TYPE(S) OF ABUSE AND HELP-SEEKING: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF LATINA WOMEN DIFFERING IN ETHNIC IDENTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Latina women endure numerous forms of interpersonal violence. While help-seeking efforts have been explored, variations in help-seeking efforts for women differing in ethnic background have yet to be analyzed. This comparative study uses an available data set to investigate help-seeking efforts for a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Latina women reporting abuse. For a subset of women with Cuban and Mexican ties, the results elucidate the differences in the types of abuse and help-seeking behavior. Overall, the results indicate that Mexican ethnicity is associated with a higher risk of victimization compared to Cuban ethnicity. However, logistic regression models showed neither Mexican nor Cuban identification to be significantly related to any form of help-seeking after controlling for other variables. Predictive factors, such as exposure to the United States (i.e., generational status), language preference, household income, and education, were assessed to explain group differences in help-seeking. Language preference was associated with increased odds of seeking formal help, while household income increased the odds of seeking informal help. Thus, the findings have implications for policy and formal institutions centered on reducing violence against women and improving the awareness and availability of formal and informal resources.

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Chapter 1: Rationale for this Research

Latina women, like individuals from many other historically marginalized communities, face challenges when enduring domestic and intimate partner physical, sexual, and mental abuse. The intersection of gender, race, ethnicity, cultural beliefs, immigration status, language barriers, and socioeconomic factors often compounds Latina women's barriers to seeking help and eliminating the abuse. This comparative study aims to understand not only the challenges women encounter by examining the reported nature of abuse but also the cultural and structural barriers to help-seeking that Latina women navigate. Latino Critical Race Theory, an expansion of Critical Race Theory centered on Latin American communities, reveals the need for a deeper examination of how race and ethnicity intersect with issues of power, privilege, and social justice in Latina communities. Latino Critical Race Theory provides a theoretical framework for developing culturally sensitive and effective support systems, interventions, and shelters to empower Latina survivors and foster a safer and more equitable environment.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory also provides a particularly helpful framework in the literature review section, Cultural Barriers. In this section, I highlight a study that reveals the importance of considering Latinas' ecological contexts, such as family and community support networks, to understand the challenges Latinas may encounter when experiencing abuse and seeking help.

Consistent with Latino Critical Race Theory and Ecological Systems Theory, this study examines the type of abuse, help-seeking behaviors, and formal and informal help-seeking by Latina women differing by ethnic identification (Mexican and Cuban). The findings have implications for violence against women initiatives and programs and, overall, shed light on the resiliency and various avenues Latina women pursue to seek help and heal. After highlighting

the rationale for this research, I review the existing literature in Chapter 2, the study's methods in Chapter 3, and the findings in Chapter 4. The thesis ends with a discussion of the findings, policy implications, and recommendations for future research in Chapter 5.

A Vulnerable Population

While Latinas experience interpersonal violence at a disproportionately higher rate, they are often ignored in interpersonal violence literature (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Perilla et al., 1994; Edelson et al., 2007; Lopez & Pasko, 2021). To understand the ethnic origins and historical context of Latinx populations, the present study uses Zinn and Zambrana's (2019) definition of Latinx as individuals with ties to Spanish colonial history and ethnic, cultural, political, and genealogical links to Latin America. Latina women in the United States face various structural barriers that increase their susceptibility to violence and hinder their ability to seek help. Considering Latina women's experiences is crucial when evaluating abuse and violence because it can ultimately impact disclosure and help-seeking efforts, as well as the responsiveness of criminal justice agencies. Examining the intersections of ethnicity and gender within Latinx populations is crucial for evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.

Being Latinx in the United States

Within the United States context, Latinx individuals can be characterized as immigrants and those with lineage to immigrants. Latinx individuals may be US citizens or residents and may hold an undocumented status (Gutierrez et al., 2000). Moreover, the US Latinx population represents one of the fastest-growing demographic groups. According to the 2020 U.S. Census Bureau, the estimated number of Latinx individuals in the United States was 62.1 million.

The Mexican population is the largest subgroup within the US Latinx population at 35.8 million, accounting for 58% of the larger demographic group. The Cuban population is the third

largest subgroup at 2.2 million, representing 3.6% of the 62.1 million US Latinx population. According to the 2020 US Census Bureau report, Latina populations comprise 31 million individuals, accounting for 49% of the US Latinx population.

The 2020 US Census Bureau report revealed that Latinas are likely to be born in the United States, young (median age was 27 years old), married, hold a high school diploma, have low-wage jobs, and often live in impoverished environments. Of the 31 million Latina women, almost half were born outside of the United States (49%), were married (44%), had children (39%), and had a spouse living within the household (46%). The socioeconomic data highlights that Latinas can experience barriers related to educational attainment; about 22% of Latinas report receiving higher education.

Historically, the American education system has had a negative impact on the educational attainment of Latinx due to the marginalization of their language and cultural identities. Speaking Spanish was considered a learning barrier, leading to discriminatory practices such as segregation into English as Second Language (ESL) or remedial classes, which excluded Latinx's from mainstream classrooms. These policies limited Latinx's access to quality education and perpetuated a cycle of inequality and exclusion by limiting opportunities for academic advancement and social integration (Cobas et al., 2009). This practice has consequences in terms of risk for harm, as education is a protective factor for interpersonal violence and help-seeking. Education can provide Latinas with the skills and confidence needed to navigate societal barriers and advocate for themselves in situations of abuse (Edelson et al., 2007).

Educational attainment may remain lower on average due to economic constraints. For example, Latina full-time workers' median income is approximately $40,664, but 28% live in

poverty, and a single-head household (18%) exacerbates the likelihood of poverty. Specifically, the poverty rates for Latina subgroups are 29 percent for those with Mexican origins and 19 percent for those with Cuban origins (U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The structural barriers perpetuate a cycle of limited economic mobility and related difficulties in dealing with abuse for Latina women, which underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these systematic inequalities. Thus, Latina women, who make up around half of the U.S. Latinx population, remain in a complicated situation with numerous obstacles when they experience abuse.

Interpersonal Violence within Latina Communities

Gonzalez et al. (2020) describe interpersonal violence as encompassing domestic abuse, intimate partner violence, dating violence, child sexual abuse, child physical abuse, and sexual assault. Statistical reports and surveys reveal that Latinas experience high rates of interpersonal violence (UN Women, 2017). While Latinas experience interpersonal violence at a disproportionately higher rate, they are often ignored in interpersonal violence literature (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Perilla et al., 1994; Edelson et al., 2007; Lopez & Pasko, 2021). One reason that Latinas have been ignored is because of the stereotypes about Latina communities. Stereotyping includes essentialist passivity and a lack of nuanced understanding, which makes it challenging to adequately address and understand Latinas' circumstances (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Additionally, cultural norms, structural barriers, and language barriers may inhibit Latina women from seeking help and contribute to underreporting; thus, official statistics are inaccurate (Gonzalez et al., 2020). The statistical reports suggest that high percentages of Latinas are experiencing interpersonal violence, which is a human rights issue (NISVS, 2016-2017; E.L. Smith & Farole, 2009; Crippa-Mendez & Rodriguez-Barraza, 2022).

Evidence suggests that Latina survivors encounter a complex interplay of cultural, linguistic, legal, and socioeconomic factors when seeking help for interpersonal violence (Postmus et al., 2014). Cultural factors include gender roles and hierarchies, such as the social constructs of *familismo* and *marianismo*. Consistent with *familismo,* family is the primary focus for women, and it requires family loyalty and solidarity. Consistent with *marianismo*, women are expected to be submissive, selfless, and passive (Perilla et al., 1994). Cultural factors may impact Latina women's response to domestic violence. The victim's decision to leave an abuser may be repressed because of cultural implications such as *familismo* and *marianismo* (Perilla et al., 1994).

It is important to conduct research on Latina women reporting abuse, as much of the research regarding interpersonal violence disregards or essentializes Latina populations (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Because Latinas are lumped into one category, research needs to look at Latina women's reporting of abuse by sub-groups of ethnic origin (Edelson et al., 2007). Overlooking the differences within Latinx ethnic communities fails to address the characteristics of diverse national and ethnic backgrounds and neglects individual experiences within each ethnic community. Considering the intersectional configurations of identity is essential to understanding the true experiences of historically marginalized communities (Crenshaw, 1989; Jones & Briones, 2022). Therefore, Latina women may undergo differing experiences of abuse and violence based on sub-group ethnic origin. This thesis provides information that can help guide the design and implementation of gender-, cultural-, and acculturation-informed treatment.

Theoretical Framework

Critical race theory (CRT) -- a framework consistent with some social sciences approaches -- emerged in the late 20th century (Carbado & Roithmayr, 2014). Its roots can be

traced to legal scholarship (Crenshaw et al., 1995). Emphasizing the role of systemic racism in perpetuating social inequalities, CRT originated in response to the limitations of traditional civil rights approaches (Matsuda, 1991). CRT delves into how racial disparities persist through institutions, policies, and everyday practices, and it challenges the idea of colorblindness in addressing these issues (Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). CRT provides a lens to examine and understand the interplay of race, power, and inequality in contemporary society by shedding light on the nuances of racial injustice and discrimination (Carbado & Roithmayr, 2014).

