partner should be taken in consideration so scholars learn the extent of activities in which victims engage to meet their needs, and current advocacy and community interventions and responses to domestic violence can be improved.

One method for improving interventions and responses to domestic violence is through examining existing services and critiquing the effectiveness of comprehensive advocacy responses. Advocacy and other human service programs must recognize the need for a comprehensive response to survivors’ needs (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan 2004). Some researchers believe that service agencies, hospitals, or the criminal justice system may not be adequate for Latina women because of language barriers, or because of differences in the cultural norms. For instance, a focus group of Latina and Asian victims was conducted in a healthcare setting, with the purpose of identifying provider behaviors that facilitate patient-provider communication. Results suggested the need for improving communication and developing skills so providers can offer meaningful support to these clients (Rodriguez, Bauer, Flores-Ortiz, and Szkupinski-Quiroga,).

Research also suggests that immigrant victims need culturally competent services from advocacy agencies. In a recent study, Whitaker and colleagues developed a network model for providing culturally competent services to two Latino communities in the state of Massachusetts. The purpose of the network was to build collaboration and cultural competence, organizational level-changes, and outreach and education activities in existing community-based agencies.
Ideally, a woman’s contact with any source of help would quickly activate referrals to a variety of services. As stated above, researchers (Baker, Nagy, Pavlos, Pratt, Reed, Silverman, Suri & Whitaker 2007) believe that current services offered by social service agencies, hospitals, or the criminal justice system have not been adequate for Latinas because of the language barriers or because of differences in the cultural norms in the way in which services are provided. After the implementation of the network model, researchers concluded that collaborations among service agencies can maximize the competent use of financial and personnel resources so that culturally responsive services can be delivered to as many families as possible (Whitaker, Baker, Pratt, Reed, Suri, Pavlos, Nagy, & Silverman, 2007).

Many immigrant Latina victims have reported using advocacy services during the last decades. Given the risk levels for partner abuse experienced by Latinas, community services, such as those provided by social services agencies, have focused attention on developing programs and interventions to meet Latina needs. Yet many Latina victims of domestic abuse underutilize these services and networks due to immigration and language issues, lack of knowledge of resources and cultural beliefs.

**Explaining Latinas Underutilization of Anti-violence Services**

Latinas face unique challenges in coping with domestic abuse, which may include stressors related to immigration, language, challenges of acculturation, legal and economic pressures (Mattson & Rodriguez, 1999). Poor understanding of available resources, the existence of family support and cultural beliefs may also keep Latinas from seeking help and support from anti-violence organizations. For Latina victims who reside in rural communities, the challenges of coping with partner abuse might be more complex because of isolation, lack of transportation, isolation and cultural barriers. Websdale and Johnson (1997) and Websdale (1998) noted on a
study of police responses to victims in rural areas, that physical isolation associated with the rural setting provides abusers with opportunities to engage in abusive behavior. Researchers also concluded that rural victim women encounter difficulties in using supportive domestic violence interventions.

The literature demonstrates how different environmental circumstances and personal characteristics influence domestic violence victims in the formal service seeking process (Grossman, Hinkley, Kawalski & Margrave, 2005), that often prevent them from disclose the abuse or from leave their abusive partners. Those characteristics include legal status of the victim, lack of English proficiency, social or physical isolation, lack of knowledge of services and cultural beliefs about marriage or relationships. These factors influence and compound each other and are interrelated, making it more complex for Latina victims to access services. To shed light on the problem and find potential solutions, it is essential to address what victims perceive as barriers to building effective connections with advocacy organizations, networks and resources.

*Immigration Status*

The little research that has been done on gender and migration show that migration can provide new opportunities to improve women’s lives and change oppressive gender relations. Even displacement as a result of conflict can lead to shifts in gendered roles and responsibilities to women’s benefit (Jolly & Reeves, 2005); however, migration can also serve to root cultural roles and inequalities, and expose Latinas to negative situations and experiences due to factors such as legal status and lack of language skills. Studies have shown that partner abuse is a very common problem experienced by immigrant Latinas living in the United States. Tjaden and
Thoennes (2000) found that 23.4% of Latinas at some point in their lifetime report abuse by an intimate partner.

Immigration status has been cited in the domestic violence literature as a contributing factor that prevents victims from seeking help. In intimate partner violence studies, researchers have found that being an immigrant had an impact on help-seeking behaviors by Latinas (Ingram, 2007). Undocumented Latinas, or those who have unstable residency, may believe that reporting the abuse or seeking help from social services may lead to deportation (Dutton et al., 2000). For instance, in one study the Detroit police reported a large volume of class from Latinas who had been victims of abuse; however, many women did not want to prosecute the abusers because of fear of deportation (Maciak, Guzman, Santiago, Villalobos, & Israel, 1999). This same study revealed language barriers as a factor that may prevent Latinas from getting help. Among Mexican, Mexican-American and Puerto Rican, Latinas who sought help had greater proficiency in English (West, Kaufman, & Jasinki, 1998). Similarly, in another study Bonilla-Santiago (2002) reported that undocumented status, language barriers, and cultural isolation make access to resources extremely difficult for Latinas; therefore, they seek help from informal resources such as families and friends. For undocumented women, their challenges with immigration status may act as a disincentive to contact the legal system or police (Grossman & Lundy, 2007). While there are laws preventing deportation of immigrant women who experience abuse, many Latina victims are not aware of these legal procedures, and those who may know do not always trust that the laws will be enforced (Sen, 1999; Hass et al., 2000; and Raj & Silverman, 2002).
Acculturation and Isolation

Acculturation and isolation are concepts related to immigration that exacerbate domestic abuse for Latinas. Acculturation refers to the adaptation to new cultural norms and practices, which can have special implications for intimate partner abuse (Klevens, 2007). The feeling of helplessness experienced by abused women can be magnified for Latinas who are not part of the majority culture (Perilla et al., 1994). This may happen because a lack of proficiency in English language skills, financial stressors and isolation from family and social support (Goldberg, Hokoda, & Ramos-Lira, 2007). Latina victims who do not speak English, do not know the existing resources, and do not have any social support are likely to be unwilling to contact the law enforcement system or any other source of help.

Reichert (2003) indicates that new immigrants from countries with strong patriarchal traditions may be unaware of laws prohibiting domestic violence. Likewise, immigrant families who have lived in the United States may maintain traditional beliefs from their country of origin (Brownell & Congress, 2007). Consequently, Latina victims may underutilize interventions and community sources, and may remain in potentially life-threatening situations. According to Lischick (2007), the batterer or perpetrator usually separates the battered woman from friends and family by his efforts to destroy all competing relationships through isolation, secrecy, and betrayal. The control of the perpetrator over his victim and the isolating components of battering substantially reduce a victim’s resources (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996).

Literature suggests that the situations of isolation experienced by victims of domestic abuse may be another factor that keeps victims from seeking help. In a study about women’s health risk conducted in Chicago, researchers found that the most common reason for not talking to someone was related to isolation (48% of participants). Many of these women may have
wanted to talk about their violence situation but did not have someone available (Engel, Fugate, Landis, Naureckas & Riordan, 2005). Pinn and Chunko’s (1997) research findings on culturally sensitive interventions reported that low-income women and those who live in isolated conditions (i.e., they do not own telephones, do not speak English, and live in rural areas) are more likely to experience all types of violence. Results from another study on domestic violence and different ethnic groups revealed that Mexican victims were less likely than Anglo, Mexican American, and Puerto Rican women to look for help from friends and family, probably due to increased isolation because of their recent immigration status (West et al., 1998). Isolation also played a great role in Bonilla’s (2002) study. According to Bonilla, undocumented Latinas face serious difficulties because their potential to be abused. The results of her research revealed that many immigrant Latinas were isolated and trapped in aggressive homes, afraid of seeking help.

**Cultural Beliefs**

Culture includes the “norms, values, beliefs, and knowledge that serve as standards of behavior and that define a way of life” (Susser, Watson, & Hopper, 1985, p. 133) of any community. According to family researchers, Latino/as are described as sharing a variety of cultural characteristics, such as having high regard for family unity; having respect toward family members; having close personal relationships; and placing great importance on trust (Keefe, 1984; National Alliance for Hispanic Health, 2001; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994; Vega, 1990). Cultural beliefs then, determine how Latino/as define and act in response to issues related to partner abuse.

Literature shows that many Latino/a families have very strong values about marriage. Latinas are taught that males are entitled to dominance and control within the family and that females are to serve as caretakers for others within the family system (Perilla, Bakerman, &
Norris, 1994). As previously mentioned, the dynamics of machismo and marianismo in the Latino culture may prevent Latina victims from seeking help. For instance, in a study of differences in effects of domestic violence between Latinas and non-Latinas, researchers found that Latinas had significantly greater difficulties in responding to domestic abuse than did non-Latinas. Although for all women, the decision of leaving their abusers was extremely complicated, for Latinas the difficulty increased as the notions of machismo and marianismo provided them pressures to remain in the family (Edelson, Hokoda, & Ramos-Lira, 2007). The cultural demands to stay married and the fear of what other would say make it difficult for Latinas to leave their partners; consequently they remain in aggressive relationships for longer periods.

*Language Barriers*

The lack of English proficiency has been cited in the literature as a factor keeping Latina victims from connecting with domestic violence services. Results from a previous study reported that when Latinas who did not seek assistance at shelters were compared to Latinas who did, those who sought assistance were more acculturated, as defined by language use (Altarriba & Santiago-Rivera, 1994). This lack of proficiency in English language skills might be a reason why Latinas experience difficulties in connecting with advocacy agencies. Immigrant families who speak only the language of their country of origin are much less likely to know about American laws and policies about domestic abuse (Brownell & Congress, 2007). The lack of information about legal procedures and resources, and the lack of bilingual employees from social and legal services institutions may also prevent victim immigrants from seeking help.

Language is also an institutional barrier that might affect the interventions needed to address domestic violence concerns in the Latino population. Rivera (2003) conducted research
on domestic violence services for Latina survivors in New York. Her findings indicated that some Spanish-monolingual women have been denied access to programs, including residential programs, due to agencies’ failure to provide bilingual services and staff. Once advocates developed and established bilingual programs and hired Spanish speaking personnel, fewer perfunctory language-based denials occurred. In another study of battered women’s help seeking behaviors, Moe (2007) reported that some monolingual Spanish-speaking women had difficulty reaching any of the agencies that offered services in Spanish to which they had been initially referred, and when they found someone speaking Spanish it was usually an answering machine, so they did not get help immediately. Likewise in 2004, the Latina Alliance Against Sexual Aggression organization evaluated training and policy issues related to Latina survivors of sexual and intimate partner violence. The results reported a lack of bilingual direct service staff and volunteers at the rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters. This issue reflects blatant disregard for Spanish speaking victims of violence and the advocates who serve them (ALAS, 2004). The findings from research mentioned above suggests the need for language proficiency requirements on services and interventions, and the need for bilingual personnel, working especially in areas populated by Latinos.

Lack of Knowledge of Resources

Latina victims who do not speak English, have low levels of acculturation and live isolated from their communities, are not usually aware of the existing resources and support networks within comminutes. This lack of knowledge of resources, which has also been cited as a barrier, may keep women from seeking domestic violence services. Sometimes domestic violence survivors lack information about the full range of resources that exist in their communities and knowledge about how to effectively mobilize them (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan
The results of a study conducted in Chicago, in which 491 abused women were interviewed (22% Latinas), demonstrated that despite the efforts by domestic violence services agencies to raise awareness, a large number of women lacked knowledge of resources. These included women who did not know of any agencies, did not know who to contact, did not know where to go, or did not know how to contact an agency or counselor (Engel, Fugate, Landis, Naureckas & Riordan, 2005). Engel et.al speculated that Latinas who move to the U.S. are usually isolated from the community, causing particular impediments to awareness of services and programs. The findings of this study suggest that services and interventions may not be well integrated into the Chicago community, and possibly in other cities across the United States.

The above studies have made important contributions to our understanding of domestic violence services and Latina victim’s experiences with them. As stated by other researchers, there is a large amount of literature concerning domestic violence. We can find extensive research that explore victims experiences with advocacy outreach, studies that examine domestic violence interventions, including helping resources used by victims, the sources available in the community, and the services provided by advocacy organizations. Most of the research has focused on White women’s’ experiences, although some research has examined experiences of women from other ethnic groups. Mainly, those studies have taken place in states such as California, Florida, New York, Texas and Illinois. Although there has been research done about the Latino community in the state of Iowa, it has centered around immigration, factory work and parenting, with little or no work done on Latinas’ experiences with domestic violence services.
CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter I explain how Standpoint feminist theory and Multicultural/Multiracial feminist theory, two related theoretical frameworks, informed my research. I also explain the importance of attending to the intersectionality of social categories such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, and citizenship for understanding the life experiences of women from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Feminist Theory

Feminisms as theories “seek to analyze the conditions which shape women’s lives and to explore cultural understanding of what it means to be a woman” (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p. 1). The main goal of feminism is to understand women’s social, cultural and political subordination and marginalization. In addition, feminism seeks legal, social and cultural equality between men and women (Lorber, 2005). When analyzing Latina victims’ needs in relation to domestic violence services that are often not culturally adapted, and the barriers Latina victims experience when they try to build effective connections, it becomes clear that these issues are emotionally, socially and politically oppressive.

Domestic violence is a gendered phenomenon, and can only be fully understood when placed within the context of current male and female positions in our society. When violence is examined in this way, it is not equivalent: it occurs within different contexts and has different

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4 Oppression refers to the experiences of people with “situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation” (Frye, 1983, p. 3). Those experiences are shaped by forces and barriers that are not accidental or occasional. Those forces are systematically interconnected to each other, and usually keep people blocked or trapped within a mainstream society.

5 In addition to the increased recognition of the trends and consequences of the violence experienced by women, there have been also concerns about domestic violence experienced by men. Evidence in the literature suggests that many men are maltreated by their wives or partners, both physically and emotionally, and that women are capable of domestic violence for power reasons and not in just self-defense. Men who have experienced abuse
meanings and consequences for women and for men (Loseke & Kurz, 2005). This gendered context includes the history of tolerance of men’s violence toward women (Dobash & Dobash, 1979), which continues to be reinforced in social institutions, such as the church, sports (Messner, 1989) and fraternities (Sanday, 1991). In other words, what makes it possible for men to entrap women is not their greater physical strength, but the social strength they derive when unequal power relationships are reinforced (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996) by our society.

In this study, I employ Standpoint feminist theory to: (1) give voice to a group of marginal women, and; (2) produce new knowledge by exposing Latina victims’ experiences, struggles and values through this research. I employ Multicultural/Multiracial feminist theory to analyze the experiences of the respondents as shaped by their particular gender, ethnic and class locations. Multicultural/Multiracial feminist theory emphasizes the intersectionality of gender, racial categories, ethnicity and social class (multiple structures of domination) that construct social locations that might oppress women.

**Standpoint Feminist Theory**

The major concept of Standpoint feminism is that “knowledge and culture should be produced from women’s as well as men’s point of view” (Lorber, 2005, p. 177). For standpoint feminists, women’s experiences and perspectives are different from men’s, and they are essential in the production of knowledge and culture (Lorber, 2005). We live in a hierarchical society where women’s voices may be invisible and marginal, and one way to change this is by exposing a variety of women’s experiences, struggles and values through research.Latinas’ migration to have been shown to suffer injuries, fatalities, depression, alcoholism, stress and fear. But findings on abuse of husbands/partners have been challenged by some feminists, who argue that violence by wives/partners is in self-defense, and therefore, there is not such as an abused husband/partner (e.g., Pleck, Pleck, Grossman, & Bart, 1977-78). Consequently the literature on husband/partner abuse has been primarily an argument over whether or not there is any such thing (Hines & Malley-Morrison, 2005).
the U.S. has been largely excluded from research mainly because they have been viewed as dependents of their partners, moving from one place to another as wives, mothers or daughters of male immigrants (Zlotnik, 1995). The voices of immigrant women have not been heard because they are invisible to the dominant culture. Their concerns, struggles and personal experiences with issues such as partner abuse and anti-violence services remain overlooked because research has been mainly focused on the experiences of Anglo-American women; therefore, interventions and services do not meet the particular needs of Latinas. Since this is the case, the challenge is to include Latina’s roles and life experiences in the creation of new knowledge.

According to some feminist theorists, immigrant Latinas who do not speak English, who do not have legal status, do not work, experience isolation, and who also struggle with many other forms of oppressions, face particular and unique hardships that cannot be compared with those of White, African American, lesbian and other women from different backgrounds. Because immigrant battered women are seen as “deficient,” “inferior,” “exotic,” or simply identified as the “other” (Dasgupta, 2005) in the U.S., their lives are likely to be neglected and ignored. According to Harding (2004), standpoint feminism intends that the inclusion of the lives of those at the bottom of social hierarchies can offer starting points for new theories, since they provide insights to important issues that can be explained through a research agenda. From a feminist framework, Harding points to Patricia Hill Collins’ idea of rethinking standpoint epistemology to argue that sources from the lives of poor and illiterate African American women disclose significant truths about the lives of intellectuals, both African-American and European American (Harding, 2004). Therefore, starting with the perspectives of Latina immigrants might reveal important realities about the lives of other immigrants from different historical and geographical locations.
**Multicultural/Multiracial Feminist Theory**

While Standpoint feminist theory constitutes an important means of empowering all women through the production of knowledge and culture from women’s struggles and experiences, Multicultural/Multiracial feminist theory acknowledges how gender, race/ethnicity, and class differently shape the experiences of women, and includes in its framework the voices and concerns of women from specific marginalized groups. In this study “standpoint” feminism is implicit in the narrative analysis to develop knowledge from Latina victims of domestic violence. Conversely Multicultural/Multiracial theory is explicitly connected into the analysis of results because its emphasis on the experiences of those who are disenfranchised by their race.

