EXPLORING HOW NGOS OPERATE AS A SOCIAL RESOURCE WITHIN LATINA
IMMIGRANTS' EXPERIENCES OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

National data note one in two women (e.g., 42% prevalence rate) in the United States will experience an incident of interpersonal violence (IPV) at least once in their lifetime with Latinas contending broader lifetime IPV prevalence rates ranging anywhere from 4%-80%. Latinas also find themselves disproportionately affected by IPV resulting in increased risk for negative health outcomes (e.g., chronic pain, sleep difficulty, poorer self-rated physical and mental health) and increased patterns of revictimization. Findings on how social-cultural contexts and community level factors may influence experiences of IPV among Latina immigrants is vastly understudied. However, what we do know is that Latina immigrants are uniquely vulnerable to violence exposure due to the intersections of their ethnic, sex, gender, religious, language, nationality, and legality identities. To this end, this study seeks to understand how the community level factor of non-governmental organization (NGO) operates within Latina immigrants' experiences of IPV. This study consisted of ethnographic field work (e.g., observations, interviews, and questionnaire) with one NGO in West Michigan that directly works with Latinas that have experienced IPV and the surrounding community. Through one-on-one, semi-structured interviews this exploratory study sought to understand staff perceptions of how they provided services, met with clients, and worked with clients to address issues of IPV. Findings speak to how staff perceive the NGO operating as a social resource that works as a unit to buffer the impact of IPV on their clients' lives. Staff also recognize the challenges in the work they do, strive to empower participants, and are cognizant that the NGO must function within multiple systemic barriers. A broad theme of recognizing the strain of documentation insecurity amongst client was also identified and staff spoke to operating within a dominant collectivistic perspective when providing services. This paper ends with situating the current study amongst gaps in the literature and providing direction for future studies.

Key words: Latina immigrants, Interpersonal Violence, Latino Critical Theory, Community Level Resource, Collectivism

In deep gratitude to my research participants and the NGO. Thank you for giving me this opportunity and believing in my efforts. For opening your space to this work, sharing your experiences, and providing words of wisdom.

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¡No daré paso para atrás, ni para agarrar impulso!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

As of 2022 there are 46.2 million immigrants in the United States. At 18.6 million, Latinx

immigrants, make up the largest segment (40.3%) (Shenasi Azari et al. 2024). Since the late 19th century,

traditional migration patterns from Latin America have coalesced around specific regional areas such as

California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas (Durand, Massey, and Capoferro 2005). However, more

recent migration patterns saw a slow yet definite shift to more Midwest areas in the U.S. Thus the early 20th

century saw the emergence of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio as new gateway or

destination areas for immigrants (Badillo 2003b; Crowley, Lichter, and Turner 2013; Durand et al. 2005;

Saenz 2011). While there was a dip in migration to the Midwest during the mid-20th century, by the 1990's

there was a resurgence to non-traditional sites, with some of the biggest changes in migration patterns

happening amongst more recent immigrant arrivals (Badillo 2003b; Durand et al. 2005).

This resurgence to non-traditional migration sites includes an increase in Latino migration to

Michigan. As of 2021 immigrants in Michigan make up 6.8% of the state population, with Latino

immigrants comprising 17.1% of that segment (Migration Policy Institute 2021). Although these

demographics are smaller compared to U.S. trends, there are notable differences, to consider at the state

level. First, within Michigan, there has been a consistent growth in the foreign-born population, at a 47%

increase between 1990 and 2000, whereas the U.S. Born population only increased by 5% during this same

time period. When this population growth is measured at 10-year intervals, recent arrivals of foreign-born

populations have also stayed consistent at 20%, 23%, and 33% since the 1990's. Lastly average household

and family sizes are greater in foreign born families compared to U.S. born ones (Migration Policy Institute

2021). Thus, while numbers in the Midwest, and specifically Michigan, lack the exponential growth of the

Southern and Western regions of the country, it should be noted that Latino migration into Michigan has

increased threefold since the 1990s. With some of those instances of growth contributing to the overall

population growth of major cities in the eastern and western parts of the state (Badillo 2003a).