As an extension of Critical Race Theory, Latino Critical Race Theory (LatCRT) focuses on the experiences of Latinx individuals in the United States and elsewhere. Latino Critical Race Theory emerged as a response to the need for a more nuanced understanding of racial dynamics within Latinx communities composed of people with diverse national and ethnic backgrounds. LatCRT delves into issues such as the intersection of race and immigration status, the role of language and culture in identity formation, and the impact of structural racism on various Latinx subgroups (Crenshaw, 1989; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). LatCRT also acknowledges the historical and ongoing struggles of Latinx communities from colonialism to labor exploitation while emphasizing the resilience and agency of Latinx people and communities (Garcia, 1995). LatCRT offers an essential framework for analyzing Latinx individuals' challenges and opportunities within the broader context of racial and ethnic relations in the United States and beyond (Delgado-Bernal, 2002).

Latino Critical Race Theory focuses on the experiences of Latinx individuals in the United States and Latin American communities. It is characterized by several key tenets that expand upon the tenets found in Critical Race Theory. First, LatCRT emphasizes the importance of intersectionality, recognizing that Latin American communities are diverse, encompassing

various national origins, cultures, and immigration statuses. LatCRT contends that racial identity is intertwined with other factors, such as socioeconomic status and language, which influence the experience of racism and discrimination. This study considers the tenet of intersectionality to understand intragroup differences (Mexican and Cuban) in reporting abuse and the cultural and structural barriers women encounter in seeking help (Crenshaw, 1989; Solorzano & Delgado-Bernal, 2001). Additionally, LatCRT examines the historical and ongoing impact of colonization, exploitation, and forced migration of Latin American communities, emphasizing the significance of recognizing and addressing this history. This study considers the tenet of historical agency and resiliency by looking at sub-group ethnic identification (Mexican and Cuban) of the women who have sought help (Delgado,1984; Garcia, 1995; Harris,1994; Olivas,1990).

Chapter 2: A Review of Existing Literature

This chapter begins by examining interpersonal violence statistics and violations of Latinas' human rights. In the second section, the historical and cultural context of Cubans and Mexicans in the United States is provided to explain Latina's vulnerability to violence. Finally, the hypotheses to be tested and the rationale for testing them are presented.

Interpersonal Violence Statistics and Women's Human Rights

Violence against women is a pervasive and deeply troubling global issue that transcends borders and cultures. Interpersonal violence is defined as the intentional use of physical force or power against individuals by perpetrators. It encompasses intimate partner violence (IPV), sexual assault, sexual violence, and physical and psychological violence (Mercy et al., 2017). It takes various forms, including physical abuse, sexual assault, psychological manipulation, and economic exploitation (Crippa-Mendez & Rodriguez-Barraza, 2022). These acts of abuse and violence violate women's fundamental human rights and perpetuate gender inequality and discrimination. The United Nations (UN) presented the finding that 1 out of 3 women has endured some type of violence (physical, sexual, psychological, economic) during their lifetime. Specifically, within Mexico, an even higher rate of 6 out of 10 women have suffered at least one type of abuse and violence (physical, sexual, psychological, economic) (UN-Women, 2017).

A Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) special report indicated that in large urban counties, of the female survivors experiencing intimate partner violence, 34% of them were Latinas (E.L.Smith & Farole, 2009). The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) reported that within the US Latinx community, approximately 42% of women have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) in their lifetime **(**NISVS, 2016-2017**).** The National Survey of Gender Equality conducted in 2016 revealed that of the 5 million Cuban women on the island,

26.6% of them experienced some form of abuse by their partners (UNFPA, 2019). Thus, globally, women around the world continue to suffer, and the United States is no exception. Specifically, for Latinas, gender, race, and distinct sub-ethnic cultural practices and traditions may contribute to differing experiences of abuse.

In addition to abuse, Latinas' increased vulnerability to economic disparities and limited access to education indicates a lack of equity and equality between Latina women and men (UN-Women, 2017; Lopez, 2019; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). The lack of equity and equality Latinas face can be due to culturally accepted gender roles such as *machismo* and *marianismo* within Latinx communities (Quinones-Mayo & Resnick, 1996). The resulting interpersonal violence impacts women's physical, mental, and emotional autonomy and perpetuates power imbalances and gender-based oppression.

Women's human rights are violated by interpersonal violence and gender-based oppression (NISVS, 2016-2017). A human rights violation is an act that breaches basic rights and freedoms, such as civil, political, social, economic, and cultural aspects, to which all individuals are entitled simply because they are human. Women face violations that are specific to their gender, such as discrimination, sexual harassment, IPV, and denial of reproductive rights. These violations occur due to deeply rooted gender inequalities and societal norms perpetuating discrimination (Crippa-Mendez & Rodriguez-Barraza, 2022). Specific to Latina women, human rights violations manifest in certain ways due to the intersections of gender and ethnicity (Crenshaw et al., 1996; Delgado & Stefancic, 2000). They also experience specific forms of violence or exploitation, such as abusive control and sexual punishment, that arise from cultural vulnerabilities (Quinones-Mayo & Resnick, 1996). Thus, human rights violations for Latina women involve the infringement of fundamental rights and an added layer of gender-based

discrimination and cultural vulnerabilities, which can lead to harm and violence. It is essential to recognize and address such gender-specific human rights violations to promote gender equality within Latinx communities and to ensure that women's rights are protected. Furthermore, it is beneficial to acknowledge how gender disparities by ethnic origin group (Mexican and Cuban) contain distinct differences that can impact Latinas' human rights. To understand Latina women's vulnerability to violence, it is important to understand the historical context in which this vulnerability is situated.

Racialization of Cubans and Mexicans

Next, I introduce the topic of racialization of Cubans and Mexicans within the United States, along with their distinct immigration patterns. I end this section by acknowledging the need to create culturally sensitive services and interventions that recognize the experiences of racial and ethnic groups within the United States.

Latinx communities have historically been treated as an ethnic group, but these populations have also been racialized. Cobas et al. (2009) define *racialization* as a process in which societal groups are categorized and assigned racial identities based on perceived physical, cultural, and social characteristics. The racialization process involves the imposition of power dynamics that advantage certain groups while marginalizing "others." The process of racialization is relevant to the present thesis because it influences how these communities are perceived and treated within the United States, and it impacts access to resources, cultural perceptions of violence, and help-seeking attitudes.

The history of racialization among Latinx in the United States can be traced back to the European colonization of the Americas (Cobas et al., 2009). The concept of race originated in Europe during the Age of Enlightenment, when Europeans sought to categorize and create a

social hierarchy based on physical and cultural differences. Racial ideologies justified the subjugation and exploitation of Indigenous individuals and Africans through slavery and colonization (McKittrick, 2014). Latin American populations are comprised of various ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, such as Mexican and Cuban, and European powers considered Latinx people to be the product of racial mixing. Spain colonized the Americas, and its citizens began having children with Native American and African origin individuals, which formed racially mixed populations. Therefore, Spanish colonial policies categorized Indigenous communities, Africans, and mixed-race individuals into hierarchical racial castes, and this process contributed to the formation of racial identities in Latin America (Cobas et al., 2009).

From 1850 to 1920, the United States Census classified Mexicans as "White." In the 1930 Census, Mexicans then became a separate race, but in 1940, Mexicans were again classified as "White." Cubans migrated to the United States due to the Cuban Revolution in 1959, and they began to show up in the census in 1970. In an effort to ensure accurate race and ethnicity data for the United States federal government, in 1977, Directive Number 15 included five categories of race: American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White. The new categories of race were included in the 2000 census, and respondents could choose one or more races. The 2000 census also included two ethnic categories: Hispanic or Latino and not Hispanic or Latino (Cobas et al., 2009). At that time, Hispanic or Latino included individuals from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South or Central America, or other Spanish-identified cultures of origin, regardless of race. Thus, the census treats Latinx individuals as an ethnic group, separate from racial categories. To this day, Latinx communities struggle with how to categorize themselves, often having to consider their race as White and ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino, even if they do not consider themselves to be White

(Cobas et al., 2009). The lack of fit between census categories and individuals' ethnic identities highlights the importance of focusing on ethnic identification in the present research.