The premise of Multicultural/Multiracial feminism is that “aspects of self-identity such as race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, nationality, ability, age and religion are not fixed but dynamic” (De Reus, Few, Balter, 2005, p. 447). Some theorists have been able to create new understandings of the lived experiences of diverse cultures by including and studying these categories in their analyses. According to Lorber (2005), the intersectionality of gender, racial categories, ethnicity and social class constructs a social location that can be either more or less oppressive, because they are the result of multiple structures of domination. The dynamics and effects of that intersectionality encompass a “complex hierarchical stratification system in the U.S. in which upper-class White women and men oppress lower-class women and men of disadvantaged racial groups and ethnicities” (Lorber, 2005, p. 196). Therefore, the experiences of women and men in different social locations and ethnic groups ground Multicultural and Multiracial feminists, their views of the world and their activist politics. With these dynamics in mind, Multicultural/ Multiracial feminists convey that it is not enough to dissect an area of social
thought from the point of view of women in general (as Standpoint feminists tend to do) or even one specific group of women. The standpoint has to include the experiences of women of different racial ethnic groups and must consider social class and economic conditions (Lorber, 2005).

Most immigrant victims, who usually come from lower socioeconomic status, face additional hardships (besides the abusive experiences) when seeking advocacy help because they live in a mainstream culture that is often hostile to both the individual immigrant and their cultures (Dasgupta, 2005). In the case of Latina victims, they might fall through the cracks of a system that supposedly invests in anti-violence interventions, but fails to recognize the dynamics of race/ethnicity and class in regard to their immigrant positions. This pattern of disregard can be found in different areas within U.S. society: (1) The legal system does not know how to protect immigrant victims of abuse; (2) some anti-violence agencies neglect to develop programs addressing immigrant needs; (3) citizen-neighbors ignore screams ostensibly in unfamiliar languages (Dasgupta, 2005).

For Multicultural feminists the immigration status (legal or not legal) of Latina victims plays an oppressive role because of the fundamental belief that women of “other” cultures are inferior to their White American counterparts. Thinking about immigrant women as “other” allows society and its institutions to overlook their concerns and needs. For instance, Latina victims may not be properly served, and in extreme cases can be rejected from programs if they

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6 In her essay The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir accounts the historical and current status of women in Western society. Beauvoir (1953, p. 8) argues that “humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being”. Therefore, men set the standards and values and women are always the Other (the second sex) because they lack the qualities of the dominants (Lorber, 2005).
do not have proper referrals from law enforcement or social services. In the cases of poorly equipped programs with insufficient staff to provide bilingual/bicultural services, Latina victims may feel neglected because programs do not recognize the structural and cultural constraints they experience. Bilingual and bicultural services available for immigrants could be critical to the safety, security and well-being of newcomers. In addition, the oppressive situations experienced by some isolated immigrant Latina victims (those who live in rural areas) because of their immigration status, lack of English proficiency and level of acculturation, might be also a result of the lack of services and outreach for “invisible populations.” Being both a woman in a patriarchal society and a Latina in a white supremacist country may increase Latina victims’ burden with domestic abuse. If we add in other intersectional circumstances, such as economic ones, the burden is again multiplied.

**Intersectionality of Gender, Race, and Class**

Both, Multicultural/Multiracial and Standpoint feminist theories incorporate gender, race and class within their frameworks, and mark these factors as an important starting point: partner abuse and all the issues regarding this problem are different for women from diverse racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and also sexual orientation and immigrant status. In addition, the notion of intersectionality encourages feminist researchers to learn how social institutions, organizational structures and social practices influence the choices, identities and opportunities that individuals make (Collins, 1998). According to Ann Russo (2001), violence against women has multiple interconnected sources, and is not linked solely to an isolated source of male domination. So, when we talk about Latina immigrants and their experiences with advocacy services, it is essential that we understand how these forms of oppressions, or “social locations”, interlock and affects each other.
For Multicultural/Multiracial feminists, the concept of intersectionality of gender, race and class produce both a matrix of domination and a cultural devaluation of women (and men) of subordinated racial ethnic groups (Lorber, 2005). Multicultural/Multiracial feminist politics have the potential to embrace gender, race, and class to address the differences among women, and to understand the life experiences and struggles of those who remain marginalized by a White-dominated society. Likewise, Standpoint theory views the world from where the woman is located physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially, arguing that the viewpoints of marginalized “others” (women, members of the working class, people of other racial ethnic groups, and people from developing countries) are not included in the production of most knowledge (Lorber, 2005). Standpoint feminists make the case to reflect on women’s lived experiences within intersecting oppressions of gender, race, and class to produce knowledge and culture.

Crenshaw (1992) uses the concept of intersectionality in feminist research and argues that we all exist in social contexts created by the intersections of systems of power involving gender, race, class and sexual orientation, and resulting systems of oppression, specifically gender inequality, prejudice, class stratification and heterosexist preconceptions. For Crenshaw (p. 116) “these systems are not mutually exclusive, static or abstract. They function independently or simultaneously, and the dynamics of each may exacerbate and compound the consequences of another.” In the case of partner violence, intersectionality shapes the nature of abuse, how people respond to it, how social and personal effects are characterized and how escaping and overcoming abuse can be achieved. For instance, while men who abuse exercise some type of patriarchal domination, their associations with patriarchy vary depending on their social locations. While all women are vulnerable to abuse, a victim woman might be judged by people
in a different way if she is Latina, Black or White, or if she is located in a low or high socioeconomic status, or if she is an undocumented immigrant or a citizen (Bograd, 1999).

Participants in this study are Latina immigrant victims who have experienced partner abuse. In order to explain participants’ experiences with anti-violence services, it is essential to understand the role of gender, race and class intersections that might place them in particular social locations that exacerbate their oppressions. Understanding subjugated and marginalized groups’ experiences might facilitate the development of services and interventions culturally adapted and competent for the populations they are intended to serve.

In sum, the use of both Multicultural and Standpoint theories allowed me to develop knowledge from, analyze and theorize the situation of Latinas in relation to their experiences with advocacy services. A Multicultural framework, focusing on race and ethnicity, provides a comparative analysis of groups that are socially and legally subordinated and that often remain culturally distinct within U.S. society (Zinn & Dill, 1996). The experiences of immigrant Latina victims of domestic violence in the U.S. can be explained through Multicultural/Multiracial theory because the intersection of their race, their gender, their immigration status and their location within a mainstream culture, often provide the opportunity for abusers to oppress (or exert power and control over) their victims, legitimating and perpetuating their subordination. In addition, Multicultural theory can examine the multiple ways that Latina victims experience themselves as classed, gendered, raced and sexualized when both seeking community services and reestablishing their lives as immigrants in the U.S. Standpoint theory does not explain or analyze Latina victims’ experiences with advocacy services; however, it offers the opportunity to develop knowledge from these women’s experiences. I chose Standpoint theory because I wanted to increase cross-cultural knowledge from Latina victims’ experiences with community
services in the Midwest region of the U.S., since their voices need to be heard within a dominant society. While the notion of Standpoint theory refers to the creation of knowledge from a woman’s standpoint, allowing women to produce their own knowledge (Lober, 2005), it is limited because de-emphasizes differences and inequalities among women (Jaggar, 2007). Multicultural/Multiracial feminism creates a broader theory of gender inequality with the continuum of dominance of subordinated minority women and the inclusion of women from other groups. I find both theories essential to identify and examine the perspectives of Latina immigrant victims of domestic violence.
CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

This study addressed two main research questions: (1) What factors do Latina victims perceive as barriers to building effective connections with advocacy organizations, resources and networks in the state of Iowa? (2) How do participants perceive they are served by current anti-violence services? The following discussion reviews the research methodology, including: (1) rationale for feminist research design, (2) rationale for feminist narrative methodology, (3) description of the research sample, (4) research design, (5) methods of data collection, (6) analysis and synthesis of data, and (7) ethical considerations.

**Rationale of Feminist Design**

Feminist methodology and qualitative research techniques were used to obtain data from Latina victims who have connected with anti-violence services. Feminist research methodology was suitable to this research project because of its emphasis on shifting the point of view of research to those who are marginalized. Feminist research methodology not only helps researchers achieve “the political commitment to produce useful knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives” (Letherby, 2005, p. 4), but also helps us use women perspectives to explore and uncover patriarchal social dynamics and relationships. Previous research has demonstrated how interviews and narratives inform researchers about how intersectionality affects the lives of women being researched (Bell-Scott, 1994). Feminist research design with the inclusion of feminist theories can move research toward improving the lives of women due to a focus on promoting the need for social change and the value of diversity.

Qualitative methods were appropriate to this study because they allow participants to express their experiences entirely and in their own terms. In addition, qualitative methods have been recognized as consistent with feminist values because of “their potential to offer a more
Rationale for Feminist Narrative Methodology

According to Epstein, Jayaratne & Stewart (1983), feminist researchers should always ask themselves “how the research has potential to help women’s lives and what information is necessary to have such as impact” (p. 54). Feminist narrative methodology offered the tools needed for this study to capture and describe participants’ lives. Furthermore, through participants’ narrative accounts, I intended to increase public awareness and understandings of the Latina immigrants’ lives.

A feminist narrative design helps researchers explore the lives of individuals through the telling of stories. For Bloom (1998), “through deep interpretations of personal narratives we may gain a greater understanding of women’s lived experiences and the concrete realities of daily life” (p. 8). Feminist narrative methodology can provide a deep understanding of women’s participation in social life. In addition, feminist narrative methodology enables the ongoing consideration of the relationship between researchers and researched, particularly in studying private and sensitive issues. Bloom (1998) defines feminist methodology as having “a more interpersonal and reciprocal relationship between researchers and those whose lives are the focus of the research” (p. 1). As feminist researchers, we must work to achieve strong level of comfort with our participants by breaking down the barriers that exist between the researcher and the researched, and by providing a space where participants can comfortably converse and develop a relationship more like friendship or sisterhood instead of conventional positions between strangers (Boom, 1998).
Description of the Research Sample

A purposeful sampling procedure\(^7\) was used in this study. According to Patton (1990), “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169). Through this procedure, I identified and selected Latina immigrants who have previously contacted an anti-violence organization and have used its services. Purposeful sampling allowed for sampling of immigrant Latinas from different countries of origin who lived in Central Iowa.

A total of 10 interviews were conducted. The nationalities of the participants included Ecuadorian (1), Salvadorian (1), and Mexican (8). Ages ranged between 25 and 42, and their number of children ranged between 1 and 5. None of the participants had obtained more than a high school education. Eight participants had low-skill wage jobs, and two were unemployed. Respondents’ length of time living in the U.S. ranged between 5 and 18 years. All participants lived in an urban area in Iowa. One participant had lived in a rural area (of Iowa) for about 2 years. I did not ask respondents whether or not they were documented, but information about their legal status emerged in the course of the research. All Latina participants were native Spanish speakers and only two had some level of English proficiency. To ensure confidentiality, pseudonyms were assigned to participants.

\(^7\) Subjects are purposely selected because of some particular characteristics. The subjects of this study were selected because they were Latina victims of domestic violence and all have used anti-violence services and interventions.
Table 4.1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>No. children</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Job status</th>
<th>English proficiency</th>
<th>Length of time in the U.S.</th>
<th>Length of time in Iowa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Ecuadorian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Technical degree</td>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>12 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonia</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Salvadorian</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Sales job</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melba</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Suite manager</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rubi</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>14 years</td>
<td>14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lola</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Cashier</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lucia</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Office cleaning</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ana</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Waitress</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isabel</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elementary school</td>
<td>Hotel cleaning</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lina</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Sales job</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>6 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Design

The kinds of data that sought to address this study research questions was determined through a feminist theoretical framework and falls into three categories: (a) demographic, (b) perceptual, and (c) theoretical.

Requests were submitted to the ISU Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix E) in order to conduct the interviews and focus group. My first source in locating interviewees was the director of a nonprofit anti-violence organization with whom I have established contact\(^8\) in previous visits to her office. Then the advocate and volunteer coordinator of that non-profit

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\(^8\) The members of the board of directors of this agency requested that I present my research proposal. Their main concern was the confidentiality and privacy information of their clients. After our meeting they decided that it was necessary for me to take a 28 hour volunteer training so I could better understand domestic violence issues and responses. Once I had the training certification and I had my research proposal approved by my thesis committee, I started collecting data.
organization contacted Latinas who had used the services of that organization, informed them about my study, and asked if they were willing to participate. After that, I contacted by phone those individuals who were willing to participate, explained the study, and asked if they were willing to participate in a face-to-face interview on a day, time, and location convenient for them. I also asked if they were willing to participate subsequently in a focus group with other Latinas who had received services from the same anti-violence organization.

At the beginning of my meetings with participants for both the interviews and the focus groups, I explained them the purpose of and my interest in this topic. I encouraged participants to ask me any question or to address any concern about this project. The creation of this shared communication enabled us to eliminate the feeling of power or distance that usually comes from "othering" respondents (Fine, 1998) while researchers explore their lives. The main concern of many participants was my intentions for doing this research. After my explanation, they found this research to be very powerful and helpful for other Latina victims who are not aware of services addressing domestic violence issues. Then, I gave participants a signed copy of the consent form, asked them to read it, and then signed two copies of the consent form, one for them and one for my records.

Understanding that there could have been different levels and types of language use among my participants, I asked them for their language preference and, accordingly, offered the consent form and all information related to the study in both Spanish and English. I gave participants the option of being interviewed and participating in the focus group in their language of preference. Spanish was the only language used by all service recipients. I am a native speaker of Spanish, so interviews and focus group were conducted in Spanish.
Although I offered transportation to respondents, most of them agreed to meet with me at the anti-violence organization location. Only 3 participants agreed to be interviewed at their homes, at times that were more convenient for them. All participants were interviewed in-depth for between 45 minutes to 1 hour. All were given a chance to review the summaries of the transcripts in a subsequent meeting, but many were not able to participate because of time constraints (many were working or busy and did not have time to meet).

Data-Collection Method

The use of multiple methods and triangulation was critical in seeking to gain an in-depth exploration of Latina victims’ experiences with anti-violence responses. For Brantlinger, Jimenez, Klingner, Pugach & Richardson (2005), triangulation is a credibility measure for qualitative research that searches for convergence of, and consistency among evidence from multiple data collection sources such as interviews, focus groups, observations and documents. Similarly, Jick (1979) argues that “the effectiveness of triangulation rests on the premise that the weaknesses in each single method will be compensated by the counterbalance strengths of another” (p. 604). For this reason, this strategy added rigor and depth to my study and substantiated the information that was gathered.

Because my goal was to understand Latinas’ experiences, it was essential to have the flexibility that using multiple methods would allow so that I could be responsive to my participants. The notion of multiple sources of information was relevant because of the need to understand the experiences of Latina victims with advocacy services from different perspectives. While interviews allowed me to gain insight into the lives of my research participants, the focus group complemented and expanded that data. In addition, the focus group functioned as a source
of empowerment for Latina victims, gave them an opportunity to share their struggles and realized that they are not the only ones who have faced problems of violence.

**Interviews**

Interviews were the primary data collection method used. The use of this method gave me the opportunity to gather rich and detailed data through the narrative accounts of Latinas. Furthermore, it offered me the possibility to clarify and corroborate their statements and to explore additional information when needed. Oakley (1981) states that a major benefit of collecting data through interviews is that they offer the potential of mutual interaction in which the researcher is open and gives something of herself by answering questions when asked. This type of reciprocity, Oakley argues, lets respondents get a degree of control over the research process, and breaks down the hierarchy between the researchers and the researched. Since my study addressed the very sensitive issue of domestic violence, it was important to develop research relationships with my respondents so they could feel empowered and free to express their stories.

In her book on feminist methodology and narrative interpretation, Bloom (1998) offers seven research propositions that could guide any feminist research. I employed four of those propositions during my interviewing process and focus group discussions. First, feminist methodology should break down the one-way hierarchical framework of traditional interviewing techniques. Feminist interviews helped me to engage and interact with my participants. Feminist interviews allowed me to strive for intimacy from which I was able to develop some sort of relationship with respondents. Feminist interviews were dialogic in that both my respondents and I revealed ourselves and reflected on these disclosures. Second, as a feminist researcher I gave focused attention to and non-judgmental validation of my respondents' personal narratives. Third,
in feminist methodology, the traditional "stranger-friend" continuum may be lengthened to a "stranger-friend-surrogate family" continuum, which can allow the connection between women to be a source of both intellectual and personal knowledge. I presented myself as a Latina researcher interested in my participants live experiences and I was always open to questions related to personal interests in this research. Finally, as a feminist researcher I strove for democratic relationships with my respondents by making space for them to narrate their stories as they desired; and by respecting the editorial wishes of the respondents regarding the final product or text.

With these propositions in mind, I sought for the interviews and focus group to be more like informal conversations, focusing my attention on my participants and their responses without judging their experiences with partner abuse or anti-violence services. Although my intention was to keep interviews informal and conversational, I planned my interview schedule with open-ended questions to guide the interviews process. The format of the interviews was semi-structured, in order to allow me to steer the discussion.