From this increase in immigration, there also comes an increase in immigrants' exposure to a

variance of stressors stemming from race-based xenophobia, housing and employment discrimination, and

anti-immigrant policies at state and federal levels (Li 2016; Sternberg et al. 2016; Torres, Driscoll, and Voell 2012). Direct effects from these stressors are further compounded by immigrants' experiences throughout their migration journey. Experiences include physical assaults on themselves or their family, pre-migration, culminating in racial/ethnic or psychological assaults post-migration (Li 2016; Lusk and Terrazas 2015; Perreira and Ornelas 2013). Thus, Latino immigrants may find themselves in a state of imposed upon vulnerability (e.g., higher overall stress exposure) due to the severity and variety of stressors experienced (Li 2016; Lusk and Terrazas 2015). This paper incorporates Speed's (2019) presentation of vulnerability derived from her work with Indigenous women migrants. Thus, within this paper vulnerability is conceptualized as an imposed upon state of being to acknowledge that is should not be misconstrued as an inherent trait of an individual or a particular group, such as Latina immigrants, but rather it is an outcome of the stressors and life conditions people must contend with. This conceptualization of vulnerability is also appropriate given my work's focus on incorporating a Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit) lens that centers the negative impacts of Eurocentric hegemonic powers.

As such, immigrants are uniquely vulnerable to stress exposure due to the intersections of their ethnic, sex, gender, religion, language, nationality, and legality identities (Crenshaw 1989; Hill Collins 2000; Ryan et al. 2021; Villalón 2010). Examples of this vulnerability includes experiences of exclusion within workplace, education, criminal justice, and health care systems as a result of the racialization of their intersectional identities (García 2017). Latina immigrants may also find themselves experiencing vulnerability on a more proximate level when navigating housing options, the power dynamics of heterosexual, romantic unions, and the contention derived from their intersectional identities (Welsh and Burton 2016).

Extant research has identified specific experiences such as forced migration, discrimination, fears of deportation, family conflict, and negative acculturation perceptions or experiences that increase stress among U.S. Latina immigrants (Bekteshi and Kang 2020). While other work finds that Latina immigrants not only experience unique stressors, but also appear to be more susceptible to the adverse effects of stress, leading to greater BMI and higher likelihoods of depression and anxiety compared to their male

counterparts (Diaz and Niño 2019). However, one stressor that has been given limited attention, despite the disproportionate impacts on women from marginalized communities, is interpersonal violence (IPV) (Beyer, Wallis, and Hamberger 2015; Nowinski and Bowen 2012).

Findings from a national survey note one in two women and approximately three in five men in the U.S. will experience an incident of IPV at least once in their lifetime, translating to prevalence rates of 42.0% and 42.3% respectively. (Leemis et al. 2022). This same study found that Hispanic women experience IPV at a rate of 42.1. Yet findings from a systematic review of the literature on IPV indicate Latinas contend with broader lifetime IPV prevalence rates ranging anywhere from 4%-80% (Gonzalez et al. 2020; Leemis et al. 2022). Moreover, Latinas also find themselves disproportionately affected by IPV resulting in increased chronic pain, sleep difficulty, poorer self-rated health, higher rates of depression, anxiety, and post post-traumatic stress disorder, and increased patterns of revictimization (Wretman et al. 2022). Still, to date, findings on how social contexts and community may influence experiences of IPV among Latina immigrants is vastly understudied (Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020).