Relevant to the comparison of women who identify their origins as Cuban and Mexican in this thesis, reflecting historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors, the two groups are racialized differently in the United States. The racialization of Cubans is based on physical characteristics instead of self-identification of ancestry. Historically, Spaniards migrated to Cuba during the twentieth century, and enslaved individuals arrived at the island due to the sugar revolution in the late twentieth century. The racial hierarchy within Cuba stemmed from Spanish colonizers imposing a racial caste system that favored Cubans of European descent. Thereafter, racial mixing occurred, and African and indigenous cultures remained in Cuba (Cobas et al., 2009). The diverse ancestry of Cubans contributes to Cuban culture, as it encompasses aspects of Spanish, African, and indigenous traditions in music, dance, cuisine, religion, and language. The hierarchy created segregation, with lighter-skinned individuals experiencing greater socioeconomic and political mobility compared to darker-skinned Cubans (Cobas et al., 2009). However, the perception of greater socioeconomic mobility stems from the predominantly white-European ancestry of many Cubans who migrated to the United States following the Cuban Revolution in 1959. The Cuban revolution highlighted social and political change, including efforts to address racial inequality through policies promoting racial integration and celebrating Afro-Cuban culture. Despite the efforts of the revolution, racial hierarchies persist in Cuba, and the intersections of class, gender, and political ideologies complicate inequality and privilege within Cuban communities (Cobas et al., 2009).

Conversely, Mexicans have been subjected to racial discrimination and stereotyping, as Mexican populations are portrayed as non-White and primarily laborers. The racialization was

influenced by historical factors, such as the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which led to Mexican territory being annexed to the United States in 1848. The treaty increased immigration patterns as the United States border crossed Mexican territory, separating Mexican homes and land. The treaty provided citizenship to many Mexicans, but the United States denied their rights and began to instill anti-immigrant sentiments (Cobas et al., 2009). Thus, due to the tensions regarding citizenship and immigration, Mexicans identify with their cultural heritage and have little engagement with Euro-American hegemonic knowledge/belief systems.

The differing racialization of Cubans and Mexicans contributed to disparate experiences in the United States. Cubans may benefit from structural institutions associated with being perceived as white or racially ambiguous. Alternatively, there is evidence that Latinas identifying as Cuban experience socioeconomic disparities, language barriers, and stigma, which can hinder their ability to seek help (Gonzalez et al., 2020). Latinas identifying as Mexican face structural barriers due to intersecting factors, such as immigration status, language barriers, economic disadvantage, and education due to their marginalized racial status. The intersecting factors exacerbate Latina's experience of interpersonal violence and create additional obstacles when seeking help (O'Neal & Beckman, 2017). Overall, understanding the racialization of Cubans and Mexicans is essential to address the systemic factors that contribute to interpersonal violence and women's efforts to obtain help within these communities. Historical and structural inequalities, such as racism, poverty, and immigration policies, intersect with gender dynamics to perpetuate cycles of abuse.

Moreover, the racialization of Cubans and Mexicans influences the availability and accessibility of culturally competent services for Latina survivors. Service providers and justice policies must be aware of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences within Latina

communities to support survivors and effectively address Latinas' needs. Service providers and justice policies must be able to offer linguistic and cultural services to recognize Latinas' intersecting identities and experiences that shape survivors' help-seeking behaviors (Postmus et al., 2014).

Cuban and Mexican Immigration

In addition to differences in racialization of Cuban and Mexican origin people in the United States, differing patterns of immigration have affected the two groups. Cuban immigration to the United States has been shaped by various waves of migrants seeking refuge, economic opportunities, and political freedom. A significant influx of immigration occurred after Fidel Castro's rise to power in 1959. The communist presence in Cuba led to political repression, economic hardship, and limited civil liberties, such as restricting freedom of speech and movement. These negative communist factors motivated many Cubans to flee during this communist regime in search of refuge in the United States, leading to increased Cuban immigration in the early years following Castro's revolution. Cubans who migrated during this time were considered middle or upper class due to the 1965-1973 Memorandum of Understanding between the United States and Cuba. The memorandum influenced one of the most monumental migration waves from Cuba; for Cubans to migrate, they must be "claimed" by family in the United States, which primarily assisted those who identified as white (Aguirre, 1976). In 1980, another large wave of migration occurred due to the Mariel boatlift, the only migration effort that included Black and racially mixed individuals (Cobas et al., 2009).

Mexican immigration to the United States is related to the Mexican-American War and the tensions of Mexican American citizenship from the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. Mexican immigration is motivated by economic opportunities and family reunification. The Treaty of

Guadalupe Hidalgo ended the Mexican-American War, and the United States gained territorial land: California, Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and parts of Colorado and Wyoming. The territorial gain led to Mexican and indigenous individuals becoming subjects of the United States, altering their citizenship status and rights (Cobas et al., 2009). The transfer of territory meant that many Mexicans and indigenous communities that had lived in these regions for their entire lives now lived in a new country. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo granted some Mexican Americans United States citizenship, but they were denied access to their legal rights. Therefore, numerous Mexican and indigenous communities began to relocate back to Mexico, while other individuals chose to remain in the United States. This displacement process led to economic hardship and family division. Moreover, the Bracero Program, instituted during World War II, brought Mexican laborers to the United States to work in agriculture and manufacturing (Cobas et al., 2009). Once jobs were completed, some laborers were deported back to Mexico, while others remained in the United States, contributing to the steady flow of undocumented immigration.

Ethnic identification as Cubans and Mexicans has implications for acculturation, as many Latinx individuals strive to preserve their cultural identity while adapting to life in the United States. The theory of selective acculturation derived from Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut (1996) highlights the notion that individuals adjust to the dominant culture (the United States) while preserving elements from their ethnic culture (Cuban or Mexican). Cuban and Mexican communities form in cities like Miami, where Spanish language, food, and traditions are evident (Cobas et al., 2009).

Cuban and Mexican immigration patterns impact Latinas experiencing interpersonal violence, as immigrants face obstacles to seeking help due to language barriers, fear of

deportation, and cultural norms, such as gender roles and power dynamics within relationships that influence perceptions of abuse and hinder disclosure. Thus, efforts to address interpersonal violence within Cuban and Mexican communities require culturally sensitive approaches that acknowledge the intersections of immigration status, ethnicity, race, and gender.

Cultural Barriers

I begin this section of the thesis by connecting Latin American cultural history to cultural beliefs and roles within Latinx communities. Then, I look at Perilla et al.'s (1994) study, which is framed within Ecological Theory, on how cultural norms and roles create barriers for Latinas who are enduring domestic violence.

Cultural History and Beliefs

The Catholic Church, Latin American independence, and Roman Law have had a lasting impact on many Latinx cultures. The Church's teachings on traditional gender roles and male authority have reinforced concepts like *machismo* and *marianismo*. *Marianismo*, in particular, has been used to justify submissiveness and feminine passivity of Latina women. The prioritization of male inheritance and property rights in Roman Law also contributed to the idea of male superiority. During the fight for independence, the *caudillos*, leaders of Latin American people, embodied masculinity, respect, and power, representing traditional values within Latinx communities and families. The fight for Latin American independence was for political freedom but did not address gender inequalities, perpetuating established norms. These cultural values and norms persist in many Latinx communities and contribute to the persistence of gender disparities and gender roles.

Consistent with the idea that Latina women experience micro and macro aggressions, Perilla et al. (1994) identified social constructions of Latinx cultural beliefs and morals that may

lead to domestic violence. In Perilla et al.'s (1994) application of an ecological framework, Latin American culture is at the center, and the analysis considers the cultural impact on Latinas and the potential contribution of culture to domestic violence. The basis of an ecological framework is to understand the ecology of an individual, specifically how they were raised, their place of work, their religious affiliations, their role within society and the household, and their institutional involvement (Brofenbrenner, 1979). At the individual level, cultural norms and gender expectations within Latinx communities may pressure Latina women to conform to traditional roles of submissiveness and obedience. Latinas' conformity to traditional Latin American roles can lead to internalized stress and feelings of powerlessness and helplessness.

Conversely, Latinas may adopt traditional gender roles as a coping mechanism to avoid abuse and punishment despite being aware of the hardships they face (Lopez & Pasko, 2021). Perilla et al. (1994) highlight the cultural norms and values of *machismo*, *marianismo,* and *familismo* as contributing to domestic violence in many Latinx communities. *Machismo* can be seen in both positive and negative lights: on one hand, it represents being the head of the household and taking care of one's family with honor and responsibility; on the other hand, it can also perpetuate traditional gender roles that emphasize male dominance, aggressive behavior, and control. *Machismo* may foster a sense of entitlement in men, leading to controlling behaviors and justifying acts of abuse to assert dominance (Perilla et al., 1994).

Along with the cultural concept of *machismo, marianismo* also represents a set of traditional roles and expectations specifically focused on women. Latinas are often expected to conform to the cultural concept of *marianismo*, which involves prioritizing their families' needs over their own. While *marianismo* has positive qualities like selflessness and devotion, it can also contribute to domestic violence. Women may remain silent about the abuse they suffer,

believing they must endure violence for the family's stability or out of fear of seeking help and disclosure. Due to these cultural norms, there is a struggle to recognize interpersonal violence as abuse, which can create a barrier to seeking help. Perilla et al. (1994) found that imposing traditional gender roles and family cohesion within Latinx culture impacted Latina survivors within their sample.

Hypotheses to be Tested and Rationale

This section presents several hypotheses that were tested. Following each hypothesis, terms are defined, and a rationale is provided for testing the hypothesis.

First Hypothesis

Women differing in ethnic identification (Mexican and Cuban) experience different types of abuse.