The research questions were intended to bring conversation about Latina participants’ accounts of anti-violence services. To develop these questions I used Charmaz’ (2006) recommendations on crafting open-ended questions. In order to understand Latina victims’ views of their experiences with advocacy responses, the questions in the interview and focus group guides (Appendix A & B) were meant to evoke responses on a range of issues related to the obstacles they faced when seeking out help, the way they perceive current services and interventions and their view on advocacy institutions with regard Latina victims’ needs. Customary to most interviews, our discussion often finished with demographic questions (e.g. marital status, education, employment, age, country of origin, etc.). The interviews lasted from
45 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews were tape recorded, with respondents’ permission, in order to ensure an accurate transcription of responses. Participants were reminded that anything they heard and said during the group discussion would be kept confidential.

**Focus Groups**

Focus groups were used to corroborate interview data and expand on information needed to answer the research questions. In addition, the focus group allowed for exploration of Latina participants’ experiences and perceptions about anti-violence services that might not have been revealed through the interviews. Focus groups are useful because they combine the strengths of in-depth interviewing with those of participant observation for the collection of rich data (Montell, 1999). The dialogues, discussions and participants’ interactions in a focus group provide valuable comparative data among participants. The focus group allowed me to observe how the intersections of immigration status, country of origin, age, ethnicity, English proficiency and economic status function as obstacles when seeking help. In addition, through their group discussions, I was able to identify differences and similarities about the group members’ perceptions of support networks and advocacy interventions. As Montell (1999) notes, group members can ask questions of one another, and they may challenge as well as support one another’s statements, insisting on a fuller or less self-serving telling than an interviewer could. The collective interactions of Latina groups also allowed me to gather a large amount of data from their spontaneous responses.

For those who are marginalized or silenced in a mainstream society, just participating in a discussion group on a topic can be empowering (Sprague, 2005). Latina participants, who might be isolated because of immigration status, lack of language proficiency, financial dependency
and many other factors, might use these discussions to create an empowering experience with group testimony about their struggles experiencing partner abuse.

According to Madriz (1998), focus groups offer participants a safe environment where they can share their thoughts and experiences in the company of people who share a social location, and come from same ethnic and gender backgrounds. Furthermore, Madriz argues that focus groups are the framework of collective testimonies and group resistance narratives that serve to expose and validate women’s everyday experiences of subjugation. Because a focus group was conducted with Latina immigrants with common experiences and related issues with partner abuse, some participants reported that they found the experience very enjoyable and stimulating. For those participants who could have felt intimidated or uncomfortable when discussing their experiences in a group of peers, personal interviews provided them a space to feel free to express their stories.

Upon completion of the interviews, the focus group was conducted at a different site: another service agency from which the participants had received some services and which was more conveniently located for them. After calling all ten participants, and explaining the focus group’s goal, just four respondents were willing to participate in a focus group. Time constraints was the reason given by women who chose not to participate in this second part of the study.

The focus group lasted one hour. The themes addressed were determined on the basis of the interview data. Questions addressed service recipients’ experiences of economic and emotional transition following domestic violence incidents. Discussions focused on the ways Latinas were rebuilding their lives in the community, and their experiences with support services and assistance from advocates. I also asked about their expectations regarding services and
resources, and the extent to which anti-domestic violence service organizations have met their needs (Appendix B).

In the interviews I asked participants questions regarding their marital status, English proficiency, age, educational background, work experience and number of years living in the U.S. This demographic information was needed to understand how those characteristics may affect Latinas seeking help. In addition, it helped me identify similarities and differences in service perceptions among Latina participants. Second, through interviews and focus groups I explored Latina participants’ descriptions of their experiences with anti-violence services, and their perceptions when connecting with those services. Considerations on how Latinas went about obtaining what they needed to gain access to services were also taken into account. Third, feminist theories helped me explain how Latina victims could be emotionally and socially oppressed because domestic violence services may not be culturally adapted, and how the obstacles they experience in building effective connections may be the result of ineffective responses to women from minority groups. Finally, as stated above, a feminist narrative methodology was employed because through their narratives, Latinas’ experiences with organizational responses can be reviewed to provide a context for understanding the issues faced by those individuals regarding current services and programs. To gather the information needed to answer the study’s research questions, qualitative methods were used. Qualitative methods allowed for active listening and helped to foster a connection between the researcher and the researched.

Methods for Data Analysis and Synthesis

My major professors and I were the only investigators with access to the data, which were in tape-recorded form. I transcribed data from the interviews and the focus group (in
Spanish). I translated participants’ quotes into English, and the English versions are presented here (see Appendix D for the verbatim Spanish quotes). Subjects were assigned a unique numeric code and this code was used on the tapes and transcriptions instead of participants’ names. Personal identifiers were destroyed within a week following the interview. The study records were kept in a locked file cabinet in my house. Once the tape recorded data were transcribed, the audio files were destroyed.

To analyze the data I used a constant comparison method\(^9\) of data reduction and display, to identify the major themes and issues related to the research questions. I also identified significant accounts that for me exemplified participants’ perceptions on the issues that I felt were most salient. I began by reading and rereading the transcripts to get an initial sense of the data and issues. Then, using a constant comparative method, I identified the initial codes in the transcripts. I read line by line of each response (of each participant) and I wrote an initial code\(^10\) in front of each line. Through those codes I classified items of information pertinent to answering research questions. At the beginning I had over 95 initial codes which then were grouped and regrouped into themes to address research questions. This process allowed me to condense and organize my data into categories that made sense in terms of those questions. Then I labeled the first category as “Barriers influencing immigrant Latina victims’ help-seeking behaviors.” The subcategories related to that domain included immigration status, language proficiency, lack of knowledge of resources, inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms, fear of

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\(^9\) Constant comparison means that every time I selected a line (or response), and coded it with a label, I compared it with all those lines I have already coded that way. This process ensured that my coding was consistent and offered me the possibility of deleting codes that didn’t fit or that there were other phenomena in response or lines that I needed to code in another way (Gibbs & Taylor, 2005)

\(^10\) Codes are the “names or symbols used to stand for a group of similar terms, ideas, or phenomena” that researchers can notice in their data (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999, p.55)
partner, isolation, and feelings of shame. The second category developed from codes was “perceptions and experiences of Latina victims with current anti-violence services.” I labeled it that way because many of participants’ responses were related to their experiences (positive and negative) with the services and programs addressing domestic violence. The last category was named “perceptions of how immigrant Latina victims believe advocacy services need to change.” This category was another major and constant theme that emerged from several participants’ responses at the end of interviews and focus groups. Once I developed the appropriated label for categories and subcategories, I began writing analytic memos about each theme. Through memos, I created meaningful definitions of each category from participants’ responses that I used later to analyze and write about my data. For example, for “barriers keeping participants from seeking help” I wrote the memo: “A significant theme that emerged across many participants was various barriers to using anti-violence services.” Barriers constituted a major reason for participants not contacting an agency. These barriers included: immigration status, fear of partner, inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms, etc. After that, I wrote a memo for each subcategory. For instance, in the case of immigration status I defined it, “Immigration status barrier occurs when a victim person, who has not legal documents to live or stay in the U.S., is afraid to report her abuse because she believes she may be deported.” The same process was conducted with each category and subcategory.

The data from the focus group were analyzed through the application of code mapping. I read through the text and found recurrent issues (same process done for interviews). Those issues formulated the same categories developed from interviews, to explore research questions 1 and 2. Data from the focus group corroborated and expanded information from interviews. Information related to categories identified in interviews was added to those themes.
**My Role as a Researcher**

I am a Latina graduate student focused on the social sciences. I decided to study social sciences because I have a particular interest in Latino community issues in the U.S. I became interested in exploring Latinas’ experiences with domestic violence services and organizational responses in the course of my work with a professor studying Latino/a immigration to rural areas in the Midwest. I worked as her assistant during a summer and participated in several interviews she conducted in 2008. As she talked with Latina immigrants, it became clear that some of them have had experiences with domestic violence and have had difficulties connecting with advocates. I began to wonder how Latina victims could effectively connect with support systems and receive the help needed to meet their needs. After doing some preliminary reading and reflecting on the subject area, I decided to embark on a research study that would eventually help Latina victims who live in the Midwest overcome the effects of abuse. I am truly convinced that this research would generate new knowledge from the stories of Latina victims’ experiences with services in the Midwest, and I think that my work would stand as a challenge to what had been done before about this issue (nothing).

Bias and subjectivity were concerns in this research. Because I am a privileged Latina student with an opportunity to go to school and do research in the U.S., I developed this study with some knowledge (rationale from class materials and related theories) about Latina victims’ experiences with partner abuse, and how current advocacy organization work can contribute to the subordination of victims, that could have leaded to partial or even distorted collection, interpretation and production of data. But bias and subjectivity are expected when doing feminist research, and as Letherby (2003) notes “bias is in fact inevitable and the only thing we can do is to aim to make bias visible. Furthermore, it is better to understand the complexities
within research rather than to pretend that they can be controlled.” I concur with Letherby’s position and I do reflect on biased sources and their effect on useful data. With this issue in mind, I was committed to engage in continual critical self-reflection during the whole research process.

The role of the researcher, either as insider or outsider within the fieldwork, is a major issue of conducting qualitative research; or put it in another way, the extent of being socially distant or close to the kind of people under study might affect the accuracy of the collected data and the subsequent analysis that unfold (Young, 2004). There are qualitative researchers (Merton, 1972) that assert that researchers who share membership in the same social categories as their participants (race, gender and class), are best suited to uncover ideas and opinions about issues related to those people or to those categories. Some others argue that in certain cases “the comfort or familiarity that comes with insider status can also promote impatience or confusion when one or more interacting parties do not seem to follow the implicit rules of dialogue for people who are familiar with each other” (Young, pp 194). Other researchers believe that there is not singular insider or outsider status within the course of fieldwork, but rather the researcher positions depend on the social conditions affecting the research endeavor (De Andrade, 2000). In case of my own work as a Latina researcher conducting research with Latinas, this was an issue that I took into account from the beginning of this project. For instance, growing up in a Latino culture help me to identify and understand specific issues and experiences of Latinas with domestic violence (e.g., machismo or role models of males and females). In addition, being a Latina in our society and often exposed to discrimination (because of gender, age, education level, or marital status) somehow help me to sympathize with victims of violence since I am a victim of the system as well. However, through the whole research process I could keep some
sort of outsider status because I am not a victim or survivor of domestic violence so I was able to see “objectively” the victims’ perspectives and experiences within violence contexts.

Sharing the same social categories of ethnicity, primary language, and gender helped me access and gain the trust of my participants. However, the fact that I am a graduate student certainly distanced me from them because of my class location and education. I sought to minimize the distance from my participants through the fostering of informality in the conversations with participants and through a focus on their experiences and narratives. During our conversations I shared personal interests and particular experiences as an immigrant, Latina and student. This position enabled me to acquire meaningful and honest data because respondents felt comfortable to openly talk about their life experiences. In addition, holding education resources (academic support and status) might have affected the construction and presentation of this study results. I sought to minimize possible biases that could affect the interpretation of results through ongoing reflexivity and acknowledging my intellectual privilege and my own location in the research process. I was committed to seeing things from the perspectives of my participants avoiding academic perspectives about the topic addressed in this thesis. It is also important to note that at the time of the study I was working as a volunteer at the anti-violence organization, and that provided my respondents a sense of comfort in interacting with me. Yet, I remained distant from participants because of my reflecting on possible bias or shortcomings that would affect the validity and resulting work of this research.

**Ethical Considerations**

The probability for participant and researcher discomfort in these interviews was greater than normal, given that domestic violence is such a personal topic. While the risk of emotional discomfort in the interviews could have been present, it was somehow minimized because the
respondents were women who had already sought out help and worked with domestic violence organizations. Furthermore, they all expressed a willingness to talk about their experiences prior to being contacted by the researcher. Regardless, I emphasized and reminded respondents that they could decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any point if needed.

In addition, participants and I shared information about other regional domestic violence nonprofit organizations or resources that may be of assistance to the respondent. The safety and well-being of participants was also a concern. Most of participants were undocumented or were in the process of changing their residency status. I explained respondents issues related to confidentiality (addressed on the inform consent form) and reminded them that information related to their legal status would be removed from data upon their request. Subjects' daily routine was interrupted. I sought to decrease such interruption by clarifying the research purposes and the benefits the research might represent for the community. I reminded participants that they may decline to answer any question at any point of the focus groups. Discomfort was ameliorated by the fact that participants chose the place (the anti-violence organization) and times that were convenient to them for the interviews, and I chose the place for the focus group after giving them different options. The location that was chosen was the most convenient for all participants. In addition, I provided participants with a written consent form (Appendix F) that explained the purpose of the research. The written consent form explained issues of confidentiality and participants’ rights during the study’s process. This form was available in Spanish and English and I asked participants for their language preference. They rather signed the Spanish version of the form. The consent process included a written document of consent that is written according to IRB guidelines.
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

In this chapter, I present the key findings obtained from the 10 in-depth interviews, as well as from the focus group conducted with 4 of the participants. I also provide my interpretative analysis of these research findings. The elements that frame my analysis include: (a) connective patterns among the experiences of Latina victim participants with anti-violence services outreach, as well as their perceptions of current interventions; (b) ways in which research participants described and understood those connections, and; (c) consistencies or inconsistencies with the literature and theoretical framework. This chapter analyzes, interprets, and synthesizes the findings. The chapter is organized by the following analytic categories:

   *(Research Question 1)*

2. Perceptions and experiences of immigrant Latina victims with advocacy services.
   *(Research Question 2)*

3. Perceptions of how immigrant Latina victims believe advocacy services need to change so victims of domestic violence can satisfy their full range of needs.
   *(Emerging Category)*

Following is a discussion of the analysis of findings by categories with details that support explanations for each finding. According to Denzin (1989), thick description allows researchers to explain a broad range of experiences, and thereby provide an opportunity for readers to enter into a study and better understand of the reality of research participants. Thick descriptions in this study allowed me to focus on the experiences of my participants. Because my goal was to capture the richness and complexities of Latina victims’ experiences with anti-violence services, I have included descriptive quotations taken from interview transcripts.
Further, I included incidental data to enhance the discussion and explained my research results with the feminist theories stated in the literature and theoretical framework chapters.

**Analytic Category 1**

**Barriers influencing immigrant Latina victims’ help-seeking behaviors**

A significant theme that emerged from interviews with many participants was a variety of barriers to using anti-violence services. Barriers constituted 80% (8 out of 10) of participants’ reasons for not contacting an advocacy agency. Among the barriers cited by participants were their immigration status, fear of partner, inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms, lack of awareness of resources and lack of language proficiency. In addition, participants identified isolation and shamed as other significant obstacles keeping them from seeking help.

**Immigration Status**

Many participants indicated that immigration status was one of the major reasons keeping them from seeking help or reporting the abuse to the authorities. Undocumented participants, or those who have unstable residency, believed that reporting the abuse or seeking help could have led to their deportation. In their responses, some participants identified their partners’ threats of deportation as a main factor in avoiding disclosure of their abuse. Participants expressed their perceptions in the following statements:

“He beat me up and I could have called the police because that was I thought to do... but he threaten me... he told me that if I called the police I was gonna lose out ...because they (police officers) would take him (deport him) but they would also take me because I didn’t have legal documents... he told me that police officers from A (name of town) would get the people from immigration authorities... and that I shouldn’t do nothing.”

(Sonia)

“I used to live here back in 1995... I was experiencing abuse from my first husband... but I never called for help because I didn’t know there was an organization (anti-
violence organization)… I don’t know if M (name of organization) existed… but you know… back then any undocumented person was afraid… I never looked for help because people said we could be deported… I never sought help even though I knew I was here in the U.S. and I was experiencing domestic abuse.” (Maria)

Such assertions might be warranted; a number of studies dealing with obstacles influencing immigrant victims’ help-seeking behaviors recognize that perpetrators often use their victims’ illegal resident status to threaten deportation if the violence is disclosed (Dutton et al., 2000). If we consider the implications of being an immigrant with lack of language proficiency and with little knowledge of how the U.S. legal system works, undocumented immigrant victims might be unaware of the legal procedures preventing deportation for immigrants experiencing abuse (Sen, 1999; Hass et al., 2000; and Raj & Silverman, 2002). Therefore, abusers who use the deportation threat may find it an effective control tactic, exacerbating Latina victims’ vulnerability to domestic violence. The Immigrant Power and Control Wheel\(^\text{11}\) provides a good overview of multiple ways in which immigration status can be used by abusers as part of a system of power and control. In addition, undocumented immigrant victims may not disclose the abuse because they feel intimidate or have trouble trusting legal experts because of bad experiences with the law enforcement system from their home countries. One of the participants, Maria, reflected this view when she said “The first time I tried to seek help was back home (Ecuador) because I was living in my country… and I called the police but it took them so long to get to my house… and I don’t think they believe me when I spoke to them.” Severe mistrust of the authorities and the lack of awareness of legal procedures make it difficult to Latina victims to access some avenues for safety available for all victims of domestic violence living in the U.S.

With these dynamics in mind, Multicultural/Multiracial feminism makes the case that Latina immigrant victims do not disclose their abuse because their abusers take advantage of their illegal positions, or because they do not believe authorities can help. This may happen because immigrant victims are immersed in a mainstream culture, the U.S. society, that often fails to inform immigrants about their rights and options under oppressive circumstances, and neglects their experiences with domestic abuse because of the lack of recognition of the structural and cultural constrains of victims due to their residency status.