Efforts to address the effects of stress exposure among Latinx immigrant communities persist, and include providing outreach services at the community level, through Latinx serving Non-Government Organizations (NGO) (Eisenman et al. 2008; Kaltman et al. 2016; Pineros-Leano, Liechty, and Piedra 2017). Outreach services may focus on education, involve resource sharing, provide individual or group-centered therapy, or host social gatherings (Eisenman et al. 2008; Kaltman et al. 2016; Pineros-Leano et al. 2017). Regardless of service modality, there is an understanding among scholars, that services should be presented in a culturally congruent or adapted manner relevant to the Latinx population (Eisenman et al. 2008; Kaltman et al. 2016; Pineros-Leano et al. 2017). Proposed examples of culturally adapted services include having bilingual/bicultural staff-led interventions, presenting material in a relevant language, being mindful of clients' work or professional obligations when scheduling services, and understanding that cultural differences (i.e., Latinx stigma surrounding mental health) or socioeconomic status (i.e., income, lack of health insurance) may impact a client's reception of outreach services (Eisenman et al. 2008; Kaltman et al. 2016; Pineros-Leano et al. 2017).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Stress Process Model

Given the heightened stress exposure that can be experienced by Latina immigrants, there is a need for further analysis to expound upon how they experience, navigate, and are impacted by stressors. Initially developed by Pearlin (1999), Stress Process Model (SPM) was created to understand the effects of external stressors on mental health. Within SPM, stress is not a singular occurrence, but rather a variance of interrelating factors that converge on an individual and their overall well-being (Pearlin 1999). According to SPM, factors of impact are present within the different levels (micro, messo, macro) of society, occur as daily life events, and are linked via an individual's social status. Further development of this analytical model distinguishes between stressors, life events, traumatic events, role strain, stress proliferation, and the temporal and sequential distinction of stressors (Pearlin and Bierman 2013). Advances have been made to continue to strengthen our understanding of this model's application, however, according to Pearlin and Bierman (2013), a key area remains; that of coping. While there is a firm understanding on the individual moderating resources of coping, social support, and self-concept (Alcántara, Chen, and Alegría 2015; Erving, Lacee, and Chen 2021; Pearlin and Bierman 2013; Torres 2016), future work can build upon these efforts. One avenue is to further deconstruct the impacts of intersectional identities, risks from using support systems, and what happens when both produce unexpected coping outcomes. Specifically, there is a need to focus on intragroup differences in coping, outline social contexts and their respective impacts at the proximal and distal level, and the potentially synergistic quality of coping mechanisms and individual outcomes.

Latino Critical Theory

Within this study, SPM will be utilized to provide an overall framing of Latina immigrants' experiences with stress and resource navigation. Alongside, this framing there is a need to engage an epistemological approach capable of grasping at the multifaceted, racial, and gendered identities of the Latina immigrant community. To this end, LatCrit, which centers Latinx individuals as holders and creators of knowledge, is utilized as an epistemological lens (Delgado Bernal 2002; Garza 2021). Incorporation of LatCrit is done

with the intentionality of adding to our current systems of knowing by employing data collection and analytical methods that take into consideration participant worldviews, the social conditions they inhabit, and concurrent power dynamics. Similar to other raced and gendered epistemologies, LatCrit operates within the intersections of various social identities and conditions. Where LatCrit differs is in the explicit focus on Latinx individuals and systemic factors relevant to and acknowledged as being part of this community's individual and collective standpoints. One such factor that will be further explored within this paper is collectivism.

Collectivism

Collectivism's relevance to the Latinx community derives from its quality of being a dominant perspective, group resource, and strong influence on how Latinx individuals interact with fellow group members, outsider groups, and systems around them (Rosenfield, Lennon, and White 2005; Smith et al. 2023). Within this paper collectivism will be conceptualized as follows:

> "… an individual's primary emphasis or preference for the group's success, overall well-being, and maintained visible and invisible cohesiveness, with a secondary emphasis on the success and well-being of the individual, even if at times it may appear to the outsider to be at their own expense." (Rivera 2023: 6)