Rationale

As noted above, researchers often lump Latina women into one category, dismissing their racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. Race and ethnic identification are intersectional so that Latina women in the United States originate from Latin America, identify as a women, and are most often working class; thus, within Anglo-American societies are considered minoritized; these characteristics create a social and political identity (Crenshaw, 1989).

Anzaldua's (1987) semi-autobiographical account identifies an essential concept regarding the social crossing between the United States and Mexico border. She describes Mexican-identified women as being physically in the United States but also mentally and emotionally maintaining ever-lasting ties to Mexico. Thus, in borderlands, people embody conflicting identities regarding gender, race, and ethnicity. When Latinas cross the border, they must form a new Anglo-American identity. Anzaldua (1987) formed a modern awareness that

facets of Latina women's identity, such as gender, are associated with power systems and structures, and they continue to operate in "in-between" identities and spaces. Thus, the intersecting identities (gender, race, ethnicity) and spaces Latina women operate in must be considered to understand Latinas' life experiences. Compared to Cuban-identified women, those with Mexican ties may be more bound to traditional gender ideologies and thus may live with higher levels of abuse.

Through the internalization of cultural and gendered expectations, some Latina women perceive and tolerate abuse, such as emotional violence and abusive control, as forms of punishment. Alternatively, some women may not have internalized cultural and gender expectations but become submissive to punitive abuse as a survival mechanism due to economic constraints, lack of social support, and language barriers (Lopez & Pasko, 2021). Thus, violence against women within Latinx communities is likely to differ for Cuban and Mexican women. Relevant to the present research, in some self-reported studies, interpersonal violence prevalence rates were reported by subethnicity. The prevalence rates among Mexican immigrants ranged from 31% (Sabina et al., 2015) to 68% (Sabina et al., 2013). The prevalence rates of Cuban immigrants vary from 19% (Sabina et al., 2015) to 21% (Sabina et al., 2013; Gonzalez et al., (2018). Overall, reports concerning interpersonal violence prevalence rates within Mexican and Cuban communities contain disparities, leading to the current exploration of types of abuse and help-seeking behaviors reported by Mexican and Cuban-identified women.

Help Seeking: Formal and Informal Resources

Help-seeking can be formal or informal support. Informal support includes disclosure and support from family, friends, and community members. Formal support includes seeking help from law enforcement, legal services, shelters, safe houses, hotlines and crisis centers, and

government-funded programs. Law enforcement agencies are crucial for responding to immediate threats, conducting investigations, and providing protection orders when necessary. Latinas' experiences with law enforcement are critical, as they are gatekeepers to legal protection and professional support (Postmus et al., 2014).

Second Hypothesis

Demographic information (exposure to the United States, language preference, education, household income, and ethnic identification) and the lifetime seriousness of abuse are related to seeking help from formal and informal sources.

Rationale for Each Hypothesized Predictor

Exposure to the United States: Latinas who migrate at an older age may face challenges in adjusting to a new culture and resources. Due to economic constraints, they may be more inclined to seek informal help from friends or families. Alternatively, Latinas who immigrate at a younger age or were born in the United States may have adjusted to the new culture and established networks and may prefer formal help, such as law enforcement or the legal system.

Language Preference: Proficiency in English can facilitate access to formal services, while Spanish-speaking Latinas may rely more on informal networks due to language barriers within the United States context (Postmus et al., 2014; Bui & Morash, 1999; O'Neal & Beckman, 2017). Legal services and court systems allow victims to seek justice and obtain restraining orders against perpetrators. However, language barriers isolate some Latinas who are not proficient in English from accessing legal support. Language barriers result from institutions lacking multilingual staff and spaces, making it difficult for Latina women to seek help or navigate the legal system (O'Neal & Beckman, 2017). In Postmus et al. (2014) study on Latinas' seeking help, the women in their sample explained that exposure to a bilingual-bicultural legal

advocate was impactful; if the legal advocate were not bilingual, the women experiencing abuse would not seek help.

Education: Higher education levels may correlate with an increased awareness of formal support systems and empower Latinas to seek help from professional sources. In contrast, lower education levels may correlate with decreased awareness of formal support, influencing Latinas to seek help from informal sources (O'Neal & Beckman,2017).

Household Income: Economic factors could influence help-seeking behaviors, as individuals with higher incomes may have greater access to resources (e.g., therapy, interventions, and crisis centers) and be more inclined to seek formal help. Latinas with lower incomes or who are economically dependent on their partners may lack access to resources and be more inclined to seek informal help or no help at all (O'Neal & Beckman,2017).

Ethnic identification: Identification as Cuban versus Mexican may be related to help-seeking because of individual experiences within each ethnic community.

Third Hypothesis

A higher proportion of Latinas (Mexican and Cuban) who were born in the United States and whose native speaking language is English will seek help from formal support.

Fourth Hypothesis

A higher proportion of Latinas (Mexican and Cuban) who were born outside of the United States and whose native speaking language is Spanish will seek help from informal support.

Present Study

Overall, LatCRT highlights the multiple layers of oppression faced by Latinas experiencing abuse while navigating help-seeking avenues. The confluence of gender, race,

ethnicity, language barriers, education, and economic instability contributes to Latina's vulnerability and potential persistence in abusive situations. Therefore, understanding these complexities is essential to developing cultural interventions and policies that address the immediate consequences of abuse while also addressing the underlying structural factors that perpetuate such injustices. By considering the experiences of Latinas within the broader context of LatCRT, a more comprehensive understanding emerges regarding gender, race, and ethnicity. LatCRT enables targeting strategies for advocacy, support, and needed research.

Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine the types of abuse reported by Latinas differing by ethnic identification (Mexican and Cuban) and their help-seeking behaviors. The study sheds light on the challenges Latinas face when enduring abuse and identifies the barriers they encounter when accessing resources and support. Indeed, the study aims to inform gender-, cultural-, acculturation- interventions and justice policies in regard to violence against women and culturally sensitive support systems to address and assist Latinas experiencing abuse.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

The study is a secondary analysis of data collected through interviews with a national sample of Latina women who have experienced interpersonal violence. The "Sexual Assault Among Latinas (SALAS) Study, May-September 2008" was funded by the United States Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice (2007-WG-BX-0051). The Sexual Assault Among Latinas Study data are from a nationally representative sample of 2,000 Latina women. The sample allows for a comparative analysis of the nature of abuse and help-seeking behaviors for Latina women differing in ethnic identification and an examination of predictors of seeking help from formal and informal sources. Overall, the findings from the representative sample can inform evidence-based policy and intervention strategies aimed at addressing interpersonal violence and improving access to support for groups with diverse backgrounds. For the thesis, the analysis focuses on subsamples of 1143 Latinas who identify as Mexican and 275 Latinas who identify as Cuban from the larger study of 2,000 adult Latina women living in the United States (Cuevas & Chiara, 2012).

Procedures

The larger study collected data from May 28, 2008, to September 3, 2008. The interviewers contacted individuals in the selected households through a Computer Assisted Telephone (CATI) system. When calling a specific household, the interviewers would make an initial attempt, and if there were no response, they would make four more callbacks. Once a household was reached, the interviewer would call three more times to receive either a response to the interview or a refusal. Interviewers made calls between 5 pm and 9 pm throughout the week, between 10 am and 9 pm on Saturdays, and from 11 am to 9 pm on Sundays. They

followed an inclusion system to determine Latina women's eligibility: if the call went through, the female interviewer would ask for the total number of Latina women 18 years or older in the household. If one woman was eligible, the interviewer asked her to participate. If more than one Latina woman were eligible, the interviewer would use the "most recent/next birthday" method to determine which could participate. Once the interviewer made contact with the eligible woman, she read the informed consent and asked the woman to participate in the study. After the interviewer received consent, the interview was conducted, or the interviewer would call the participant back based on the participant's availability.

All in all, of the nationally representative sample of 2,000 Latina women, 16 (.8%) derived from areas with 20% or lower Latina/o density, 42 (2%) derived from areas with 21%-40% Latina/o density, 41(2%) derived from areas with 41%-60% Latina/o density, 111 (6%) derived from areas with 61% to 80% Latina/o density and 1,790 (90%) came from areas with 80% or higher Latina/o density (Cuevas & Chiara, 2012). Thus, most of the women lived in areas populated primarily by other Latina/o people.

The interviewers worked for a survey research firm skilled in conducting interviews with sensitive subject matter such as interpersonal victimization. Only multilingual females conducted interviews, as previous literature on interpersonal victimization specific to Latina women, revealed that survivors and reporters were more likely to participate and provide narratives if the interviewer spoke multiple languages, for this sample, English and Spanish, and if the interviewers were women (Postmus et al., 2014). Female interviewers were also specifically trained to conduct the Sexual Assault Among Latinas (SALAS) interview, which gathered information on demographics, the state of social issues (i.e., discrimination, violent crime, domestic violence, and sexual assault and harassment within American society), victimization

history, help-seeking efforts, mental health status, and religious behavior/beliefs. Due to the nature of interpersonal victimization, participants were given a code phrase to say ("OK, you're welcome") if they needed to end the call because of safety or confidentiality concerns.