**Fear of Partner**

The findings reveal that some participants (5 out of 10) in this study indicated they did not seek help from anti-violence services because they were afraid of their abuser partners. They felt they became frightened of their partners because of the severe violence they experienced, and did not look for help before because they did not want to exacerbate the abuse. Two participants described their experiences:

“There was fight and fight!!... and alcohol was always involved... and abuse... and instability because you feel like... like in my case... during weekends... the weekend was coming and I didn’t want have to deal with anything... my mind was prepared to what those ugly days were gonna be.” (Lucia)

“I was always afraid of him... I could easily break into tears just by listen to his voice... and then he would ask why you’re crying? Are you crazy? and wouldn’t say anything but one day I told him I was afraid of him... then he said: I don’t believe you... if I really wanted to kill you I would have done it already.” (Angela)

Fear of partner is an emerging finding in this study, and may be explained through the dynamics that the literature addresses as factors increasing partner abuse in Latino communities. Perilla (1999) expands on those dynamics identifying them as “machismo” in Latino males and “marianismo” in Latino females. Characteristics attributed to machismo include sexual prowess; high alcohol consumption and aggressiveness; and characteristics related to marianismo include
submissiveness, deference to others, and self-sacrifice. Perilla points out that the combination of machismo and marianismo in the Latino culture may increase the probability of domestic violence for Latinas. The patriarchal cultural structures found in Latino culture may influence the way Latinas respond to oppressive situations. Living within a culture where men have absolute power and control, reinforce Latinas’ fear of male partners, and in the case of abusive relationships, severe abuse creates unsafe environments when immigrant Latina victims confront or leave their abusers. Because Latinas may perceive male dominance and control as typical traits of their relationships, it may be inconceivable to victims that authorities or other services providers would intercede on their behalf. In addition to that, some Latina victims experience fear of the consequences of police interventions, such as abuser reprisal or the abuser being arrested (Engel, B., Fugate, M., Landis, L., Naureckas, S., & Riordan, K, 2005) or deported to his home country. Because Latina victims cannot control the process or outcome of authorities’ interventions, some remain silent or underreport the abuse.

**Inability to Understand Domestic Violence Given Cultural Norms**

The inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms was also an emerging theme cited in the responses of participants. This issue accounts for subsequent participant perceptions regarding some level of tolerance of partner violence within the Latino culture, also addressed through the previous theme. Among the most interesting comments were those by Lucia and Lina:

“I waited 5 years to seek help... you know it (domestic violence) is like a slow process and you don’t know it is happening... I have a friend who experienced abuse and I knew she came to this organization and everything... but it’s hard to accept that you are experiencing domestic violence... it was hard for me...it was like I wasn’t in that.... I didn’t feel I was in that circle... I felt like I could handle the situation...I felt like ... I felt like if we would separate for awhile he would change... and then you know... you think that’s normal... in Mexico it is normal to have fights... that they (partners) can drink...
like there still machismo in Mexico... like everything is part of marriage... I thought it (domestic violence) was part of marriage.”

“What happened was that I didn’t know I was experiencing domestic violence... I got married and I didn’t what was going on... he was very strange... we would hit the trash can... he would get upset and I was scared... but I didn’t know that was abuse... I thought that was normal... and he would be fine... but things got worse... things (violence) happened more often and I didn’t like it.”

When I asked Lina if the Latino cultural views of marriage influenced her perceptions of her own situation and played a role as an impediment to seek help, she answered negatively; however, she believed that Latinas are usually unaware of experiencing abuse when in fact they are. She said:

“...I didn’t... that idea at home no... like we are Catholics... my parents got divorced... so we didn’t have idea that if your husband hits you, you had to stay? no ....but I didn’t know what was abuse back then... didn’t know exactly what meant abuse... like in the movies you can see a guy yelling at her or whatever but that’s it... I mean we, Latinas, don’t know how much could be abuse... we cannot recognize it (abuse)... when we get married we do not recognize it... we think it is normal.”

Participants identified Latino cultural views of marriage as factors influencing some victims’ perceptions of abusive partner relationships, and that these cultural views were playing a role as impediments to seeking help. It is not surprising that some participants would cite greater difficulties in identifying abuse because of the absence of physical abuse in their relationships (although there was verbal or emotional abuse). This lack of understanding of domestic violence is a result of the Latino perceptions about partner relationships. Literature sheds light on the importance of the strong values about marriage within the Latino culture. According to Perilla, Bakerman and Norris (1994), Latinas are taught that males are entitled to dominance within the family and that females are to serve as caretakers within the family system. If the husband or partner of a Latina chooses to abuse her, it may be extremely difficult for the victim to account for the abuse because of the hierarchical and patriarchal nature of Latino families. For Perilla
(1999), these patriarchal values and practices, where the man is regarded as the head of the household, contributes to the Latino culture neglect (or tolerance) of Latinos’ violence towards Latinas.

In the case of some participants who were aware of the abuse, other cultural values may influence their response to domestic violence. For instance, the notion of “familismo,” or family loyalty and solidarity, is a pervasive value in Latino culture (Galanti, 2003). The strong sense of “familismo” can provide Latina victims with a sense of belonging, and support and care for husbands or partners, or family members. When thinking about disclosing their experience with partner abuse to others outside the family system, it is not surprising that some Latina victims may find themselves torn between their commitment to preserve and maintain the marriage (or partner relationship) and their obligations to themselves.

**Lack of Knowledge of Resources**

Few participants perceived the lack of knowledge of services as a barrier to using anti-violence interventions. When I asked participants to think about the obstacles faced by victims who recently moved to the U.S. or those who live in isolated areas, respondents stated that for new-comers, the lack of information about services might be a problem because they may not know the city or the places they need to go to get help. One respondent, who was the only participant who has previously lived in a rural area, identified difficulties in connecting to services when she was living in a small town far from an urban area, because she found it hard to find information about sources of help in such an area. Some others explained they knew about services, but they did not know where to go, or they were unsure of their eligibility for those services. Two participants conveyed these views when they said:
“To be honest... when I had that problem (domestic violence) I didn’t have any problem (to learn about services)... I mean I know DSM (city) very well and I can go everywhere and it wasn’t hard (to find this organization) because when I started coming to the support groups and presentations it was easy to find the location... but for other people with that problem (abuse) and who need it (help) who don’t know this city is gonna be hard...” (Maria)

“Well... if they (victims) live in DSM (urban city) they can find information... like in the newspaper or the Latino phonebook... because I have seen it... but... like from my own experience I can tell... like I lived 8 years in S (town) Iowa, and there are not Latinos there... there is not a Latino community... we were the only Latinos in the area....and I took me long time to learn about it (services)...there was no newspaper... I didn’t see any information about services.” (Rubi)

According to these participants’ responses, it appears that domestic violence services may not be well enough integrated into many communities, including those in rural areas. There could be a lack of criteria to determine the methods utilized to inform the public of rural areas of anti-violence services, and current programs may not be effectively promoting the inclusion and meaningful participation of Latina victims living in those areas. I argue that the reason for this lack of response is because we still live in a hierarchical society where immigrant battered women are seen as “deficient,” “inferior,” “exotic,” or simply identified as the “other” (Dasgupta, 2005), and their lives and unique hardships are likely to be neglected and ignored. Immigrant Latina victims are not only marginalized by race, ethnicity, rural location, or immigration status (that usually place them in a greater risk for partner abuse) but are also ignored by (or excluded from) institutional responses, falling through the cracks of a “social safety net” that fails to protect them. It should be noted that only two participants addressed this issue, and that further research with rural victims of domestic violence would be pertinent to generalize this judgment.

Many of participants spoke favorably about advocacy services outreach and acknowledged that information about formal services for Latina victims is accessible for anyone,
through several sources namely: clinics, law offices, church, schools, social workers, Latino and American stores, gas stations, signs and fliers, friends, other nonprofit organizations, and the media (newspaper, radio, and TV). The next statements convey participants’ perceptions about the accessibility of information about anti-violence services in their community:

“I learned about it (nonprofit organizations) through Hispanic people … they talked about H (nonprofit organization helping Latinos) here in DSM and I’ve been living here for 11 years … well I think H started first … long time ago but they help you to connect with medical services, church, like when police officers give you tickets … things like that but they don’t help you with that (domestic abuse).” (Melba)

“When you go to see the doctor you see flyers at the clinic … the Hispanic clinic … I think you learn a lot from other people … like if I saw somebody experiencing the same situation that happened to me (abuse) I would tell her about this organization … so through word of mouth people know.” (Lola)

It should be noted that many participants in this study had lived a number of years in the area, and they had some social networking within the Latino community. This makes it appear that access to information about services and resources created to meet these participants’ needs was easily accessible. It is difficult to discuss the availability of information about services with Latina victims who live in isolated areas, where services are nonexistent or poorly advertised. Because this study focuses on perceptions of services that are taken advantage of, my conclusions are necessarily limited to the population of Latina victims of violence who live in urban areas, and have been successful at reaching out to services.

*Lack of Language Proficiency*

Most of participants did not cite lack of language proficiency as an impediment to seek or obtain help. This finding revealed that all participants in this study indicated they found information about services in Spanish, and that all services providers spoke Spanish. Many existing anti-violence services provided by advocacy agencies are culturally competent and
adequately reflect the demographics of the population being served. The fact that advocacy agencies are incorporating language accessibility and cultural competency into staff members, and in the organization brochures and website, demonstrates a level of respect of the diversity within the Latino community in the Midwest, and the organization’s willingness to employ practices that have positive impacts on immigrant victims despite their race or country of origin.

Only one of the 10 participants cited the lack of language proficiency as a barrier at the time of obtaining help from authorities and advocacy services. The participant identified the lack of bilingual employees in law enforcement services and in a shelter as a significant impediment when she sought help and when she used services. This participant struggled with services provided by mainstream organizations like the police. As she put it:

“One time my partner was throwing pillows at me and I didn’t even know why so I called a policy officer who I knew spoke Spanish but then he sent other officers...and I do not speak English and they did so they talked to my partner because he speaks English... and my partner told them I was crazy and that he was leaving to work... so they left.” (Angela)

This participant also cited this barrier as another service provider’s barrier due to the lack of bilingual staff when she looked for help at a shelter:

“I stayed there (shelter) for a week... like I said before I do not speak English and I didn’t know how to drive... there was somebody speaking Spanish during the morning shifts and it was perfect... but later in the afternoon and night they change staff and it was hard... because you cannot... well I couldn’t tell them anything... I felt like I was there but I wasn’t at the same time... and then he (partner) asked me to come back and you know I didn’t have more options... I didn’t want to go back to the shelter... I didn’t do anything there.”

Advocacy institution should be analyzed in light of what Multicultural/Multiracial theory describes as the structural patterns of legal and social service systems that do not recognize the dynamics of race in regard to the assistance immigrant victims need. Multicultural feminists remind us that Latina victims play oppressed roles because of the fundamental belief that women
of “other” cultures are inferior to their White American counterparts. Thinking about immigrant women as an “other” allows society and its institutions to overlook their concerns and needs. Further, it might be that in the Midwest some mainstream organizations are unaware of a growing Spanish-speaking population and therefore assume that bilingual services are not needed. Lack of awareness of demographic changes in the Midwest may lead to a lack of commitment to the development of specific programs to address the improvement of services for immigrant victims, such as adequate training and language capacity to respond effectively to victims who are immigrants. Further research on the understandings of demographic trends in the Midwest needs to be done to confirm this assumption.

Experiencing Isolation

Two participants described the difficulty they had in connecting with advocacy agencies because of their experiences with isolation. Isabel stated: “I didn’t know about these organizations (advocates) because… I never would go out… he didn’t let me go out… and I didn’t have a car… so I didn’t leave my house… because you are isolated you don’t know about those services.” Another participant commented:

“I didn’t know people… I never left the house (crying)... and when I got here was during snow time... you know during the winter people don’t leave their houses... I did go out sometimes but I did it because he took me out... but if I wanted to leave (him) I didn’t know where to go... all was white... there were not people outside... I think there might be information about services back then (2001) but I didn’t know about it because I never left the house.... maybe the information was right there but I never saw it.... because now I can say there is a lot of information (about services)... I believe that if you stay in an abusive relationship is because of... I don’t know... you love that person (abuser) too much, or you don’t love yourself or something is wrong.” (Angela)

Literature has shown that isolation is an issue related to immigration that exacerbates domestic abuse in Latinas. Lischick (2007) attributed feelings of isolation among victims as a major factor keeping them from seeking interventions or community resources. The author pointed out that
the batterer or perpetrator usually separates the battered women from friends and families in the effort to destroy all competing relationships through isolation, secrecy and betrayal. The author found support from others researchers that the control of the abuser over his victim and the isolation components of battering substantially reduces a victim’s resources (Stark & Flitcraft, 1996). This theory suggests that the sense of isolation that these participants experienced is related to the fact that they were socially isolated within both their community and within the dominant U.S. culture, and that a main factor influencing their isolation is related to the beliefs of the Latino culture about the dominant roles of men. Literature also suggests that factors such as lack of language proficiency, lack of knowledge of existing community resources, and a lack of familiarity with the U.S. social system intensifies isolation and loneliness in immigrant victims (Goldberg, Hodoka, & Ramos-Lira, 2007). These two study participants did not speak English, did not work for pay, did not have any social network and were not aware of legal procedures in reference to their immigration status. Their narratives (and life experiences) lend support to how isolation associated with other factors has affected the help seeking behaviors of Latina victims.

** Feeling Ashamed **

Some participants (4 out of 10) indicated that feeling “ashamed” and “embarrassed” were strong motivators preventing them from seeking domestic violence services. Several factors were mentioned that contributed to the inhibition of disclosing the abuse to others. Feelings of shame were seen to be reinforced by close friends’ behaviours as well; specifically the likelihood to become a target for gossip. This idea is best illustrated by the comments of these participants:

"I was embarrassed... I didn’t want people to know about... that I was going to separate.... because this was my second separation.... I divorced once and it was hard for me to do it again... just to think about it...and then talking with my friends...then they
would start asking you about what happen and why... I mean... I was embarrassed... I don’t know.” “It is hard to find friends you can trust because they usually make fun of you... then they start talking saying things like: hey! look how bad he treats her he doesn’t love her... you know people start gossiping... and everyone hear about your problem... that is why I never said anything.” (Lucia)

“At the beginning... I don’t know... I was feeling so bad that I didn’t want to tell anyone because... I thought nobody was going to believe me because I felt like it was like gossip... so I felt embarrassed when I wanted to talk but... I mean it was something that I felt... I felt ashamed...” (Sonia)

When partner abuse occurs in Latino families, cultural beliefs are reflected in sayings such as “la ropa sucia se lava en casa,” (“the dirty laundry is washed at home”) and “el que diran” (“What will people say”) help label the problem of domestic violence as shameful and private (Edelson, Hokoda, & Ramos-Lira, 2007). The participants of this study may not have considered telling anyone because they understood partner abuse as a private matter and did not want to “air their dirty laundry in public.” The predominant thinking, that the family unit ought to be preserved at any cost (Goolkasian, 1986), may influence Latina victims to maintain their intimate relationship issues isolated from outside influences, and to avoid the possibility of embarrassment. Once again, the cultural views of family and marriage contribute to how Latinos define and act in response to issues related to partner abuse.

In conclusion, Latina victims’ help seeking behaviors are shaped by structural inequalities predicated on patriarchy and hierarchy. Although immigrant Latina victims are likely to face many barriers in their efforts to seek help, in the long run they may fare better or worse within mainstream institutions and advocacy organizations depending on the intersection of different sociostructural inequalities (their immigration status, lack of language proficiency, isolation, and cultural views of partner relationships) that may or may not place them in oppressive situations and locations.
Analytic Category 2

Perceptions and experiences of immigrant Latina victims with advocacy services

The other significant finding of this study is that current advocacy services and programs addressing domestic violence issues are meeting the full range of Latina victims’ needs. This finding is highly significant in terms of the overwhelming number of participants (10 of 10) who found the interventions effective, because services met their expectations and needs. Among the programs and services participants used were: crisis counseling and intervention, referrals to primary services providers such as law enforcement, domestic abuse and sexual assault criminal proceedings, hospital personnel, Department of Human Services (DHS), and emergency food and clothing. Some other services included: domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and education to victims, young adults, and school age children, 24 hour crisis line and victim support groups. The next section includes a further discussion of their expectations about anti-violence interventions before they sought help as well as their personal experiences once they connected with an advocacy agency.

Expectations of Services

Participants spoke of the expectations they had when they sought formal help from an advocacy agency. Participant descriptions demonstrated a need for crisis counseling and intervention. Some participants described that they needed understanding of their problem (domestic violence), peer counseling, as well as legal and financial assistance. They framed their expectations as follows:

“Well... when I was... the first thing I want to do was to get out (from the abusive relationship) and I wanted to get help with... you know... because I wasn’t feeling right... then I had to think about the bills... because you think about that... what are you gonna do alone... because some people tell you... you cannot do that (getting out) by yourself... so I needed to look for help... like I needed a job...and if you have kids well... if they...
don’t go to school... well mine go to school... thank God!... so I don’t need to find somebody to watch them... but there are a lot of people that need to childcare services.”  
(Ana)

The first thing I thought was counseling… I wanted them to help me with all I have in my head... I felt like my mind was broken... and I wanted help to get the U visa (legal remedy for undocumented victims of domestic abuse).”  
(Isabel)

Based on participant descriptions, there appeared to be a need for crisis counseling and intervention. Participants described a need for understanding their problem (domestic violence), peer counseling, as well as legal and financial assistance. Women who face partner abuse usually experience assault and coercive behaviors from their abusers. Those behaviors include: physical assault, psychological or emotional abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, intimidation and threats, and deprivation. It was not surprising that after facing some of these violence issues, participants were expecting comprehensive intervention and confidential advocacy services addressing their individual and specific needs through appropriate interventions.