This conceptualization follows previous understandings of collectivism such as group influence over the individual, prioritizing the needs of others over the needs of self, and the use of mutually beneficial exchanges (Jason et al. 2018; Schwartz et al. 2014; Shavitt et al. 2016; Smith 2023; Turner 2013). It also incorporates behaviors of social cohesion, integration, and support present within the Latinx immigrant community (Song 2011). Simultaneously, this conceptualization will also diverge from previous definitions of collectivism in two distinct ways. First, through its intentional focus on the visible and invisible factors at play that may not be easily observed by outsiders, and second, through the incorporation of agency by alluding to individual preferences and choices. Within the conceptualization of collectivism, agency will be integrated as presented by Thoits (2006) to speak to the complexity within lived experiences. Coupling this conceptualization of collectivism with Thoits' (2006) insights on agency aims to bring to the forefront

a potential paradox of the Latino immigrant experience. Specifically, it looks to address why collectivism, although being perceived in-group as a mechanism for coping during times of stress, has been associated with adverse health outcomes amongst the Latinx immigrant community (Ai, Weiss, and Fincham 2014; Sangalang et al. 2019).

Finally, collectivism within this study is presented as an interpretive framework that is capable of influencing and informing a person's creation and use of subjective meaning (Swader 2019). Choosing to frame collectivism as an interpretive framework instead of solely as a cultural trait stems from previous understanding that it is a driving mechanism in social relations and processes within the Latinx immigrant community (Canizales 2023; Vargas and Kemmelmeier 2013). Within this study, it should not be assumed that collectivism is the sole driving factor within Latina immigrant social processes and relationships. As such, there may be instances where Latina immigrants may not exhibit collectivistic social dynamics. Thus within this work, collectivism is presented as a perspective that needs further exploration to first ascertain its presence within the population being studied and if observed, to then understand how it is being used. Per LatCrit, this approach to understanding collectivism is necessary given the insistence of its being a defining factor of the Latinx community while there is still an under exploration of the concept.

By under exploration, I mean that within the literature collectivism has traditionally been measured as a cultural trait that influences within group social relations, however to the best of my knowledge it has never been studied as an interpretive framework that impacts social relationships and dynamics within the Latinx community (Oyserman, Coon, and Kemmelmeier 2002; Vargas and Kemmelmeier 2013). Therefore, understanding how Latina immigrants employ collectivism within their experiences of IPV, intersectionality, and proximate life conditions (e.g., life events that occur in close proximity to the individual) has the potential to help us understand how this traditionally marginalized group navigates life experiences and stress, both as individuals and a collective.

Non-Governmental Organizations

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have traditionally been defined as government independent, formal organizations that promote a set of goals with the aim of achieving a common good for the

population they work with. While varying in size and services provided, NGOs have generally been program-oriented establishments that meet the needs of community members who might otherwise lack access to necessary resources by their own means (Elsenhans and Warnecke-Berger 2018). NGOs also have a long-standing history of centering gender equality within their work that includes recognition of issues such as women's reproductive rights, health issues, and violence against women and girls (Joachim 2018). Within the Latinx immigrant community in the United States, NGOs have a history of working alongside informal social networks, playing a key role in providing social services relevant to the immigrant community (e.g., reunification assistance, advocacy, and liaison work between immigrant and non-immigrant communities), supporting immigrants' rights efforts, and influencing immigrant family integration trajectories (Cordero-Guzmán 2005; Massey 1987; Mora et al. 2018; Vasquez Guzman et al. 2020).

NGOs have also positioned themselves as formal resources to address issues of IPV providing various degrees of assistance during the help-seeking process. This includes providing temporary housing aid, advocacy services, mental health assistance, and resource referrals (Messing, Vega, and Durfee 2017; Saathoff and Stoffel 1999). Despite NGOs extensive efforts in service delivery, Latinas are still cited as a group that has limited access to services or experience greater barriers to effective help seeking. In the event that Latinas do seek out assistance, there are also instances of women preferring informal support or resources compared to the formal services provided by NGOs, especially when it came to experiences of IPV (Ingram 2007; Satyen, Rogic, and Supol 2019). As such there is a need to continue understanding how NGOs function to serve the needs of Latina immigrants and if these needs are being effectively addressed given the aforementioned help seeking barriers.

Research Question

Situated within the presented scholarly background and research needs, the following questions are proposed within this study:

RQ1: How do NGOs operate as a resource for Latina immigrants experiencing IPV?