The phone interview covered topics in the following order: questions about the state of social issues, demographic information, acculturation, lifetime victimization, help-seeking behaviors for the abuse incident that occurred in the United States and that the victim viewed as the most upsetting, religiosity, gender role ideology, psychological symptoms, and posttraumatic stress symptoms. Once study participants completed the phone interview and the SALAS survey, they received compensation of $10 for their time.

Sample

All women in the original sample needed to meet the criteria of identifying as a woman, over the age of 18, identifying as Latina (foreign or United States citizen), and speaking either English or Spanish. The criteria prevent the findings from being generalizable to all women who do not identify as Latina and women who do identify as Latina but identify as Indigenous and speak other languages, such as Portuguese (Kellogg, 2005). To create a national sample of Latina women living in the United States, the primary investigators used a random digit dial method (RDD) to generate probability samples of households with landline phones. Therefore, a total of 69,549 numbers were dialed, and 5,075 (7%) were extracted from areas with 20% or lower Latina/o density, 4,398 (6%) were extracted from areas with 21%-40% Latina/o density, 4,183 (6%) were extracted from areas with 41%-60% Latina/o density, 3,953 (6%) were extracted from areas with 61%-80% of Latina/o density, and 51,940 (75%) were sampled from areas with 80% or higher Latina/o density which provided a diverse sample of women residing in mixed geographic areas. The proportions from communities with different concentrations of Latinx

individuals are relevant to generating a national sample of Latina women living in the United States. The sample did not include the phone numbers that revealed nonresidential contacts, such as businesses, churches, and college/university dorms. The phone numbers included in the sample were households with Latina women who met the eligibility standards or households with no more than five extraneous individuals. The national sample of 2,000 Latina women ensures the generalizability of the study findings to a large part of the population of Latina women in the United States.

Quantitative Measures

Demographic Variables

The variables included in the analyses are exposure to the United States, language preference, household income, education, and ethnic identification. The variables, questions that elicited the data, and response options are listed in Table 1.

Table 1.

Predictive Variables

Variable	Question	Options
Exposure to the United States	If the women were born in the US, if they were a child immigrant, or an adult immigrant.	0= "Born US," 1= "Child immigrant," 2= "Adult immigrant."
Language Preference	*What language are you most comfortable speaking*?	0 = "English or *Spanish*," 1 = "Spanish only."
Household Income	*What was your yearly household income in 2007 before taxes?*	1= "Under 9,999," 2= "10,000 to $19,999," 3= "20,000 to $29,999," 4= "30,000 to 39,999," 5= "40,000 to 49,999," 6= "50,000 to 69,999," 8= "70,000 to 79,999,"9= "80,000 or more."
Education	*What is your highest level of education?*	1= "Less than high school," 2= "High school graduate/GED or equivalent," 3= Some college/trade school," 4=" Two-year college graduate," 5= "Four-year

Table 1 (cont'd)

		college graduate," 6= "Some graduate school," 7= "Graduate degree."
Ethnic Identification	*What is your ethnic background?*	1 = "*Mexican,*" 2 = "*Cuban*," 3 = "*Other*."

The ethnic origin groups with a large enough sample size for comparison of types of abuse are Mexican (84%) and Cuban (16%)—a total of 1143 Latinas identified as Mexican, and 275 Latinas identified as Cuban.

Exposure to the United States is a measure of generational status. To obtain this measure, the answer to the question, "*What country were you born in*?" response options 1= "*United States*", 2= "*Mexico*", 3= "*Puerto Rico*", 4= "*Cuba*", 5= "*Dominican Republic*", 6= "*El Salvador,"* 7= "*Honduras,*" 8= "*Guatemala,*" 9= "*Other*" was recoded into a new variable with value 0 indicating birth in the United States and 1 indicating birth in Mexico or Cuba. The response options for the question, "How old were you when you came to the United States?" were 1= "*18 to 24,*" 2= "*25 to 34,*"3= "*35 to 44,*" 4= "*45 to 54,*"5= "*55 to 64,*" 6= "*65+."* The response was recoded into one of two categories, with 0 indicating immigration younger than 18 and 1 indicating immigration at 18 or older. Then, the recoded variables were used to create a variable indicating exposure to the United States with values 0= "*Born US,*" 1= "*Child immigrant,*" 2= "*Adult immigrant*."

To measure language preference, the original question, "*What language are you most comfortable speaking*" response options 1= "*Spanish,*" 2= "*English,*" 3= "*Local dialect from country of origin,*" 4= "*Other*" was recoded. If a Latina preferred only to speak Spanish, that was coded as 1, and if a Latina preferred to speak English or their local dialect, that was coded as 0. The recoded response options for "*Language preference*" are 0= "*English or both English and Spanish*" and 1= "*Spanish only."*

Household income is indicated by responses to the question, "*What was your yearly household income in 2007 before taxes?"* Response options include 1= "Under 9,999," 2= "10,000 to $19,999," 3= "20,000 to $29,999," 4= "30,000 to 39,999," 5= "40,000 to 49,999," 6= "50,000 to 69,999," 8= "70,000 to 79,999,"9= "80,000 or more." Education was indicated by responses to the question, "*What is your highest level of education?"* Response options are 1= "*Less than high school*," 2= "*High school graduate/GED or equivalent*," 3= "*Some college/trade school*," 4= "*Two-year college graduate*," 5= "*Four-year college graduate*," 6= "*Some graduate school*," 7= "*Graduate degree*."

Types of Abuse

The types of abuse reported by Latinas who identify as Mexican and Cuban included measures of lifetime victimization that highlight negative actions that Latina women might experience. The data includes 1 = "*Yes*" and 2 = "*No*" codes (response options) for several types of lifetime victimization. They include non-physical abuse such as, "*Have you ever been stalked by anyone*?" The items also highlight life-threatening types of abuse, such as, "*Have you ever been shot at, stabbed, struck, kicked, beaten, punched, slapped around, or otherwise physically harmed?*" Some lifetime victimization items focused on childhood abuse, such as, "When you were a child, were you ever struck, kicked, beaten, punched, slapped around, spanked hard enough to leave a mark, or otherwise physically harmed?" and "*Have you ever been kidnapped or held captive?*" The other lifetime victimization measures that did not focus on childhood abuse included, "*Have you ever been threatened with any kind of weapon, like a knife, gun, baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, stick, rock, or bottle?*" and "*Has anyone ever threatened you in a face-to-face confrontation?*" The questions also asked about assault, "*Have you ever been actually assaulted with any kind of weapon, like a knife, gun, baseball bat, frying pan, scissors,*

stick, rock, or bottle?" Items asked whether women experienced sexual assault and coercion, "*Has anyone—male or female—ever forced or coerced you to engage in unwanted sexual activity?*" and "*Other than what we just talked about, did anyone, male or female, ever attempt to—but not actually—force you to engage in unwanted sexual activity?*" and "*Other than what we just talked about, has anyone ever actually touched private parts of your body or made you touch theirs against your wishes?*"

Following the method of counting types of delinquency to reflect seriousness, a count of types of victimization was calculated to reflect seriousness of lifetime victimization (Hindelang et al., 1979; Osgood et al., 2002). The resulting count variable is called a variety score.

Help-Seeking Behaviors

The help-seeking behaviors reported by Latinas encompassed different types of disclosure to formal and informal sources of help. Women were asked to describe help-seeking behaviors specific to the negative experiences Latina women had faced, "*Earlier, you'd mentioned that you have had the following experiences…Of these experiences, which one would you say was the MOST SEVERE incident that occurred in the United States and has upset you THE MOST?*" Response options included: 1 = "*Someone has stalked you,*" 2 = "*You have been shot at, stabbed, struck, kicked, beaten, punched, slapped around, or otherwise physically harmed,*" 3 = "*You have been threatened with a weapon like a knife, gun, baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, stick, rock, or bottle,*" 4 = "*Someone has threatened you in a face-to-face confrontation,*" 5 = "*You have been assaulted with a weapon like a knife, gun, baseball bat, frying pan, scissors, stick, rock, or bottle,*" 6 = "*When you were a child you were struck, kicked, beaten, punched, slapped around, spanked hard enough to leave a mark or otherwise physically harmed,* " 7 = "*Someone has forced or coerced you to engage in unwanted sexual activity,*" 8 =

"*Someone has attempted to—but not actually—forced you to engage in unwanted sexual activity,*" 9 = "*Someone has touched private parts of your body or made you touch theirs against your wishes,* 10 = "*Someone kidnapped you.*" Thus, the help-seeking behaviors reported by Latinas are specific to negative experience they considered to be the most severe and that occurred in the United States.