Experiences with Services

All participants described their ultimate experiences with services and advocates as positive and beneficial. In their narratives of experiences with services, participants spoke favorably about advocacy interventions and described their perception of the effectiveness of the services aims to serve Latina victims of domestic abuse. These participants were explicit in describing their positive experiences with advocacy and advocates:

“Well through presentations and therapy... well they haven’t provided therapy with a psychologist but they are gonna get me one... but she (advocate) has helped me a lot... she talks to me and explains me that not all (men) act the same ....because you know you feel like you are blocked... and they try to break that block so you can be happy again... is like they get you out from a hole right? ... you feel like you don’t have the right to anything but they give you options... hope... to have a better future... not only for yourself but for your children... like the legal assistance so you can get your work visa....
They give you options so you can have more expectations about getting something better to your kids.” (Melba)

“These services are good... I like them a lot... they have helped me to feel much better.... They (advocates) have taught me... I have learned to love myself more... now I know that if I want my family to be well I have to feel fine first... and that I can depend on myself not on anyone else.” (Rubí)

With regard to Latina victims’ experiences with social services, research studies have shown that the issues and experiences of battered Latinas have not been taken into consideration in the human services and social work communities (Bonilla, 2002), and that Latina victims are not usually being properly served because of insufficient staff providing bilingual/bicultural services, and in extreme cases have been rejected from programs without proper referrals (Rivera, 2005).

The positive perceptions and experiences of Latina victims with anti-violence services in the Midwest are not so much to demonstrate the inadequate responses to helping battered women from different ethnic groups that previous research has revealed, but rather to build on this existing theory or to fill gaps that may exist in the literature of anti-violence responses for Latina victims. The findings in this category suggest that advocacy responses provided by an anti-violence organization in the Midwest, helped Latina victims of domestic violence navigate the systems of social services as they attempted to acquire the resources they need. Additionally, participant responses revealed that advocacy institution work has been effective in improving victims’ perceptions of their social support and individual well-being. I can conclude from these findings that advocacy approaches in the Midwest may be adequately accommodating the needs that Latina victims of domestic violence present; however, it should be noted that prospective respondents may have felt forced or obligated to comment favorably on their experiences with advocacy services because they may have felt they should have demonstrated appreciation to service providers and to the organization. Some participants were using services at the time of
the interviews and focus group, and some others needed to express their gratitude for all the help they received. Although I made it clear to participants that the information attained from this research was confidential, when I asked them to share the reasons for participating in this study, most of them conveyed they were thankful with the organization (and providers) and they wanted to demonstrate their appreciation in this way. I believe further research on Latina victims’ experiences with anti-violence services should include former clients that no longer use anti-violence services so findings can be more accurate and precise.

One participant complained and criticized service responses from a government assistance provider. She felt that a staff member was disrespectful and insensitive to her needs, and delayed her assistance without having any reason.

“They (Medicaid providers) didn’t want to help me with that assistance. She (White female Medicaid provider) asked how we were paying rent... I told her I didn’t have a job and that is why I was asking her for that aid... and she didn’t want to help me... she was making things harder... I didn’t have money to get food to my children for a completed month... so I came here (advocacy agency) and talked to Daisy (advocate) and she suggested talking to the lawyer about it... then my lawyer told me I didn’t qualify for Medicaid but my children did... so Daisy sent them (Medicaid providers) a fax saying that I just needed money for my children... but it took so long... I waited so much time... and now I know that it usually takes 24 hours to get the assistance approval ...but in my case it took them so long... I don’t know why.” (Lucia)

These types of challenges that Latina victims confront demonstrates how the services provided by mainstream organizations (such as the public welfare system) are limited and often flawed. This may occur because mainstream organizations lack socio-cultural understanding and/or may have discriminatory or insensitive attitudes toward immigrant Latina victims of partner abuse. It is important to note that one goal of the government is to provide assistance to those who are in need without fostering dependency; however, placing benefit barriers to Latinas makes it extremely difficult for social service providers to win the trust of Latina victims. The same
participant expressed her concerns about not qualifying for Medicaid because of her situation (immigration status).

The intersection of immigration status, ethnicity and gender restrict access to benefits disparately impact particular groups of the immigrant communities (Johnson, 1995) such as the Latino community. Reflecting on domestic violence policy and vulnerable families, feminists have argued that efforts to win the support of mainstream society and secure government resources have not attended to the experiences and needs of especially vulnerable abused women, those marginalized by their race, ethnicity, and social class (Crenshaw 1991; Kanuha 1996; Richie 2000). On the same issue, family researchers have reflected on the fact that those who are outside the White race may be more likely to be “perceived as behaving in ways that are outside the bounds of proscribed victims” (Purvin, 2007, p. 190). These two positions suggest that public policies addressing domestic violence may be ineffective and at worse may increase the likelihood of abuse for minority women who are usually affected by it (Dasgupta & Eng, 2003). The experience of this participant could be evidence of the discrimination against women victims of “other” groups, within a context of a continued marginalization where their sociocultural needs and challenges are often neglected and underestimated.

While two participants appreciated the assistance provided by advocacy agencies and spoke positively about current anti-violence services, they also expressed the need for more advocacy staff available to support Latina clients’ needs. They perceived the lack of number of advocates as a complex factor that impedes advocacy institutions in delivering improved services. They stated:

“They (advocates) try to help you a lot but I think they need more personnel... you know... somebody that would help them to receive and talk to clients while they (advocates) are busy with other clients...because sometimes you got here (organization)
and they all are busy with their clients and there is nobody... like a receptionist... helping the clients that are waiting... I think they need one more member of staff... I know they don’t have the resources to pay more employees but I think it would be good if they could.” (Maria)

“Sometimes they (advocates) don’t have time for you... I mean... they are too busy... and sometimes you try to get an appointment during your day off but they are busy... they have a lot of work... and I think they need more people working here... they need extra help... more staff... I think there are 2 or 3 advocates who are working in all the cases... and we are like a thousand of clients... because you know... there are a lot of Hispanics women with the same problem.” (Melba)

What these participants identify as a problem may be a result of the lack of financial support (to hire new staff) from the government or private stakeholders. A great deal of the resources used by anti-violence organizations to develop programs, services, and to hire employees comes from federal grants, such as grants under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Studies have shown that services providers who are trying to address domestic violence issues work with scarce resources, because domestic violence services are often underfunded statewide (Rivera, 2004). While the federal and state governments and the National Institute of Justice continue to pour millions and millions of dollars tracking court records of domestic violence, of prosecutions, of arrests, of reported incidents, and of recidivism (Lawless, 2001), little has been done to secure services for the victims.

This is a disturbing reflection. Male violence against women (in the response to batterers’ violence) is producing a mega industry based on domestic violence, where the inappropriate distribution of funds adversely impacts victimized women and overlooks their needs. Some mainstream responses to domestic violence, in this case the lack of resources for services working with Latina victims, is a phenomenon that, in tandem with domestic violence, perpetrates double gender subordination.
Analytic Category 3

Perceptions of how immigrant Latina victims believe advocacy services need to change so victims of domestic violence can meet their full range of needs.

Participants’ responses identified clear areas for change in services that Latina victims are presently encouraged to employ. All 10 of the participants described how they wanted to see new programs and interventions addressing issues that advocacy agencies have overlooked in the past. Some respondents (2 out of 10) respondents were concerned about the lack of information of resources that new comers or invisible populations, such as those in rural areas, may have. Other participants expressed the need for more focus on outreach for Latina victims who are not aware of services and resources:

“More information… like in the radio… flyers… in magazines or news paper… because there are people that don’t know about M (advocacy agency)… they have no idea that this organization can help them.” (Maria)

“They should make more flyers but they should go house by house handing in those flyers… so many people can learn about these services… or they can just leave the flyers in the mailbox so people know where they (organizations) are located and what they do.” (Isabel)

The participants’ perceived need for outreach programs targeting these populations may be a result of a lack of criteria of advocacy services determining the methods utilized to inform the rural public of anti-violence services. The desired changes for services, particularly, the inclusion and meaningful participation of new-comer Latinas in outreach programs, as well as those who live in the Midwest rural areas would be a step to move Latinas away from their marginalized locations within the dominant U.S. culture.
Two participants found it important to draw attention to issues that some isolated Latina victims may perceive as barriers to seek out help with advocacy institutions, such as lack of transportation. This idea is best illustrated by the comment of two participants, who said:

“They should have transportation... to help those people who don’t have a car and don’t know how to get to the organization... because sometimes they don’t have the resources to get out... so if they could offer transportation to them (victims) that would help them a lot.” (Isabel)

“They don’t do home visits... I would like to see that change... they should come to your house... because I remember when I was in that situation (domestic violence)... I couldn’t drive...I remember getting lost so easy... and I think there may be a lot of people in that same situation... so if they can do like home visits... that would help some people.” (Angela)

These participants found it important to address issues related to lack of transportation that some victims (those who do not own a car or who live in isolated areas) may perceive as a barrier to seeking help. The lack of transportation in some areas of Iowa is a particularly "Midwestern" characteristic - if you don't have a car, you are not going anywhere, because the Midwest does not have an extensive system of public transportation as the East and West coasts. If you do not live in one of the larger cities in Iowa, you had better have a car of your own to get where you want to go. There are no other options. Although this issue has not been cited in the literature as a specific barrier preventing Latina victims from seeking help, the lack of transportation is related to the social isolation of victims from their community. Through isolation abusers often separate victims from others by their efforts to destroy all competing relationships or to prevent any contact to society, and by reducing resources, such as transportation, they may be able to gain more control over their victims. Advocacy providers are aware of such as methods of dominance and control over victims, and they have incorporated transportation services in their programs. However, many victims are not aware of those services and do not seek out help.
because they lack transportation. This failure to communicate the full range of assistance that is available to meet victims’ needs is as critical issue that needs to be addressed and incorporated in community outreach programs. Some level of response by existing advocacy systems is in place, but Latina victims may delay seeking help because they may not be adjusted to the new culture; consequently they do not know how to navigate the community systems.

Participants also focused their responses on changes in providing more domestic violence and sexual assault prevention education to school age children, young adults, victims and abusers:

“I want to see more educational classes hmm focusing on … like in my case I’m still thinking about my problem (domestic violence)… and my children… I think about them too... I wanna see a psychologist…because sometimes I have my doubts you know... I don’t know if I’m doing the right thing or not... and like educational classes about how to protect your children.” (Lucia)

Rubi described the significance of having classes for male abusers: “I would like to see more courses… I want these organizations to educate men... to teach them how to treat a woman.”

Lola spoke about the need to focus on violence prevention, education and awareness of the youth: “Like doing campaigns at schools… like they should go to schools because I have seen young male kids abusing their girlfriends at schools… I think they should go to schools to talk with teenagers and tell them what is going on (about teen violence).”

These participants recognized a particular need for undertaking a strong education and prevention effort that focus on adolescent and abusers. Their perceptions are clear evidence that comprehensive intervention services not only should center on assisting or supporting victims, but also should focus on building public awareness about the commonality of the experience and the impact of partner abuse on children and the community. Additionally, involving abusers in domestic violence prevention activities is important because they have the opportunity to learn
about the negative aspects of machismo (Perilla, 1994), along with other negative views regarding partner relationships within the Latino community. Including abusers in advocacy programs may lead to cultural change, so that taking care of one’s family must exclude violent acts and thereby eliminate tolerance of violence (Baker, Nagy, Pavlos, Pratt, Reed, Siverman, Suri & Whitaker, 2007).

Participants also focused their responses on changes in relation to programs and services focused on providing training to victims so they can achieve work and education-based self-sufficiency. In both interviews and the focus group, participants expressed desire for changes regarding networking and education activities focusing on job skill training, English as Second Language (ESL) classes, education, employment, and orientation about legal procedures and government assistance.

“I would like to get English classes because here we just have B (college)… and you know I have a job and kids... and is hard to get in ... so if there would be more places where they teach ESL classes would be nice.... I want to go back to school but I don’t know how to speak English... so I couldn’t.” (Ana)

“There should be support groups for victims of abuse... like focus on self-improvement... like instructing women in how to get back to school... and information about issues related to parental skills... so we could be better mothers... yeah so we can go on with our lives...we need guidance... we also want to learn what type of opportunities we have in this country....we wanna know if is possible to get back to school and what are the requirements to do it... we would like to have information about schools and jobs....like places where we can get help....like information about community services.” (Lina)

Previous research on victims’ needs, and their efforts to mobilize community resources to meet those needs once they exit a shelter, have shown that those needs are often related to the lack of housing, employment, education, transportation, and legal assistance among others (Allen, Bybee, & Sullivan 2004). The participants in this study held perceptions of changes that were not a result of their experiences with exiting shelters. In their experiences with leaving their partners
they conveyed on a need for additional assistance from social services to help them to achieve economic sufficiency, as well as to foster their personal goals (e.g., education). Advocacy services often do not offer that type of assistance, but do provide referrals to primary service sources that can help victims with those specific needs. I question whether or not advocacy and other human services programs encompass comprehensive responses to victims’ needs. Advocacy services may not be effective in connecting victims to the resources they have identified in this study as important, and human services programs may not be well equipped to assist Latina victims in achieving their full range of needs. When considering how to foster a coordinated community response to Latina victims, it should be essential to include other institutions that can enhance longer term economic independency and quality of life (e.g., schools or skills-training related institutions, community centers, or local businesses).

*Findings from the Focus Group Interview*

A one-hour focus group interview with four Latina victims who were part of the study sample was held upon completion of the interviews. At the beginning of my meeting with participants, I did address issues regarding the research confidentiality and explained to participants that each would be identified by a pseudonym. Before the session began, I told participants that the discussion would be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed by the researcher (me).

My role in the focus group was that of facilitator, monitoring the discussion process during the whole session. I told participants that there would be two parts to the discussion. In the first part, I asked them to think about their experiences with reaching out to formal anti-violence services, as well as their experiences once they received those services. Participants were also asked to share with one another their perceptions of interventions that helped them (or
not) to overcome domestic violence. In the second part of the discussion, participants were asked to share with one another what future changes in programs or interventions they would like to see within the advocacy service system. It was interesting to see how the discussion by the 4 focus group participants parallels the findings derived from the interviews. All participants indicated that many of the reasons to delaying seeking out advocacy help included their immigration status, their experiences with isolation, lack of knowledge of resources, fear of partner and cultural views of marriage. Immigration status was perceived as a major factor that determined help-seeking behaviors in these research participants. Much like the descriptions from the interviews, the discussion continued, mostly centering on the experiences the 4 members had with current advocacy services. All participants expressed positive and significant experiences with services and providers.

The last part of the discussion was focused on participants’ suggestions for changes needed in available services. It was interesting to see how the last part of the discussion led to participants chatting about their perceptions of the assistance provided by the government to immigrant victims of domestic violence. According to participants, they all qualified for government benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid. However, they indicated that Latina victims who apply to public assistance may not be able to change their illegal immigration status to legal aliens because they may be perceived as a burden to the government. Maria conveyed this view when she said: “My lawyer told me that I shouldn’t (apply)… because that was a problem for the government…she told me I couldn’t apply for it (welfare benefits) if I was trying to get my legal papers….because I was gonna be like a burden to the government.” Lina quickly added:
“I think it would be helpful for us (Latina victims) if we had enough information... because lawyers like to frighten us... because my lawyer told me: if you get government benefits that would be play against your citizenship process... he told me that if you ask for help to the government they may think you are like a burden... so they can deny your petition....so it would be very helpful if we knew what can we do... what would affect us and what type of help we could get... because I just applied for Head start benefits for my child and he got Medicaid... and he is resident (of the U.S.) but he didn’t qualify for childcare... which is a government service.”

According to these participants, once they are in the legal process of changing their residency status, they all can be eligible for government benefits such as food stamps and Medicaid. However, immigrant Latina victims who apply to public assistance may not be able to change their illegal immigration statuses to legal aliens because they may be perceived as a burden to the government. In other words, in order to change her status, an immigrant Latina victim seeking status as a lawful permanent resident must establish that she will not become a public charge on the U.S. through receipt of certain public benefits. Literature shows that victims of partner abuse often turn to social services agencies for assistance, including the welfare and mental health systems (Moe, 2007). Victims seek public assistance because many of them may suffer substantial material deprivation if they leave abusive partners (Tolman, 2000). For Latina victims, the situation of abuse usually takes place within a context of poverty and underemployment, social isolation and legal status (Grossman & Lundy, 2007), that make extremely difficult to victims to leave their partners. Once victims leave their partners, they face financial challenges that may not leave them any other option than to seek assistance from public social services. Unfortunately for many Latina victims with uncertain legal status, including those of this study, they have to pass up this alternative.