RQ2: Does the NGO operate from a collectivist perspective?

The proposed research questions are situated within a stress process model and LatCrit understanding to ground how the study is conducted. Within SPM it is posited that Latina immigrants are exposed to a stressor (e.g., IPV) and experience an outcome that ranges from completely mitigating a stressor and its subsequent effects to a failure to mitigate the stress and experience detrimental effect to the self. As Latina immigrants navigate experiences of IPV they will have at least three possible pathways they might follow before reaching an outcome, such as: experiencing the stressor by themselves, utilizing a personal resource, or relying on a social resource. Continuing with the application of SPM, social characteristics are presented as antecedents comprised of the intersectional identity of Latina immigrants. Stress exposure is the primary stressor of one, or multiple, experiences of interpersonal violence and the resource includes the social resource of community NGOs. Lastly, the outcome is conceptualized as a Latina immigrant's ability to mitigate the stressor's impact and exhibit a subjective level of coping. Application of SPM is traditionally used to measure individual level responses to stress. However, to address the research questions, this study focuses primarily on the NGO (e.g., social resource) to understand how it functions within an environment where Latina immigrants have experienced IPV. As such it should be noted that while SPM is adopted in this study, it will be used to ground our understanding of Latina immigrants, stressors, resources, and outcomes from the perspective of staff that work with Latina immigrants.

Focusing on NGOs as a social resource will address gaps in the literature of IPV by situating the study within an SPM framework that is capable of capturing the contextual and cultural nuances of how NGOs operate within the context of Latina immigrants' experiences with IPV (Beyer, Wallis, and Hamberger 2015). The need to further understand Latina immigrants' experiences with IPV is due to the fact that our current understanding of IPV has strong findings on individual-level causes but continues to have a far more limited focus on the sociocultural and community level contexts of IPV predictors (Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020). As such, this study seeks to explore how an NGO operates, as a sociocultural and community level resource, within the context of Latina immigrant experiences of IPV. The adoption of a LatCrit epistemology and intersectional lens alongside an SPM framework will guide my understanding of

the complexity present when studying Latina immigrants, due to their intersecting identities. Thus allowing me to center and analyze Latina immigrants' experiences with stress even further through a lens of relationality, racial-gendered dynamics, and power relations (Delgado Bernal 2002; Hill Collins and Bilge 2020).

METHODS

Reflexivity Statement

During the second month of my fieldwork observations, as I sat in a group session with clients and staff at the NGO, the following quote was directed towards me, "Teresa, cuéntanos una historia." (Translation: Teresa, tell us a story.). Within this work I intend to honor the individual and collective voices of the predominantly Latina staff, clients, and NGO with whom I had the opportunity to work with. In this paper I will share the experiences of one NGO as they strive to walk alongside their clients helping address issues of IPV, resource engagement, and coping. I share their voices while being cognizant of two things. First, that violence has porous qualities thus it is capable of reaching out and contaminating other areas of a person's life with such a force that it spills and seeps into spaces we may initially have perceived as untouchable (King 2019). As such while this work strives to clearly and accurately detail messo level (e.g., NGO, community level factors) perceptions of IPV, due to the medium of the written word and violence's inherent nature, there will always be a need to write more on the subject of Latina experiences with violence.

Second that my own experiences as a Latina scholar, with all the intersectional identities I encompass, shapes my analytical process. A process that ultimately stems less so from my intersectional identity and more so from my ability to navigate these identities liminally. By this I mean my ability to seep in-between and within various identities, as needed, to navigate my social environment and overcome barriers, thrive, or simply find joy in this journey. It should be noted that my skillset of liminality is especially influenced by my upbringing within U.S. borderlands. As such I have deep rooted experiential knowledge in simultaneously feeling a sense of belonging and exclusion from spaces and populations, regardless of my self-identification to either.