Latinas in the sample were asked to report the types of help they sought and who they sought help from. Two questions provided data to indicate whether Latinas sought formal help by contacting the police. The first question was, "*Was this incident reported to the police?*" Response options included 1 = "*Yes*" and 2 = "*No.*" The follow-up question was, *Who reported this incident to the police?*" response options included 1 = "*You*," 2 = "*Assailant/him/her*," 3 = "*Friend/neighbor*," 4 = "*In-laws*," 5 = "*Your family/spouse/children/relatives/boyfriend/partner*," 6 = "*Doctor/nurse/other health professional*," 7 = "*Minister/clergy/priest/rabbi*," 8 = "*Social worker/counselor/other mental health professional*," 9 = "*Teacher/principal/other school staff*," 10 = "*Boss/employer/co-worker*," 11 = "*Stranger/bystander*," 12 = "*Police/security guard/security dept*," 13 = "*Other.*" One question provided data to indicate whether Latina's sought formal help by seeking a restraining order: "*Did you get a restraining order against the person as a result of this incident*?" Response options included 1= "*Yes*" and 2= "*No*". To create the dependent variable, sought formal help, a variable was created so 1= sought help from the police or sought a restraining order and 2= did not seek either type of help.

The informal help-seeking measure was based on the question, "*Aside from people already mentioned, did you ever talk to anyone about the incident, for example, a family member, friend, or priest?*" Response options included 1 = "*Yes*" and 2 = "*No*." The follow-up question asked, "*Who did you talk to about this incident*?" Response options included 1=

"*Attorney, legal, lawyer,*" 2= "*Parents/mother/father,*" 3= "*Sibling/brother/sister,*" 4= "*Children/grandchildren,*" 5= "*Other family member (aunt, uncle, grandparent, etc),*" 6= "*Friend, neighbor, roommate,*" 7= "*Other health or mental health professional,*" 8= "*Minister/clergy/priest/rabbi,*" 9= "*Husband/boyfriend,fiancé,partner,*" 10= "*Co-worker, boss, employer,*" 11= "*Teacher/faculty member,*" 12= "*School/university/counselor/staff,*" 13= "*Other*."

For the present analysis, informal help-seeking is defined as Latinas disclosing to family, friends, partners, neighbors, or roommates. The questions about seeking help from family, friends, or community members provided the data to create the informal help-seeking variable. The responses to these questions were then recorded to indicate informal help-seeking from family, friends, and acquaintances. Reports of seeking other types of help, for example, from a mental health professional, did not contain enough responses to create another dependent variable. For example, only 3 Latinas (Mexican and Cuban) sought help from other health or mental health professionals.

Analytic Strategy

This section describes how Mexican and Cuban-identified women were compared and how analyses were conducted to identify the predictors of formal and informal help-seeking behaviors.

Bivariate Comparisons of Mexican and Cuban-Identified Women

Chi-square analyses are used to determine whether there is a significant association between categorical variables (Weisburd & Britt, 2014). In this study, two-way chi-square analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between reports of each type of lifetime victimization and ethnic group. Since multiple types of abuse were compared, the Bonferroni

method to set the significance level for each test was used. For the 10 comparisons, a significance level of .04 was required to conclude that the groups were significantly different at the .05 level. Chi-square analyses were also used to compare the ethnic groups on both formal and informal seeking and on each hypothesized predictor of help-seeking behaviors. Since the variety score for types of abuse is an interval variable, the means for this variable were compared for the two ethnic groups.

Correlations among Predictors of Formal and Informal Help-Seeking

Correlations are used to identify relationships between two or more variables (Weisburd & Britt, 2014), for instance, examining the relationships between predictive variables for formal and informal help-seeking. Correlations present the strengths and directions for relationships between exposure to the United States, variety of abuse, language preference, household income, education, and ethnic identification. Additionally, regression diagnostics were conducted to further check for multicollinearity.

Logistic Regression to Identify Predictors of Formal and Informal Help-Seeking

Logistic regression is employed to model the probability of binary outcome variables, in this case, formal and informal help-seeking, as a function of predictor variables (Weisburd & Britt, 2014). Logistic regression analysis was used to predict two types of help-seeking: formal and informal help-seeking. The process of the logistic regression involves specifying a model that includes all hypothesized predictor variables. A test was conducted to determine if the full model was significant, and then coefficients were tested to determine if each one was statistically significant net of the effects of other independent variables. By conducting the logistic regressions, this study provides insights into the relative importance of each predictor variable in

influencing Latinas' formal and informal help-seeking behaviors regarding interpersonal violence.

Chapter 4: Findings

Bivariate Analyses

Results revealed significant differences in the type of lifetime abuse experiences between Latinas identifying as Mexican and Cuban. A higher proportion of Latinas in the Mexican ethnic subgroup compared to Cubans reported experiencing all types of interpersonal violence. For example, 15% of Latinas in the Mexican ethnic subgroup reported experiencing physical victimization (e.g., shot, stabbed, kicked, beaten, punched, slapped) compared to 6% of the Cuban ethnic subgroup (χ^2 = df= 1, $p < 0.01$). Based on the Bonferroni correction of multiple tests, 6 types of lifetime victimization were statistically significant at .05. Detailed information about victimization reported by Latinas within each ethnic group can be found in Table 2. The types of abuse that did not reach a significance level of <.04 are: being stalked; threatened with a weapon; assaulted with a weapon; and kidnapped. The comparison of ethnic groups on seeking help from formal institutions showed that the groups were not statistically significantly different. Specifically, 21% of Latinas in the Mexican ethnic subgroup and 30% in the Cuban ethnic subgroup sought formal help (χ^2 = df= 1, p= .139). There were no significant differences in formal help-seeking behaviors among the two groups. However, 24% of Latinas in the Mexican ethnic subgroup and 17% of Latinas in the Cuban ethnic subgroup sought informal help, and there was a significant difference in informal help-seeking among the two groups (χ^2 = df= 1,$p <$ 0.01).

Table 2.

Lifetime Victimization reported by Mexican and Cuban Latinas

	Mexican			Cuban			
Abuse Type	**Total (N)**	**Yes**	**%**	**Total (N)**	**Yes**	**%**	**χ^2**
Stalking	1433	279	19.5	275	45	16.4	1.448

Table 2 (cont'd)

Adult Physical	1430	212	14.8	275	17	6.2	14.82*
Threatened with weapon	1434	168	11.7	275	23	8.4	2.611
Threatened confrontation	1453	282	19.7	275	36	13.1	6.562*
Assaulted with weapon	1438	98	6.8	275	14	5.1	1.123
Child physical	1426	215	15.1	275	18	6.5	14.19*
Unwanted sexual activity	1430	142	9.9	274	13	4.7	7.478*
Attempted unwanted sexual activity	1433	145	10.1	275	13	4.7	7.989*
Unwanted Sexual fondling	1424	184	12.9	275	17	6.2	10.04*
Kidnapped	1441	24	1.7	275	1	0.4	2.726

Note. * $p < 0.05$ after Bonferroni correction.

Table 3 shows comparisons of the two groups for all predictor variables. For all variables, the groups were significant. First, a much higher proportion of Cuban women were adult immigrants compared to Mexican women. A higher proportion of Mexican women were US-born or child immigrants. For language preference, a higher proportion of Latinas in the Mexican group preferred to speak English or Spanish, and a higher proportion of Latinas in the Cuban group preferred only to speak Spanish. However, for both groups, the proportion of Latinas that prefer to speak Spanish is relatively high at over 75%. A higher proportion of Mexican-identified women have incomes between 10 and 20 thousand dollars a year, and higher proportions of Cuban-identified women have incomes of 40 thousand dollars or higher. For education, the primary difference is that a higher proportion of Mexican women have less than a high school education compared to this proportion of Cuban women.

For variety of abuse, mean scores were different for Mexican and Cuban-identified women. For Mexican women, the mean score is nearly double than the mean score for Cuban

women (for Mexican, *M*=1.210; SD= 1.995; for Cuban, *M*=.7190; SD= 1.547; t= 3.851; df= 1667; p <.001).

Table 3.

Predictor Variable Comparisons for Mexican and Cuban Women

	Mexican		**Cuban**		χ^2 **(df)**
Predictor	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	
Exposure US					103.859* (2)
US born	477	33.4	16	5.8	
Child immigrant	283	19.8	45	16.4	
Adult immigrant	670	46.9	213	77.7	
Language Preference					12.590* (1)
English or Spanish	306	22.4	34	12.7	
Spanish only	1062	77.6	233	87.3	
Household Income					23.436** (8)
Under $9,999	274	26.8	52	27.2	
$10,000 to $19,999	289	28.3	30	15.7	
$20,000 to $29,999	159	15.6	32	16.8	
$30,000 to $39,999	98	9.6	17	8.9	
$40,000 to $49,999	59	5.8	16	8.4	
$50,000 to $59,999	32	3.1	14	7.3	
$60,000 to $69,999	30	2.9	6	3.1	
$70,000 to $79,999	20	2.0	7	3.7	
$80,000 or more	61	6.0	17	8.9	

Table 3 (cont'd)

Education					64.475* (5)
Less than high school	610	42.6	62	22.9	
High school graduate/GED	373	26.0	73	26.9	
Some college /Trade	189	13.2	35	12.9	
4-year college graduate	83	5.8	27	10.0	
Some graduate school	113	7.9	4	1.5	
Graduate degree	52	3.6	18	6.6	

Note. **p< 0.001. For Mexican, *p < .01N ranged from 1022-1433. For Cuban, N ranged from 191-274.