Most of the women interviewed for this study seemed to be affected by the failed response of the government to immigrant victims of abuse. Complicated rules and regulations of public benefits programs mean that immigrant Latina victims struggle not only with surviving
their own victimization, but also struggle with complying with state or federal interventions on behalf of their well-being. In addition, ongoing experiences with discriminatory practices may contribute to stress for some Latina victims, and these stressors may affect how they respond to domestic violence.

**Limitations**

The findings and conclusion from these respondents cannot be generalizing to all Latina women victims of domestic violence. Because the research sample was restricted to 10 participants and most of them were from Mexico, there might be a limited possibility of generalizing this study to other groups of Latina victims from different Latino countries. Although generalizeability was not the intended goal of this study, it is essential to understanding to what extent the experiences of Latina victims with advocacy response in the Midwest can be transfer to other particular related contexts. By way of rich description and detailed information regarding these participants’ experiences and the context and background of this research, I anticipate that knowledge could be assessed for its applicability and applied appropriately with other Latina victims living in the Midwest.

Small-scale studies cannot tell us everything we need about women’s lives (Letherby, 2003). This study was based on the experiences of Latinas who wanted to make their lives public and share their narratives with others. These women also have contacted anti-violence services, and have received peer and legal counseling. This data cannot be extrapolated to Latina who do not label themselves as victims, have not voiced their experiences, are deeply controlled or isolated by their partners, or have not access any type of advocacy services. Thus, generalizations must be made with caution.
Two issues that may have influenced my results were that most of the interviews were conducted in the anti-violence organization (in a small room next to advocates offices), and some participants were using services at the time of the study. I believe participants may have felt forced or obligated to comment favorably on their perceptions about services because they did not want to do or say something that would affect negatively the legal process of their cases or their relationships with advocates. They may also felt they should have demonstrated appreciation and gratitude to services providers for all they help they received (free charge services). I promised complete confidentiality and anonymity and I offered them to review the results and discussions of the study so they could verify I cited their responses fairly and precise. However, none of the participants found that verification necessary.
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this narrative study was to explore, with a sample group of Latina victims of domestic violence, their experiences with current services provided by anti-violence organizations in the state of Iowa. The conclusions from this study follow the research questions and the findings and therefore address 3 areas: (a) perceptions that Latina victims of domestic violence experience impediments that influence their help-seeking behaviors; (b) perceptions that advocacy services provided by an anti-violence organization in the Midwest, are effective and culturally adapted to meet Latina victims’ needs; (c) perceptions of how immigrant Latina victims believe advocacy services need to change so victims of domestic violence can meet their full range of needs. Following is a discussion of the major findings and conclusions drawn from this research. This discussion is followed by my recommendations and my final reflection on this study.

Major Findings and Conclusions

Perceptions that Latina Victims of Domestic Violence Experience Impediments that Influence Their Help-Seeking Behaviors

The first major finding of this research is that many Latina victims of domestic violence face some barriers that prevent them to connect to anti-violence services. A conclusion to be drawn from this finding is that Latina victims report seeking help from advocacy services, but barriers such as immigration status, fear of partner, inability to understand domestic violence given cultural norms, lack of knowledge of resources, lack of language proficiency, isolation and feeling ashamed account for their willingness to utilize advocacy or social services, make it particularly difficult for them to access these programs or interventions. Although there are
agencies providing services for immigrant women experiencing domestic abuse, Latina victims find it difficult to access those services because they have particular cultural traits and norms that influence their response to partner abuse. Patriarchal cultural structures found in the Latino culture influence the way Latina victims respond to oppressive relationships. Cultural perceptions of men having absolute power and control over women reinforce victims’ fear of their batterer partners and create unsafe environments when Latina victims confront or leave them. Likewise, the perceptions of male dominance and control as typical traits of partner relationships in the Latino community make it difficult for Latina victims to identify abuse in their own relationships; thus these perceptions prevent Latina victims from disclosing their abuse. Additionally, cultural beliefs of partner abuse as a private matter influence Latina victims to maintain their intimate relationship issues isolated from outside influences, and to keep them away from the possibility of embarrassment. Latina victims’ feelings of shame and embarrassment contribute to the inhabitation of disclosing the abuse to advocates and social services.

Participants of this study indicated that isolation and lack of knowledge of resources are obstacles preventing new comers Latina victims to seek help from advocacy agencies. A related conclusion is that some immigrant Latinas victims enter the U.S. without knowledge of the new culture. Many of these Latina victims lack English proficiency and immigration legal status, factors that can easily isolate them from society because they cannot talk to people that do not speak their native language, and they cannot work; moreover batterers take advantage of these circumstances to separate them from friends or the community to perpetrate the abuse. I can also conclude that isolation is not only an issue that exacerbates domestic abuse in Latinas but also a major factor that prevent them from seeking advocacy services. For a victim living in a rural area
or that is isolated by her abuser, it is difficult to know about services offered by her community, and unfeasible to connect with services providers. The perceptions of Latina victims in relation to those victims who lack information, are isolated, or live in rural areas are a result of a lack of outreach programs targeting the public of rural areas and a lack of promotion of advocacy services.

Participants cited the lack of language proficiency as a mainstream organizational barrier to provide Latina victims services culturally adapted. The perceptions of participants demonstrate that law enforcement and other services providers lack adequate training and language capacity to respond effectively to victims who are immigrants and do not conform the Anglo-American population. A conclusion that can be drawn from this finding is that the lack of ability to communicate prevents members of mainstream institutions (such as the police) and some advocacy services (such as shelters) to work successfully with Latina victims, a clear evidence of services culturally incompetent, or in other words, a discrimination against Latina victims by legal and social service systems that do not recognize the dynamics of race in regard to the assistance immigrant victims need. A related conclusion is that mainstream organizations may not be aware of the growing Spanish-speaking population in the Midwest, and for that reason assume that bilingual services are not needed in that area. Yet, as I stated before, further research on Latinos immigration to the Midwest and services responses to their particular needs is required.

Participants indicated that their immigration status was a main factor in avoiding disclosure of their abuse. Because of their abusers partners’ threats, Latina victims often believe they could be deported if they report the abuse to authorities or any other public service institution; this lack of information regarding how the criminal justice system responds to
domestic violence issues within immigrant communities poses specific impediments to access advocacy services. In this regard, I can conclude that (1) immigration status is an effective tactic of abusers that increases their control and power over their victims, which exacerbate Latina victims’ vulnerability to domestic violence; (2) immigration status and ethnicity influence Latina victims’ help-seeking efforts to connect with law enforcement and social service personnel; (3) although there are policies such as The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 that prevent undocumented Latina victims or those who have unstable residency, from deportation, they still face barriers preventing them from seeking help because of misconceptions regarding their unstable residency. There is a lack of awareness of domestic violence laws in Latino communities living in the Midwest and a great deal of education is required within these communities about policies, laws, potential solutions and the availability of Latino serving programs. The more information and tools a Latina victim has, the more ability she will have access to advocacy support and safety.

**Perceptions that advocacy services provided by an anti-violence organization in the Midwest are effective and culturally adapted to meet Latina victims’ needs**

The second major finding was that all participants perceived that the advocacy responses provided by an anti-violence organization in the Midwest were helpful and that advocates who worked in their cases were very supportive. Although previous researches demonstrate there is a lack of response to Latina victims from social work and community services in the U.S., the findings of this study were not consistent with the literature. In fact, some advocacy institutions, such as anti-violence agencies in the Midwest, do help Latina victims to improve their individual well-being as they attempt to acquire the resources they need. These institutions are able to foster Latina victims’ needs because they provide comprehensive response through bilingual/bicultural
services. The provision of these core services in the context of Latina victims is evidence of highly trained advocates that understand the dynamics and consequences of domestic violence, and reflect the cultural experiences of Latina victim clients when they create, develop and provide advocacy services.

Although these findings sustain the efforts of some advocacy approaches in the Midwest to adequately accommodate the needs that Latina victims of domestic violence present, advocacy agencies still face challenges because of the lack of funding to hire additional advocacy service providers to assist clients with their needs. This complex factor often impedes advocacy institutions to deliver improved services. I definitely have personal bias when it comes to the government funding for advocacy services targeting minority victims of partner abuse. My perspective is that the lack of services funding is related to the lack of the stakeholders’ (private organizations and government) recognition of the need for community resources to increase and improve the response for Latina victims’ needs. Whereas this reflects some institutional discrimination on the part of minority groups for more services resources, it is a trend that warrants further investigation. Nevertheless, I underline advocates efforts to provide the best services as they find ways of funding for such diverse work.

Participants perceived service responses by other services providers (the public welfare system) inadequate. Indeed, some of participants’ responses exemplified the patriarchal underpinnings within and outside government assistance that disqualify Latina victim’s voices and concerns, effectively disempowering many of those who try to use social services. Placing public benefits barriers to Latina victims because of their immigration status is evidence of discrimination or the lack of socio-cultural understanding of mainstream organizations regarding the experiences of immigrant Latina victims of violence.
Perceptions of how immigrant Latina victims believe advocacy services need to change so victims of domestic violence can meet their full range of needs

The study’s third major finding was that participants identified clear aspects for change in services that Latina victims are presently encouraged to use. They expressed the need for the development of programs with support groups or educational classes, to address issues related to empowerment and domestic violence prevention and awareness. Desired changes for intervention and program included: outreach programs for underserved populations (isolated or rural Latina victims); domestic violence and sexual assault prevention education to school age children, young adults, victims and abusers; job skill training; English as Second Language (ESL) classes; education; employment; orientation about legal procedures and government assistance.

There are four primary conclusions that can be drawn from this finding. First, domestic violence takes an enormous toll on Latina victims even after abuse. Latinas victims who are adjusting to life after leaving their abusers, still facing additional stressors related to long-term financial security (e.g., acquiring employment, attaining economic self-sufficiency, starting or continuing education). There is a need for a more comprehensive and coordinated community response to Latina victims’ needs. Because Latina victims present a full range of needs, a greater involvement of advocacy services with other social institutions can affect Latina victims’ lives including for example social services, schools and local businesses.

Second, current advocacy agencies serving Latina victims in the Midwest, lack outreach programs targeting new-comer or isolated Latina victims. The failure to inform the public of rural areas of anti-violence services, or to apply those programs in those areas, is simply because they do not have the resources to dramatically expand outreach programs and services, or
because these populations experience significant barriers that are overlooked by advocacy institutions that make it extremely difficult for them to access services. Further research on the experiences of Latina victims living in rural areas with anti-violence services is needed to confirm this assumption.

Third, there is a need for undertaking a stronger education and prevention effort, focusing on adolescence and abusers. Although advocacy responses provide some prevention and education programs targeting youth and perpetrators, domestic violence remains as the centerpiece of their agenda. Most of intervention services are focus on assisting or supporting victims and do not involve abusers in domestic violence prevention activities. Last, current domestic violence and immigration policy failed to response to women who are nonmainstream (immigrant victims of abuse). Although Latina victims can qualify for some public benefits, they cannot use them because once they seek status as a lawful permanent resident, they must demonstrate that they will not become a public burden on the U.S. through receipt of certain public benefits. These rules interfere in Latina victims’ ability to comply with immigration policy requirements, and serve as a significant barrier to their economic advancement. I can conclude there is a fundamental mismatch between immigrant Latina victims’ particular needs and the assumptions about those needs that underline public minority policy.

**Recommendations**

My goal was to bring the voices of Latina victims of domestic violence into the public sphere, and to include their experiences to the discussion of proposed changes to existing practices against domestic violence in Iowa. The women in this study are asking for tools with which to work and navigate the system, for choice and opportunity, and above all for strength
and hope. For that reason, I want my thesis to provide insight into the question about what can be done to bring change to the lives of these women, and to those who face the same constrains.

With that goal in mind I now offer recommendations based on the findings, analysis and conclusions of this study.

(1) Advocacy service providers should consider the development of programs aimed at educating the immigrant public about justice system options and legal procedures intended to help undocumented immigrants who experience domestic violence. Programs should include significant involvement from law enforcement to address barriers to services related to deportation or immigration policies.

(2) Policymakers should review current public immigration and domestic violence policy restricting benefits and services to persons with certain immigration statuses. At the federal level, Congress should revise policies that place Latina and other immigrant victims in particular disadvantage. For example, through a provision of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), undocumented immigrant spouses of U.S. citizens or residents are granted conditional residency status for two years after probing abuse; however, their residency status can be jeopardized if they have utilized welfare benefits. Federal policies should not take into account immigrant victims’ interactions with social welfare assistance or any other system positively affecting their lives.

(3) Mainstream institutions such as law enforcement and social services systems should develop and implement programs focusing on adequate training and language capacity to respond effectively to Latina victims’ needs. Trainings and comprehensive response should also apply to help to meet the needs of other immigrant and minority victims.
Advocacy services should develop programs intended to help Latina victims build additional life skills and to navigate systems that might enable them to obtain needed services and to become active members in the Latino community. Those programs should include: English as Second Language classes, driving lessons, youth development programs, and orientation about healthcare, welfare benefits and assistance. In addition, human services in cooperation with anti-violence and community institutions should employ practices focusing in work-based activities such as job skill training and employment searching. While this recommendation might have some positive effect on Latina victims’ lives, they will remain vulnerable to numerous barriers to self-sufficiency (e.g., discrimination in the labor market or lower levels of education). Highly structured work programs and decent wages for particular-skilled jobs at local and state level might provide an opportunity to “at least” ameliorate their economic vulnerability.

Advocacy response should develop education and outreach programs and activities promoting help-seeking in rural communities in the Midwest, as well as promoting the provision of anti-violence services with isolated and marginalized immigrant women living in urban areas. Home visits as an outreach practice with Latina victims that lack transportation or live in isolated areas can be a good example for implementations of services in rural communities.

Programs and interventions focusing on domestic violence issues within Latino communities should address the role of machismo and marianismo in partner abuse. Through these programs the community can learn about the consequences and negative aspects of violence in relationships; these education programs can produce cultural and norm changes that would eliminate the tolerance of violence.
Services providers and policymakers should address the issue of immigration status with undocumented services recipients when developing programs and interventions. There is a need for understanding how the stigma of being undocumented influence the choices victims make in violent relationships, and have when they seek help. In addition, this factor limits victims’ resources (economic and social) because of political biased responses to undocumented immigrants. Sometimes services providers and policymakers know little about the characteristics of undocumented families and the roots of their illegal immigration to the U.S. A good start for changes would be to recognize undocumented victims’ needs by shifting the debate from micro-level notions of illegal immigrants to more macro-level issues of racial discrimination in the U.S. It would also be interesting to do a comparative study in two different states/locations with different climates on the immigration issue and with more or less immigrant friendly policies; such as study would help researchers understand how responses to immigrants differ from diverse political views, and affect positively and negatively their wellbeing.

**Goals for Future Research**

Future studies should continue to explore the factors that influence formal help-seeking behaviors of Latina victims of domestic violence and their experiences with advocacy services once they connect with such as help. The following should be considered:

1. Based on the limitations of this study, future research should be conducted with a larger sample of Latina victims from every Latino country. In that way researchers and practitioners can develop a better understanding of Latina victims’ specific needs that facilitate the implementation and development of
competent programs in various geographic locations with different types and levels of service infrastructure.

2. Further research on demographic trends in the Midwest as well as on current public services practices targeting new immigrants moving in rural and urban areas should be conducted to increase understanding about how community and mainstream organizations are responding to growing immigrant populations. It would be also extremely helpful to expand research on Latina victims who have never contacted any type of advocacy service to learn what they perceived as barriers keeping them from seeking help.

3. Another area of research entails the impact of immigration and welfare policies on immigrant victims of domestic abuse. That is, if an immigrant Latina victim is receiving welfare benefits, would they be able to change their residency status without any constraints? In addition, it would be extremely helpful to explore the extent to which public policies mitigate or exacerbate the risk of domestic violence for immigrant families.

As I come to the ending of this study, I want to reflect on my journey and personal expectations with this research. I hope I have been like a tool giving voice to those Latina victims of domestic violence struggling with anti-violence responses, shedding some light on what lays ahead for those Latina victims who remain in abusive relationships. This was my personal and professional intention from the moment I began this study. This project was greatly enhanced by the narratives and insights of Latina participants who took some time out of their lives to share with me their stories. My fondest hope is that this study may help us to make some sense of how Latinas encounter abuse, how deal with it and escape from it, and how they
continue with their lives. At the same time, by increasing this understanding, I am thankful for all that I have learned and continue to learn as a feminist Latina researcher.
APPENDIX A

Interview Schedules in English

Domestic Violence in Iowa: Exploring the Experiences of
Latinas with Organizational Responses

Interview with Latina victims

Seeking help

- What is domestic abuse or violence to you?
- When was the first time you experienced domestic abuse or violence?
- Did you try to seek help?
- How long did you wait to seek for help?
- How did you seek help?
- How did you know where to go for help?
- Can you tell me the name of the organization you contacted?
- Did you encounter any difficulties in seeking help?
- Have you experiences domestic abuse after that first incident?
- Did you seek out help again?
- Have you contacted any other organization to seek out help with domestic violence/abuse? Which one?
- Do you think there is enough information available about resources to help victims of domestic abuse?
- How did you learn about these various organizations?
- Did you have problems at any point communicating with the domestic violence service providers?
- Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experiences when you sought help?
- If you had the opportunity to give advice to other women who have experienced situations of domestic violence, what would you tell them?