Correlations among Predictor Variables

Table 4 presents correlations among predictor variables hypothesized to be related to the dependent variables. Initial correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between several variables. Household income showed a moderate positive correlation with education, indicating that higher education is associated with higher household income among Latinas. Exposure to the United States revealed a strong positive correlation with language preference. Practically, Latinas who have exposure to the United States, such as those born in the US or immigrated as a child, are more likely to prefer English or be bilingual compared to Latinas who immigrated as adults. A weak negative correlation was found between seriousness of abuse and ethnicity (Mexican or Cuban) among Latinas which indicates that there is a slight, but not statistically significant tendency for Latinas with different ethnic backgrounds to experience varying levels of interpersonal violence. The seriousness of abuse was weakly negatively correlated with the age the women came to the United States.

Table 4.

Correlations for Predictive Variables

Correlations						
	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Exposure US						
2.Variety of Abuse	-0.253					
3.Language Preference	0.618	-0.326				
4.Household Income	-0.289	0.145	-0.399			
5.Education	-0.263	0.170	-0.036	0.532		
6.Ethnic Group (1=Mexican, 2=Cuban)	0.213	-0.079	0.087	0.078	0.172	1

Note. All correlations were significant $p < 0.01$. N ranged from 1318 to 1977 due to missing data; around 600 cases are missing.

Logistic Regressions

Based on regression diagnostics, there are no problems with multicollinearity among the predictor variables. The lowest tolerance is .490, and the highest VIF is 1.957.

Table 5 presents the results of the logistic regression analysis modeling the influences of predictor variables on formal help-seeking. The model for formal help-seeking was overall significant ($\chi^2(6) = 21.394$, $p < 0.01$). The results revealed significant predictors of formal help-seeking. Specifically, it was found that, holding all other predictors constant, the odds of seeking formal support increased by 22% for Latinas experiencing greater lifetime seriousness of abuse. This finding reveals that Latinas experiencing a variety of abuse (i.e., with greater seriousness of lifetime abuse) are more inclined to seek formal support from the police or the courts. Language

preference was also found to be a predictor variable of formal help-seeking. Holding all other predictors constant, the odds of seeking formal help decreased by 94% for Latinas who only speak Spanish. Thus, women who only speak Spanish were 94% less likely to call the police or request a restraining order when experiencing interpersonal violence compared to Latinas who are bilingual or primary English speakers. These findings highlight that while seriousness of lifetime abuse increases the odds of formal help-seeking, there are also cultural implications, such as speaking only Spanish limiting Latinas from seeking help.

Table 5.

Logistic Regression Model Predicting Formal Help-Seeking

Predictor	**B**	**S.E.**	**Exp (B)**	***p***	**95% (Lower)**	**CI (Upper)**
Exposure US	-.596	.324	.551	.066	0.29,	1.03
Variety of Abuse	.197	.052	1.218	<.001	1.10,	1.34
Language Preference	.665	.314	1.944	.035	1.04,	3.60
Household Income	.006	.053	1.005	.915	0.90,	1.11
Highest Education Level	.028	.075	1.029	.707	0.88,	1.19
Ethnic Group (Mexican)	.812	.538	2.253	.131	0.78,	6.46

Table 5 shows the results of the logistic regression analysis modeling the effect of predictor variables on informal help-seeking. The logistic regression model for informal help-seeking was overall significant as well (χ^2 (6) =298.083, p <. 001). First, it was found that holding all other predictors constant, the odds of seeking informal help increased by 70% for Latinas experiencing greater seriousness of lifetime abuse. Latinas experiencing a variety of abuse are more likely to seek support from family, friends, partners, or community members. Household income increased the odds of informal help-seeking. Holding all predictors constant,

the odds of Latinas seeking informal help increased by 83% for household income. The findings suggest that Latinas experiencing higher incomes are more likely to seek informal support.

Table 6.

Logistic Regression Model Predicting Informal Help-Seeking

Predictor	**B**	**S.E.**	**Exp (B)**	***p***	**95% (Lower)**	**CI (Upper)**
Exposure US	.056	.225	1.057	.805	0.68,	1.64
Variety of Abuse	.538	.041	1.712	<.001	1.10,	1.85
Language Preference	-.137	.227	.872	.547	1.57,	1.36
Household Income	.077	.039	1.080	.049	1.00,	1.16
Highest Education Level	-.002	.055	.998	.964	0.89,	1.11
Ethnic Group (Mexican)	-.496	.403	.609	.218	0.27,	1.34

Chapter 5: Discussion

The thesis examined the influence of ethnicity (Mexican and Cuban) on interpersonal violence experiences and help-seeking behaviors of Latina women. Overall, the results have shown higher rates of lifetime victimization among the Mexican sub-ethnic group and lower rates among the Cuban sub-ethnic group. This finding supports the first hypothesis: women differing in ethnic identification (Mexican and Cuban) experience different types of abuse.

When accounting for other predictor variables, Latinas experiencing a variety of abuse increased the odds of seeking formal help. In addition, a preference for only speaking Spanish decreased the odds of calling the police or seeking a restraining order. Also, Latina's household income increased the odds of seeking informal support. Again, Latinas experiencing a variety of abuses increased the odds of seeking informal help. These findings partially support the second hypothesis: demographic information (ethnic identification, age at immigration, native speaking language, education, household income) and seriousness of abuse are related to the types of help the women seek. However, Mexican versus Cuban ethnic identity was not associated with formal or informal help-seeking behaviors. Therefore, the third hypothesis, a higher proportion of Latinas (Mexican and Cuban) who were born in the United States and whose native speaking language is English will seek help from formal support, and the fourth hypothesis, a higher proportion of Latinas (Mexican and Cuban) who were born outside of the United States and native speaking language is Spanish will seek help from informal support, were not supported.

The thesis sheds light on the complex dynamics surrounding Latinas, particularly those of Mexican and Cuban descent, who experience interpersonal violence and their decision to seek help. The results indicate that Mexican ethnicity is associated with a higher risk of victimization. Socio-demographic characteristics could have influenced this outcome. First, Latinas within the

Mexican ethnic group had the lowest household income compared to Cubans. Mexicans also had the lowest level of education compared to Cubans. Regarding exposure to the United States, Mexicans reported being United States citizens or immigrated at a younger age, whereas Cubans reported immigrating as adults. Considering these socio-demographic characteristics among the Mexican ethnic group, these Latinas were more likely to display risk factors for interpersonal violence. It is essential to underscore that within the United States, Mexicans do have lower educational attainments and incomes compared to other Latin American ethnic groups (Moslimani et al., 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2020). These factors could contribute to interpersonal violence due to stresses associated with poverty and the historically minoritized status within United States institutions such as the educational system. Thus, Latinas in the Mexican sub-ethnic group are more likely to be United States citizens and are also experiencing the negative tensions of racialization that relate to the minoritized status or identification imposed by Anglo-American society (Cobas et al., 2009). Mexican ethnic groups can experience negative effects due to the stresses of immigration and borderland history. The historical displacement and borderland violence can inflict physical and psychological victimization of citizenship status and personal identification with the nation-state. Previous research has demonstrated that Mexicans face discrimination, hate speech, and personal biases because of the anti-immigration beliefs and attitudes inflicted by the United States (Cobas et al., 2009; Rivera, 1994). The anti-immigration beliefs, along with the historical implications of racialization and labor exploitation (e.g., Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and Bracero Program), might invoke more violence against Mexican communities compared to Cuban communities. In sum, the predictor factors, along with the socioeconomic characteristics and the history of racialization and immigration, likely all contribute to the increased victimization among the Mexican-sub-ethnic

group. The findings reveal that sociocultural differences exist between Mexican and Cuban communities. Therefore, it is important to implement culturally sensitive and linguistically appropriate services and interventions, but the support must recognize ethnic differences within Latin American communities. For example, support providers must be aware that Latinas who identify as Mexican may experience specific risk factors (income and education) that contribute to interpersonal violence.

The help-seeking findings revealed that Latinas within the Mexican ethnic group (21%) and Cuban ethnic group (30%) sought formal help (i.e., called the police or received a restraining order), but the difference was not statistically significant. There was a significant difference between the percentage of Latinas who identified as Mexican (24%) or Cuban (17%) who sought informal help from either family, friends, partners, neighbors, or roommates. However, logistic regression models showed neither Mexican nor Cuban ethnic groups to be significantly related to any form of help-seeking. Moreover, exposure to the United States, which is also an assessment of whether Latinas were born in the United States or the age when Latinas immigrated, was also not significantly related to any form of help-seeking. Conversely, the logistic regression model of formal help-seeking indicated that Latinas who prefer to speak Spanish did not call the police or seek a restraining order. Thus, cultural characteristics such as language preferences influence formal help-seeking. Another influential factor of help seeking was household income. Informal help-seeking was associated with increased household income. Latinas that have higher household incomes may have several options to combat interpersonal violence due to a greater social and economic standing, and informal help-seeking is an alternative to formal support. In essence, addressing interpersonal violence among Latinas with different ethnic backgrounds requires multi-lingual and culturally competent services, interventions, and programs that take

into account household income. The integration of Latin American ethnic components within support services can increase the awareness that Latinas can receive adequate help and combat the cycle of victimization. It is essential to note that the findings underline Latina women's resilience in reporting interpersonal violence and navigating help-seeking pathways.

Overall, the findings provide insights into the factors that change the odds of help-seeking behaviors among Latinas experiencing interpersonal violence. Understanding and assessing the predictors of formal and informal help-seeking can inform the development of targeted interventions and services tailored to individuals with diverse backgrounds, limiting the use of the "one size fits all" approach. Criminal justice and victim service institutions must consider the specific needs and ecological contexts, such as the severity of abuse, language preference, and household income of Latinas, in order to improve awareness and access to resources for the victims of interpersonal violence. Criminal justice and victim service institutions can provide effective and targeted interventions to address language preferences by incorporating culturally competent services, such as bilingual and bicultural staff. Culturally competent services can assist with overcoming language barriers and Latinx cultural norms to build trust and improve communication (Postmus et al., 2014; Ramos et al., 2010; Rivera, 1994; O'neal & Beckman, 2017). Crisis intervention services can help Latinas experiencing severe abuse by providing 24/7 hotlines, emergency shelters, and urgent medical care. Culturally relevant counseling can also be beneficial in addressing the severity of abuse by incorporating cultural values, such as family cohesion and community support, to enhance the effectiveness, reduce the stigma surrounding therapy, and facilitate recovery from the after-effects of experiencing severe abuse (Ramos et al., 2010). According to Postmus et al. (2014) findings, community-based support programs can also be implemented to raise awareness of interpersonal

violence and preventive measures. Outreach and education in high Latinx-density areas can be conducted through community centers and churches, and at local events to raise awareness of interpersonal violence. Based on the finding that Latinas with higher household incomes seek informal help, peer support groups can be established to allow Latinas to share their experiences and offer support to each other in safe and understanding environments (O'neal & Beckman, 2017). Community advocates can also assist with addressing the severity of abuse, language preferences, and household income. Community advocates can provide safety planning, translation, and interpretation services, privacy assurance to ensure confidentiality of support, and referral services to specialized institutions that cater to higher-income individuals, ensuring that they receive appropriate support without compromising their lifestyles, such as healthcare and mental health counseling.

The research conducted for this thesis does contain limitations. First, obtaining the SALAS-restricted dataset posed numerous obstacles that caused months of delay before it was possible to analyze the dataset and assess which variables could be included in analyses. Also, the use of secondary data limited control over which constructs could be included in the study. For example, the assessment of gender role ideology was excluded due to copyright issues with the measure used in the available dataset. When analyzing the data, multiple variables were highly correlated. For example, exposure to the United States, age at immigration, and country of birth all contained strong positive correlations. I excluded age at immigration and country of birth and decided to include exposure to the United States as it assesses both the age when Latinas came to the United States and whether the woman was born in the United States. Overall, the use of secondary data restricts the ability to tailor data collection methods and analytical techniques, constraining the depth of investigation.

Moreover, the data was self-reported and has considerable missing data. This can be due to memory deterioration and participants refusing to answer. The interviews were conducted over telephone landlines and excluded the use of cell phones. This method of collecting data excluded Latinas who did not have landlines or did not have access to landlines due to socio-economic constraints or severe violence. Other Latinas may have been omitted due to refusal to participate in the SALAS study. The sample was a nationally representative sample of Latina women living in high-density Latina/o areas. The target towards Latina/o areas limits generalizability to other racial/ethnic groups.

Furthermore, I chose this dataset due to the inclusion of multiple Latin American ethnic groups. However, Mexican and Cuban sub-ethnic groups were the most prominent groups, and the other Latino ethnic groups were too small in number to use for comparison purposes. Regarding help-seeking, the interviews asked Latinas to report help-seeking behavior to only one form of victimization. "*Earlier, you'd mentioned that you have had the following experiences: of these experiences, which one would you say was the MOST SEVERE incident that occurred in the United States and has upset you the MOST*". Thus, the dataset did not capture help-seeking behaviors in response to other forms of violence. Also, it is important to underline that help-seeking is not the only way Latinas may confront interpersonal violence. For example, Latinas can resist gender roles, block and retaliate against the abusers, and create economic stability for themselves.

Conclusion

Future research on Latinas experiencing interpersonal violence and help-seeking should continue to examine the influence of ethnic identification. Other Latin American ethnic groups should be included in future studies to explain differing experiences with interpersonal violence

and help-seeking behaviors among Latinas. The interplay of sociocultural characteristics such as educational attainment, racialization, citizenship status, and immigration and displacement must be implemented in future research to assess Latinas' lived experiences with interpersonal violence. Based on the findings, gender-based violence research that lumps Latinas into one group overlooks the differences between ethnic groups and the overall diversity of Latin American populations. LatCRT addresses the historical context of colonialism, labor exploitation, racialization, and immigration and citizenship status, illuminating how these factors profoundly impact the experiences of Latin American communities (Garcia, 1995; Cobas et al., 2009). Specifically, the current findings reveal that Latinas identifying as Mexican have a higher risk of victimization compared to the Cuban ethnic group. This can be linked to immigration, labor exploration, and borderland history. LatCRT contends that these historical and structural influences shape Latinx experiences of violence and their responses to it (Garcia, 1995; Cobas et al., 2009). For instance, the fear of deportation or distrust in authorities rooted in historical exploitation and racialization might deter Latinas from seeking formal help. Understanding the impact of immigration status and labor exploitation can reveal why some Latinas might rely more on informal support networks rather than formal institutions.

Future research should also examine Latina's routine resilience. Routine resilience means factors that influence everyday survival—for example, the severity of victimization, relationship with the perpetrator, housing situations, and child safety. Examinations of routine resilience can provide a better understanding of Latina's strengths and coping mechanisms in navigating challenging situations while experiencing violence and seeking help. This study does incorporate Latino Critical Race Theory tenets of intersectionality and historical agency. However, it does not include the tenet of counter-narratives because the present thesis is a quantitative study.

Future research should incorporate the tenet of counter-narratives to give voice to Latinas and their experiences with interpersonal violence and help-seeking. It is essential to listen to lived experiences and stories that have been historically repressed to challenge the stereotypes and misconceptions formed about Latina communities (Delgado, 1989; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Pena et al., 2022).

The current study did not assess perpetrators of abuse, such as family members or partners. Future research should consider investigating the perpetrators of abuse to gain a comprehensive understanding of the abuse reported. This may provide insight into the possibility that some abusive incidents may not be related to family dynamics, meaning that the norms and values typically associated with family relationships (i.e., *familismo*) may not apply in these cases. Additionally, future studies should explore the likelihood that family members perpetrate the majority of serious incidents that cause individuals to seek help. This hypothesis is supported by evidence suggesting that severe abuse often involves close relational dynamics (Perilla et al., 1994; Quinones-Mayo & Resnick, 1996; Galanti, 2003; Harper, 2017). In conclusion, examining the context and relationships involved in abuse reports is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Furthermore, the present thesis focuses on the types of resources and support Latinas seek, also known as help-seeking. It does not examine how beneficial the support was, and future studies should investigate how beneficial formal and informal resources are. Also, while disclosure of violence can be an essential step in the process of seeking help, it does not necessarily equate to actively seeking out services or support. Latinas may disclose their experiences for various reasons that do not always lead to help-seeking actions. For instance, they might share their experiences with friends or family members for emotional support, to

protect themselves or their children or as a way of coping with their trauma without intending to pursue formal help or intervention (Lopez & Pasko, 2021). Given these complexities, it is crucial to conduct research specifically focused on the help-seeking behaviors of Latinas who experience interpersonal violence. Such research should investigate the factors that influence their decision to seek help, including severity of abuse, language barriers, household income, and trust in service providers. For example, future studies should explore how household income relates to informal help-seeking, examining whether economic stability affects their access to and utilization of informal support networks. Understanding these dynamics can lead to more targeted and effective interventions that better support Latinas' journey toward safety and recovery.

Indeed, as Latin American populations continue to grow within the United States, future research on Latinas experiencing interpersonal violence and help-seeking must include the nuances that may create subjection to violence. In essence, this thesis highlights the complex experiences of Mexican and Cuban Latinas facing interpersonal violence and their help-seeking efforts. Despite facing significant challenges, Latina women demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness by reporting their violence and help-seeking behaviors. Understanding Latina's cultural and individual experiences can inform adequate support and intervention (e.g., criminal justice agencies, crisis centers, hotlines, shelters) strategies tailored to Latina's needs, emphasizing the importance of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed approaches in addressing interpersonal violence and human rights issues among Latinas.

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