Experiences and perceptions of services
- Before you received help, what type of expectations about services did you have? What type of services did you expect to get from the organization?
- What services did they offer you when you contacted (name of organization)?
- Did you get all the help you needed? Explain.
- How would you describe the services provided by these organizations?
- In what ways have these services helped you to overcome this problem?
- How would you describe your experiences with services?
- How would you describe your experiences with advocates?
- Which interventions have been helpful to you? Which ones have not?
- What would you change about the current services to make them more useful?

Background
- How long have you been living in the United States?
- How long have you been living in Iowa?
- Do you live in a rural or urban area?
- Do you speak English, Spanish or both? How comfortable are you with English?
- Have you ever been married? How long?
- Do you have children? How many? What are their ages?
- Do you have other family in Iowa?
- Do you feel that you have good connections to neighbors and others in your community outside of your family?
- Are you currently employed? Where do you work? What are your duties at your job?
Demographic Questions
- Age
- Country of origin
- Gender
- Job position
- School level

Spanish Version

Plan de entrevista

Violencia domestica en Iowa: Explorando las experiencias de
Latinas y el servicio de las organizaciones

Entrevista con latin as victimas

Buscando ayuda
- ¿Qué significa violencia domestica para usted?
- ¿Ha experimentado alguna vez violencia domestica?
- ¿Cuándo fue la primera vez?
- ¿Intentó buscar ayuda? ¿Cómo?
- ¿Cuánto tiempo espero para buscar ayuda?
- ¿Cómo supo donde buscar ayuda?
- ¿Me podría decir el nombre de la organización que contactó?
- ¿Qué fue lo más dificil de buscar ayuda?
- ¿Hubo alguna otra cosa que le hizo más dificil buscar ayuda?
- ¿Experimentó abuso domestico después del primer incidente?
- ¿Busco ayuda nuevamente?
- ¿Alguna vez buscó ayuda en otra organización? ¿Cuál?
- ¿Cómo supo de estas organizaciones?
- ¿Usted cree que hay información suficiente acerca de recursos disponibles?
- En el momento que usted contactó el personal de esta agencia ¿En algún momento tuvo algún problema con el idioma?
- ¿Hay algo más que usted quisiera decirme acerca de sus experiencias con la búsqueda de ayuda?
- Si tuviera la oportunidad de darle consejo a otras mujeres que experimentan su misma situación ¿Qué les diría?

Experiencias y percepciones de los servicios
- Antes de recibir ayuda, ¿Qué tipo de expectativas tenía acerca de los servicios? ¿Qué tipo de servicios esperaba?
- ¿Qué servicios le ofreció (nombre de la agencia)?
- ¿Recibió toda la ayuda que necesitaba? Explique.
- ¿Cómo describiría los servicios que esta organización da?
- ¿De que manera estos servicios la han ayudado a salir del problema de violencia doméstica?
- ¿Cómo describiría sus experiencias con los servicios?
- ¿Cómo describiría sus experiencias con los empleados?
- ¿Qué intervenciones han sido beneficiosas para usted? ¿Cuáles no?
- ¿Qué cambiaría en los servicios actuales para mejorarlos?

Antecedentes
- ¿Hace cuanto tiempo vive en los Estados Unidos?
- ¿Hace cuanto tiempo vive en Iowa?
- ¿Vive en un pueblo rural o en una ciudad?
- ¿Usted habla inglés, español o ambos idiomas? ¿Qué tan cómoda se siente hablando en inglés?
- ¿Está casada? ¿Ha estado casada alguna vez? ¿Por cuánto tiempo?
- ¿Cuántos hijos tiene?
- ¿Qué edad tienen?
- ¿Tiene algún otro familiar en Iowa?
- Además de su familia ¿Cree que tiene buenas conexiones con vecinos y con la comunidad?
- ¿Trabaja actualmente? ¿Dónde trabaja? ¿Cuáles son sus responsabilidades en su trabajo?

Preguntas demográficas
- Edad
- País de origen
- Genero
- Posición de trabajo
- Nivel educativo
APPENDIX B

Focus Group Guide for Latina victims

1) What type of services have you received from this organization?
2) How did you learn about these services?
3) Tell me about positive experiences you have had with this organization and its services
4) Have you had any negative experiences with this organization and its services? (If yes) Tell me about these experiences.
5) How effective have been the services provided by this organization in meeting your needs?
6) How satisfied are you with the services and the way these services are provided?
7) How would you describe services providers’ responses in reference to your children’s welfare?
8) In what ways has this agency helped you re-establish your life?
9) What changes would you like to see in the future regarding services and programs?

Spanish Version

Guía de la discusión de grupo con latinas que han recibido servicios

1) ¿Qué servicios ha recibido de esta organización?
2) ¿Cómo supo acerca de estos servicios?
3) Cuénteme acerca de sus experiencias positivas con esta organización y los servicios que ha recibido.
4) ¿Ha tenido alguna experiencia negativa con esta organización y los servicios que esta presta? (Si la respuesta es si) Hábleme acerca de esas experiencias.
5) ¿Qué tan efectivos han sido estos servicios para ayudarla con sus necesidades y problemas?
6) ¿Qué tan satisfecho está usted con los servicios y con la manera que el personal los suministra?
7) ¿Cómo describe los servicios que les da esta organización con respecto al cuidado y bienestar de los niños?

8) ¿En qué manera esta agencia le ha ayudado a restablecer su vida?

9) ¿Qué cambios futuros le gustaría ver en los servicios y programas de esta institución?
APPENDIX C

Phone scripts

Advocates contacted service recipients, explained my study, and asked for permission to give me their contact information. Advocates also asked for the best day and time for me to call them.

Once I had their information and permission to contact them, I contacted them via phone.

Good morning/afternoon/evening, Can I talk to ________________?

If the potential respondent answers:

This is Angelica Reina. I am a graduate student from ISU and I am doing a study about Latinas’ experiences related to domestic violence. (name of services provider) have already told you about my study. She also told me you said I could contact you.

After explaining the study purpose and process I will ask:

Would you be interested in participating in the study?

If the person says yes:

When and where would you like us to meet for the interview?

(Participant will choose day, time, and place)

Ok, thanks and I’ll see you then.

If the person says no, I will thank her for her time and hang up.

If someone other than the respondent answers, I will ask for the potential respondent. I won’t say anything about the study or personal information to protect the confidentiality of the potential respondent.

If the person is not at home:

Do you know when she will be home? Ok, thanks I’ll give her a call then (later)

If a get a voicemail or nobody answers, I will hang up and call back later.

Spanish Version
Guión de llamadas

Defensores de la anti-violencia contactaron a latinas que han recibido los servicios, les explicaron acerca del estudio que quería y les pidieron permiso para darme su información para contactarlas. También les preguntaron qué día y que hora sería mejor para llamarlas. Una vez tuve la información las contacte por teléfono.

Buenos días/tarde/noche, Puedo hablar con ________________?

Si el posible participante contesta la llamada:

Me llamo Angelica Reina. Soy una estudiante de maestría de ISU y estoy haciendo un estudio acerca de las experiencias de las latinas con respecto a la violencia domestica. (Nombre del empleado que me dio la información para contactarla) le ha contado acerca de mi estudio. Ella también me dijo que usted le había dado autorización para darme su nombre y su teléfono.

Después de explicarle acerca del propósito y el transcurso del estudio le preguntaré:

¿Está interesada en participar en mi estudio?

Si la persona responde sí:

¿Donde y cuando podemos reunirnos para hacerle una entrevista?

(El participante escogerá el día, la hora y el lugar)

Muy bien, gracias y nos vemos entonces.

Si la persona dice que no, le daré las gracias por su tiempo y colgare el teléfono.

Si otra persona contesta el teléfono, preguntaré por la participante. No diré nada ni del estudio ni mi nombre para proteger la seguridad del posible participante. Diré que soy una amiga de la posible participante

Si la persona no está en casa:

¿Usted sabe cuándo estará en casa? Está bien gracias, la llamare después.

Si me contesta el mensaje de vos, colgare el teléfono y llamare después.
APPENDIX D

Translation of quotes from English to Spanish

Pages 52 & 53

“Él me golpeó y yo pude haber llamado a la policía porque eso fue lo que a mí se me ocurrió….pero él me intimidó y me dijo que si yo llamaba a la policía que iba a salir perdiendo… que porque o sea se lo iban a llevar a él pero que también a mí por no tener papeles…el me dijo que los policías de A echaban a emigración… que mejor me quedara así.”

“Antes yo vivía aquí en el 95 yo viví aquí también y yo recibía violencia por parte de mi primer esposo pero nunca llamé porque nunca supe que había una organización aquí… no sé si en ese entonces ya habría habido M (nombre de organización) pero en ese entonces como pues toda persona indocumentada tenía miedo… nunca acudía a ningún lado porque decían que nos deportaban… no nunca pedí ayuda a pesar de que estaba aquí en Estados Unidos y estaba recibiendo abuso doméstico.”

Page 54

“Pelea! pelea! y el alcohol casi siempre involucrado… y maltrato… inestabilidad porque uno se siente muy… por ejemplo en mi caso era en fin de semana… llegaba el fin de semana y yo no quería saber….ya estaba en mi mente preparada de que iba a ser esos días muy feos.”

“Yo siempre le tenía miedo… yo nada mas de escucharlo yo ya estaba aquí llorando… y él me decía ¿por qué lloras? ¿estás loca?… y yo no decía nada… hasta que un día le dije que yo le tenía miedo y me dijo tu me tienes miedo y dijo: ay hombre! mucho miedo me vas a tener… si yo quisiera matarte ya te hubiera matado.”

Page 55 & 56

“Espere 5 años para buscar ayuda…es que es como un proceso lento y tú no sabes que está pasando… yo tengo una amiga que sufrió de violencia doméstica y yo sabía que había venido a M (organización) y todo pero a uno le cuesta aceptar que uno está viviendo violencia doméstica… a mí me costaba… o sea como que yo no me sentía en ese… yo no me sentía en ese cuadro… sentía yo que lo podía manejar la situación… sentía yo… y yo pensaba que si me alejaba de él a lo mejor recapacitaba… y luego pues… piensa uno pues en México se le hace normal a uno pues las peleas… que ellos tomen o sea que como que todavía hay mas machismo en México… como que se le hace uno que es parte del matrimonio….pensaba que era parte del matrimonio.”

“Lo que pasa es que yo no sabía que en realidad que yo estaba viviendo violencia doméstica y yo me casé y yo no sabía qué era lo que estaba pasando…él era de un carácter muy extraño… me golpeaba el bote de la basura… se enojaba a tal manera que me daba miedo… y no sabía que era violencia… yo pensaba que era como normal… como bueno al rato se le pasa… pero después empezó a pasar más seguido entonces yo ya no… no me agradó.”
“No… a mi no… esa idea en mi casa no… somos católicos….mis papas se divorciaron entonces no… no había esa idea de que si un hombre te maltrata tienes que estar ahí no pero yo no sabía lo que era el maltrato hasta entonces… no sabía exactamente que era maltrato… en las películas ves que le grita que le hacen esto pero ahí están… o sea que tanto puede ser es lo que no sabemos las mujeres latinas… y es lo que no reconocemos porque al momento de casarnos no reconocemos… creemos que es normal.”

“Pues sinceramente cuando yo estuve involucrada en eso para mi no se me hizo difícil porque primero yo conozco la ciudad… o sea DSM yo si me voy por todas partes y para mi no se me hace difícil porque una vez que yo ya comencé a andar en esto a estar en charlas a asistir al grupo entonces para mi se me hizo fácil la dirección… pero para otras personas que no conocen y les puede pasar eso (abuso) y que necesiten (ayuda) se les va a hacer difícil.”

“Bueno si viven aquí en DSM si hay… en el periódico en el directorio hispano hay yo he visto… pero por ejemplo yo viví en S (pueblo rural) Iowa, y allá no hay hispanos… comunidad hispana… éramos los únicos… entonces yo tarde mucho para enterarme de eso (servicios)...no había en los periódicos no había nada que dijera que había servicios.”

“Me entere por la gente… por las personas hispanas que hablaban de M y hablaban de H… bueno empezó M aquí en DSM y yo tengo como 11 años aquí… H empezó primero y después empezó M… pero yo no sabía que M era para esto (violencia doméstica) y H es para más cosas no es para abuso doméstico… es para ayuda de doctores ayuda de iglesia… ayudas de policía de tickets pero no especificamente para esto.”

“Cuando va uno al médico uno ve los boletines que a veces ponen… en la clínica hispana… usted también se entera bastante por otras personas… como yo… si veo a otra persona que está pasando por lo mismo que yo, voy diciéndoles de esta organización entonces se va haciendo como cadenita.”

“En una ocasión mi pareja me empezó a estar aventándome unos cojines yo no sabía ni siquiera por qué, yo tome el teléfono y le hable a un oficial que sabía que hablaba español pero el mandó a otros oficiales a ver qué pasaba en la casa… el problema fue que cuando llegaron los oficiales pues yo no hablo ingles… y mi pareja si habla ingles y ellos hablaban ingles…entonces el nada mas les dijo que yo estaba loca y que el ya se iba al trabajo y se fueron.”

“Estuve ahí una semana pero pues como le digo yo no hablo ingles ni en ese tiempo manejaba… en el turno de la mañana había alguien que hablaba español… entonces en la mañana todo estaba perfecto… pero ya en la tarde y en la noche cambiaban de turno pues ya era un poco más difícil porque uno no podía… bueno yo no podía decirles algunas cosas…. Yo no tenía forma de salir de ahí o sea nada mas era estar ahí por nada… luego mi pareja me dijo que regresara y todo y pues como yo no tenía otra opción le dije que si… ya no quise estar en un shelter porque en el shelter no hacía nada.”
No sabía acerca de estas organizaciones porque... yo nunca salía... el no me dejaba salir... y yo no tenía carro... entonces nunca salía de la casa... porque tú estas aislada y no sabes de estos servicios.”

“No conocía a nadie... nunca salía de la casa (llorando)....y pues yo llegue aquí en el tiempo de la nieve... usted sabe que en el inverno la gente no sale de sus casas... si salía algunas veces era porque él me sacaba... pero si yo quería dejarlo no sabía a dónde podia ir... todo era blanco... no veía gente afuera... yo creo que si había información en ese tiempo (2001) pero no sabía porque como no salía... probablemente ahí estaba todo pero nunca lo vi... y le digo ahora yo siento que hay mucha información ya... ahora pienso que ahorita si uno se deja es porque yo sé... o quiere uno mucho a la persona o no se quiere uno nada o algo pasa.”

Pues me daba vergüenza...pues que la gente se enterara... de que...de separarme porque como yo ya había tenido una separación ya otra vez separarme era muy difícil por pues si como que me costaba mucho pensar otra vez... otra vez separarme... y luego platicar con mis amistades...y luego empiezan y que paso y por que y esto.... O sea se me hacia como que me daba pena... como que no se.” “Es muy difícil encontrar una amiga en quien confiar porque casi siempre se burlan de uno o después dicen: ay mira como la trata...la trata refeo es que no la quiere... o sea empiezan los comentarios... empieza a correrse la v... todo el mundo empieza a enterarse y todo eso me daba pena y yo por eso nunca decía nada.”

Al principio... no se... yo me sentía tan mal y yo no quería contarle a nadie.... yo hasta decía que tampoco me iban a creer porque eso lo sentía así como un chisme... al principio me daba pena relatar pero o sea fue algo que yo sentía... decía yo como sea yo me sentía avergonzada.”

Pues yo cuando... primero lo que quería era salir y que me ayudaran sobre lo que yo sentía... después pensar en los billes y de todas maneras pues los sigue pagando uno que... que va a hacer uno solo porque de todas maneras a uno le dicen no vas a poder sola y que esto y que lo otro.... Entonces es buscar ayuda de todo... necesitaba un trabajo.... Si tiene uno niños pues también...si no van a la escuela... los míos gracias a Dios van a la escuela y no necesito dejarlos con nadie porque van a la escuela pero hay mucha gente que también necesita cuidado de niños.”

Pues mi primer cosa que yo pensé fue recibir consejería.... Consejería para que me empezaran a ayudar con todo mi mente que yo tenía bien dañada la verdad... y pues quería ayuda con la U visa.”

Con las platicas con las terapias... bueno realmente no me han dado terapia con una sicóloga pero dicen ellas que me van a asignar a alguien ahorita...pero ella me ayuda mucho... habla conmigo me explica que no debo de tener miedo que no todos (los hombres) son iguales pero como que te quedas... dices ya no... como que te bloqueas y ellas tratan de romper ese bloque que tienes para que tu vuelvas a hacer feliz... bueno como que te sacan de un hoyito no? Que dices que no tengo derecho a nada y como que tienes opciones a poner... a tener un mejor futuro no nada más para ti sino para tus hijos... como
que la ayuda para tener visa de trabajo como que te abre un poco más las expectativas de tener a tus hijos mejor.”

“Los servicios son muy buenos… me gustan mucho… me han ayudado a sentirme mejor… a valorarme más a quererme más… a saber que para que este bien mi familia tengo que estar bien yo primero… y que yo dependo de mi no dependo de nadie más.”

Page 67

“Ellos (trabajadores del gobierno) no me querían dar ayuda… no me la querían dar… Ella (trabajadora americana) me dijo que con que pagaba la renta… le dije pues ahorita yo no estoy trabajando pero por eso vengo a pedirle ayuda también… pero ella no me quería ayudar… me puso muchas trabas… duré un mes que no tenía ni para darle de comer a las niñas ni nada… entonces vine aquí (agencia) y hable con Daisy (empleada) y me dijo que hablara con la abogada y ya la abogada me dijo que no porque yo no calificaba para Medicaid pero que mis hijas sí… entonces Daisy les mandó (trabajadores del gobierno) un fax diciendo que yo necesitaba el dinero para mis niñas… Pero se tardaron mucho… Espero mucho… y ahora me doy cuenta que tienen 24 horas y a uno le dicen si si… y ella me tardó mucho tiempo y no sé por qué.”

Page 68 & 69

“Las personas (trabajadoras de la organización) tratan de ayudarte pero lo único que pienso es que les falta más personal para que atienda a otra persona mientras ellos están atendiendo… porque algunas veces tu llegas aquí (organización) y todos están ocupados con sus clientes y no hay nadie… no se… como alguien en recepción y te diga siéntate espérate un momento ahorita te voy a llamar o tienes cita con tal persona en un momento te atiende… pienso que necesitan más personal… yo sé que no tienen dinero para pagar más empleados pero sería bueno si tuvieran.”

“A veces no tienen tiempo para ti… o sea sus agendas están muy llenas y uno busca la forma de que por ejemplo el día de descanso lo aprovechas y lo haces y ellas están ocupadas… como que a veces están muy saturadas… o sea tienen mucho… y creo que necesitan más gente de ayuda… como más personal… creo que hay 2 o 3 personas las únicas que llevan los casos y somos como mil verdad… ya somos muchas hispanas que estamos con el mismo problema.”

Pages 70 through 76

“Mas comunicación… como se ve… que se vea por la radio… volantes… en las revistas o en los periódicos que anuncien porque de verdad que hay personas que no saben de M (organización)… no saben de esta organización que ayuda.”

“Pues como que se hicieran algunos folletos para que entregaran en las casas para que así… varias personas…simplemente ponerlas en el correo para que las personas se dieran cuenta mas donde están (organizaciones) ubicados y que hacen.”

“Pues como que tuvieran alguna transportación para transportar a todas las personas que no tienen medio como ir hacia allá a su dirección… porque a veces no tienen en que salir… que tuvieran transportación para ayudar a esas personas (víctimas).”

“Ellos no visitan en la casa… a mi me gustaría que eso si pudiera ser… que ellos pudieran darnos visitas aquí en la casa… porque a veces por lo mismo… yo me pongo en el lugar de antes que estaba (violencia}
domestica)... que no podía manejar... que no conocía... que me perdía y yo pienso que hay mucha gente que también puede estar igual que yo entonces si ellos pudieran venir estaría muy bien para algunas personas.”

“Platicas mmm de sicología sería... que le ayudaran a uno... porque bueno yo todavía tengo cosas en mi cabeza de mi problema... y los niños también pienso en ellos... yo quisiera ver a una sicóloga... porque eso de que a veces uno se equivoca de tomar decisiones de repente...y pues platicas más bien de proteger a los niños.”

“Me gustaría ver más platicas... quiero que eduquen a los hombres... que les enseñen a tratar a una mujer”

“Como campañas así acerca de ir... no se... como ir a las escuelas a las high schools porque yo he visto que desde que están en la high school también sus novios a las muchachas abusan de ellas... ir a las escuelas a hablar con los jóvenes y decirles lo que pasa (acerca de violencia en los adolescentes).”

“Pues fíjate que a mí lo que me gustaría serian clases de ingles porque nada mas esta en Dmacc y los horarios son muy.... bueno como yo trabajo y que la escuela y luego mis niños para mí es muy pesado entonces pues si hay mas lugares donde hayan clases de ingles sería mejor.”

“Pienso que un grupo como de terapia de apoyo... grupo... o sea que... hay en otros lugares grupos de apoyo para las mujeres que sufren violencia domestica...como de superación... como ayudar a salir adelante a las mujeres en cuestión de no se... información de temas en cuestión de cómo ser mejor padre... si más que nada para poder salir adelante... para que nos guíen... para saber que oportunidades tenemos en este país... si puede ir uno a la escuela que puedes hacer para ir a la escuela... que necesitas hacer... información sobre las escuelas sobre trabajo... sobre lugares de ayuda... sobre servicios a la comunidad.”

“Pero es que el abogado que yo tenía hace tiempo el me dijo que no.... Porque eso es cargar para el gobierno... que uno no podía aplicar para eso (welfare benefits) si estaba aplicando para papeles... porque entonces yo era una carga para el gobierno.”

“Yo creo que sería de mucha ayuda para nosotros que tuviéramos esa información como debe ser porque el abogado te mete temor... a mí me dijo mi abogado: si tu pides ayuda te puede perjudicar al momento de que te hagas ciudadana... dice que cuando pides ayuda del gobierno estás viviendo del gobierno y eres carga... que por eso no te dan... sería de gran ayuda que supiéramos las leyes que nos informaran de que en realidad podemos... que tanto nos afecta... y que ayudas podemos tener... porque yo ahora pedí ayuda para Head Start para mi hijo y el tiene Medicaid el solo es residente pero no califico para el childcare... que es del gobierno.”
APPENDIX E

IRB Approval

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DATE: 13 May 2009

TO: Angelica Reina
    2105 Pearson Hall

CC: Marta Maldonado
    312 East Hall

FROM: Jan Canny, IRB Administrator
      Office of Research Assurances

TITLE: Domestic violence in Iowa: Exploring the experiences of Latinas and organizational responses

IRB ID: 09-197

Approval Date: 13 May 2009
Date for Continuing Review: 4 May 2010

The Institutional Review Board of Iowa State University has reviewed and approved this project. Please refer to the IRB ID number shown above in all correspondence regarding this study.

Your study has been approved according to the dates shown above. To ensure compliance with federal regulations (45 CFR 46 & 21 CFR 56), please be sure to:

- Use the documents with the IRB approval stamp in your research
- Obtain IRB approval prior to implementing any changes to the study by completing the "Continuing Review and/or Modification" form.
- Immediately inform the IRB of (1) all serious and/or unexpected adverse experiences involving risks to subjects or others; and (2) any other unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.
- Stop all research activity if IRB approval lapses, unless continuation is necessary to prevent harm to research participants. Research activity can resume once IRB approval is reestablished.
- Complete a new continuing review form at least three to four weeks prior to the date for continuing review as noted above to provide sufficient time for the IRB to review and approve continuation of the study. We will send a courtesy reminder as this date approaches.

Research investigators are expected to comply with the principles of the Belmont Report, and state and federal regulations regarding the involvement of humans in research. These documents are located on the Office of Research Assurances website [www.compliance.iastate.edu] or available by calling (515) 294-4566.

Upon completion of the project, please submit a Project Closure Form to the Office of Research Assurances, 1138 Pearson Hall, to officially close the project.
APPENDIX F

Recruitment Materials

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Study: Addressing Domestic Violence among immigrants in the rural Midwest: The perspective of both abused Latino women and existing organizations

Investigators: Angelica Reina

This is a research study. Please take your time in deciding if you would like to participate. Please feel free to ask questions at any time.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to learn the perspectives of both Latinas who have experienced domestic abuse and organizations addressing domestic violence issues of women living in Iowa. I will explore some of the barriers Latinas face to get access to these community services. I plan also seeking information about Latinas experiences with social, emotional, and economic transitions. Questions will be focused on Latinas’ expectations about services provided by advocates and the work advocates do when engage with other networks of domestic violence institutions.

You are being invited to participate in this study because I am a graduate Latino student who is especially interested in learning more about Latino women experiences in the Midwest.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES

If you agree to participate in this study, I will contact you by phone or email to set up an interview or a focus group. The interview or focus group will be held at an anti-violence agency building or at a location of your choice, at the time you will decide, and will last about an hour. I will tape record the interview and later transcribe it, but your name will not be attached to the tape or the transcription (see “confidentiality” section below). I will take notes of responses during focus groups.

If you are a service provider and agree to participate in this study, I will also make observations of your daily routines and operations related to providing services to clients. I will take notes of your interactions with clients and the activities you perform while you provide the services.

If you are a client and agree to participate in this study, I will make observations and take notes about a meeting between you and a service provider. I will take notes of the procedures of service delivering and of your feelings and perceptions of the work is done during that meeting.
Information related to clients’ personal issues with abuse or any information that will threat the participant confidentiality won’t be taken in consideration on this study, since the main concern of the research is the participants’ experiences and perceptions of current services. The interviews and focus groups involve questions related to the organizations services and some others to the current access, resources and networks Latino women have at local, state, and national levels. Some other questions will be related to experiences with social, emotional, and economic transitions once Latinas leave a violent relationship.

RISKS

While participating in this study you may experience some discomfort that is related to the susceptible character of the subject matter.

BENEFITS

If you decide to participate in this study there may be no direct benefit to you. However, the study will benefit the society by informing about a social problem which is related to public health in the Latino community.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION

You will not have any costs from participating in this study. You will not be compensated for participating in this study.

PARTICIPANT RIGHTS

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may refuse to participate or leave the study at any time. The information you will say and hear in focus groups and interviews will be kept confidential. If you decide to not participate in the study or leave the study early, it will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Records identifying participants will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by applicable laws and regulations and will not be made publicly available. However, federal government regulatory agencies and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves human subject research studies), may inspect and/or copy your records for quality assurance and data analysis. These records may contain private information.

To ensure confidentiality to the extent permitted by law, the following measures will be taken: Subjects will be assigned a unique numeric code and this code will be used on the tapes and transcriptions instead of their names. Identifiers will be destroyed within 2 hours following the interview. Only the lead investigator (Angelica Reina) and the professor Marta Maldonado will have access to the study records. The study records will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the
lead’s investigator’s house. The tape recorded data will be transcribed within three weeks following the interview then will be destroyed within two weeks after the transcription. The lead investigator will keep the transcriptions in a locked desk in her home until the completion of this study (August 2009).

Field notes and observations from participant observations and focus groups will keep participants names off the record. If the results are published, your identity and the name of the anti-violence agency and community where the agency is located will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS

You are encouraged to ask questions at any time during this study.

- For further information about the study contact Angelica Reina by either email (areina@iastate.edu) or phone (515-294 0416) and Dr. Marta Maldonado (mmaldona@iastate.edu) or phone (515-294 0793)

- If you have any questions about the rights of research subjects or research-related injury, please contact the IRB Administrator, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, or Director, (515) 294-3115, Office of Research Assurances, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

**************************************************************************

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE

Your signature indicates that you voluntarily agree to participate in this study, that the study has been explained to you, that you have been given the time to read the document and that your questions have been satisfactorily answered. You will receive a copy of the written informed consent prior to your participation in the study.

Participant’s Name (printed) __________________________________________

________________________________ (Participant’s Signature) (Date)

INVESTIGATOR STATEMENT

I certify that the participant has been given adequate time to read and learn about the study and all of their questions have been answered. It is my opinion that the participant understands the purpose, risks, benefits and the procedures that will be followed in this study and has voluntarily agreed to participate.
DOCUMENTO DE INFORMACIÓN Y CONSENTIMIENTO

Título del estudio: Violencia domestica en Iowa: Explorando las experiencias de Latinas y el trabajo de instituciones de anti-violencia.

Investigador: Angélica Reina

INTRODUCCIÓN:

El propósito del estudio es conocer las perspectivas que tienen las latinas y organizaciones que trabajan con violencia domestica, en relación con los obstáculos que las latinamericanas experimentan al conectarse con las redes, organizaciones, y servicios ofrecidos por la comunidad. También planeo buscar información acerca de las experiencias de las latinas con respecto a su transición a niveles emocional y económico. Las preguntas serán acerca de las expectativas que tienen las latinas sobre los servicios que proveen las instituciones y también se enfocaran en el trabajo conjunto que hacen las diferentes organizaciones y sus empleados para promover los servicios y recursos.

Usted ha sido invitado a participar en este estudio porque además de ser una estudiante graduada de la Universidad, estoy interesada en conocer más acerca de las experiencias de las mujeres del Medio Oeste.

DESCRIPTIÓN DE LOS PROCEDIMIENTOS

Si usted está de acuerdo en participar en este estudio yo la contactaré por teléfono o dirección electrónica para fijar una entrevista. La entrevista y las discusiones de grupo se harán en el edificio donde está localizada la agencia anti-violencia o en otro lugar y a la hora que usted decida y durará aproximadamente una hora. Yo grabaré la entrevista en un casete y después la transcribiré pero su nombre no estará incluido en el casete o la transcripción (lea “confidencialidad” en la sección debajo). También voy a tomar notas de las respuestas que tengan los participantes en las discusiones de grupo.

Si usted es un empleado que presta servicios y acepta participar en este estudio, haré observaciones de sus rutinas diarias y de las operaciones relacionadas con los servicios prestados a los clientes. Tomaré nota de sus interacciones con los clientes y de las actividades en las que usted participa cuando usted provee los servicios.

Si usted es un cliente y acepta participar en este estudio, haré observaciones y tomaré nota de alguna cita entre usted y algún empleado de esta organización. Tomaré nota de los procedimientos al momento de suministrar los servicios y de sus sentimientos y percepciones del
trabajo hecho durante esa cita. La información relacionada con problemas de abuso del cliente o cualquier información que comprometa la privacidad del cliente no se tomará en consideración en este estudio, ya que el principal objetivo es aprender sobre las experiencias y las precepciones de los participantes con respecto a los servicios existentes.

La entrevista y los trabajos de grupo implican preguntas relacionadas con los servicios que prestan la organización y otras preguntas serán acerca del acceso a los servicios actualmente y a los recursos que las mujeres latinas tienen a nivel local y nacional. Otras preguntas serán sobre las experiencias de las latinas con respecto a su transición a niveles social, emocional y económico una vez ellas dejan la relación abusiva.

RIESGOS

Durante el estudio usted podría sentir incomodidad debido al tema de investigación tan delicado.

BENEFICIOS

Si usted decide participar en esta investigación no habría ningún beneficio directo para usted. Sin embargo el estudio beneficiaría a la sociedad porque estará informando acerca de un problema social relacionado con la salud pública de la comunidad Latina.

COSTOS Y COMPENSACIONES

La investigación no tendrá ningún costo para usted. Usted no obtendrá ningún pago por participar en el estudio.

DERECHOS DEL PARTICIPANTE

Su participación en este estudio es completamente voluntaria y usted podrá rehusarse a participar o dejar la investigación en cualquier momento. La información que usted dé o escuche se mantendrá confidencial. Si usted decide no participar o dejar la investigación antes de su término, no tendrá ninguna penalidad y no perderá los beneficios a los cuáles usted tendría derecho.

CONFIDENCIALIDAD

Documentos que identifiquen a los participantes se mantendrán en secreto de acuerdo a las leyes y regulaciones que apliquen y no estarán disponibles al público. Sin embargo las agencias reguladoras del gobierno federal y la junta institucional de revisión (un comité que revisa y aprueba las investigaciones sobre individuos), examinarían y copiarían documentos con su información para asegurar la calidad y el análisis de la información. Estos documentos podrían contener información privada.

Para asegurar la confidencialidad permitida por la ley, serán tomadas las siguientes medidas: Un código numérico será designado para los sujetos y será usado en los casetes y las transcripciones
en lugar de los nombres. Las identidades serán destruidas dos horas después de conducida la entrevista. Solo el investigador principal (Angélica Reina) y la profesora (Marta Maldonado) tendrán acceso a los documentos de la investigación. Estos documentos se mantendrán bajo llave en un escritorio situado en la casa de la investigadora principal, a menos que la información esté siendo transcrita y traducida por la investigadora. La información grabada en los casetes será transcrita y traducida durante las siguientes tres semanas después de la entrevista luego serán destruidos dos semanas después de la traducción. La investigadora principal mantendrá las transcripciones con llave en el escritorio de su casa hasta el estudio termine (Agosto del 2009). Los nombres de los participantes tanto de las entrevistas como de las discusiones de grupo se mantendrán anónimos. Si los resultados se publican, su identidad, el nombre de la agencia anti-violencia y la comunidad donde se localiza dicha agencia se mantendrán confidenciales.

PREGUNTAS O PROBLEMAS

Usted podrá hacer preguntas el cualquier momento durante la investigación.

- Para mayor información acerca de este estudio contacte a Angelica Reina al correo electrónico (areina@iastate.edu) o al teléfono (515-294 0416) y a la Dr. Marta Maldonado (mmaldona@iastate.edu) o al teléfono (515--294 0793)

- Si usted tiene alguna pregunta acerca de los derechos de la investigación con individuos o las posibles lesiones relacionadas con el estudio, por favor contacte al administrador de IRB, (515) 294-4566, IRB@iastate.edu, o al director (515) 294- 3115, la oficina de aseguranzas de estudio (Office of Research Assurances), Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa 50011.

FIRMA DEL PARTICIPANTE

Su firma indica que usted accede voluntariamente a participar en este estudio, que se le ha explicado, que se le ha dado tiempo para leer este documento y que sus preguntas han sido contestadas satisfactoriamente. Usted recibirá una copia del documento de información y consentimiento antes de su participación en el estudio.

Nombre del participante ________________________________

(Firma del participante) ____________________________ (Fecha)

DECLARACION DEL INVESTIGADOR

Yo certifico que al participante se le ha dado adecuado tiempo para leer y entender acerca del estudio y todas sus preguntas han sido contestadas. Es mi opinión que el participante entienda el propósito, riesgos, beneficios, y los procedimientos que se seguirán en esta investigación y que este ha accedido a participar voluntariamente.
(Firma de la persona que obtiene el consentimiento) ___________________________ (Fecha)
REFERENCES