I present this liminality for consideration due to the noted influences on my own work. First, by influencing how I present myself within the research study environment as I strive to remain aware of my own association with participants and my privileges, power, and biases in comparison to them. Second it influences how I move within and between the research process, be it where I focus my attention during field observations, how I guide the semi-structured interviews, and how I move between and within the

theoretical approaches, raw data, and my own "cultural intuition" throughout the analytic process to my findings (Delgado Bernal, 1998).

Data

After an initial online search of NGOs present within areas where there is a higher concentration of Latinos in West Michigan, the organization for this case study was chosen for the following reasons. First, the NGO operates within a high-density Latinx immigrant area, thus increasing the probability of observing an organization that comes in frequent contact with Latina immigrants. Second, the NGO has a history and mission of working with Latina immigrants that have or are experiencing IPV. Third, the NGO connects with individuals of various national origin countries (i.e., Mexico, Guatemala, Venezuela, Colombia) thus providing diversity of a potentially salient identifier (e.g., country of origin) from the population of focus within this study (e.g., Latina immigrants). This diversity in country of origin could be helpful in contributing to the study's understanding of the complexity and nuance of Latina immigrants' experiences. Fourth, initial contact with this NGO was obtained via professional but also informal social networks. I have a previous connection with a lead NGO staff member and was also reintroduced to the NGO via a mutual contact. Lastly, with 15 part time staff, a program manager, one administrator, and an executive director, this NGO is an appropriate choice for conducting in depth interviews of an exploratory nature.

It should also be noted that the research site selection and process, from the initial search to final selection, leaned heavily on a LatCrit theoretical approach. Finding an NGO that works within a high-density Latinx area and focused their services within the Latina immigrant community would provide the necessary space to observe and gather Latina experiential knowledge. Being critical that within-group diversity was represented at the NGO would provide an avenue to uplift and center Latina diverse and intersectional ways of knowing. Finally being cognizant of utilizing informal social networks to gain access to the NGO addressed a key concern when it comes to working with the Latinx community. This concern was to find an academically ethical, yet culturally considerate, medium of being welcomed within historically marginalized populations (e.g., immigrants of color) that might otherwise, and understandably so, elect to remain hidden. In this regard, the study challenges dominant ideologies of how knowledge is

gathered (e.g., via formal, professional networks) while understanding that the utilization of informal networks is part of the knowledge creation process reflective of the Latinx community.

Analytic Design

To address the proposed research questions, I took part in an extended analytic design process prior to and throughout the study. This process included an initial meeting with the NGO's executive director in February 2023 where we discussed what the study might entail, scheduled a visit to the NGO for a formal introduction with the staff, and provided space for the executive director to present feedback, questions, or criticism on the proposed study. The initial meeting was followed up by a visit to the NGO in April 2023 and a meeting with staff members in May 2023. These visits served two purposes, first, to provide the space necessary to create informal social ties thus, positioning myself as both a prospective researcher and valued community member. Second, it provided time to share my future work with community stakeholders (e.g., NGO clients, staff, and board members) thereby solidifying my social ties, via transparency, with the NGO. This second purpose was critical for the effective implementation of a qualitative study design that would entail working closely alongside multiple individuals (e.g., staff, board members, clients, community members) that may come in contact with the NGO.

The study consisted of collecting ethnographic fieldwork data in the form of participant observations, semi-structured interviews, and a demographic questionnaire with staff of the NGO. Data was gathered in two phases. Phase one consisted of participant observations that took place from June to August 2023. Phase two entailed completing interviews and questionnaires that took place from August to October 2023. Participant observations consisted of attending weekly client group sessions, client workshops, and staff meetings at the NGO's main meeting site. Client group sessions entailed at least one staff member leading group discussions, with one to three staff present for support and anywhere from 4–28 clients present. Client workshops consisted of the NGO bringing in a community partner or local NGO to lead an educational or informational workshop with clients. These workshops were heavily attended by clients with at least 25 people present, not including NGO staff. Lastly staff meetings consisted of 2-hour long meetings exclusively with staff and took place once a month after scheduled client group sessions. While only one

of the three events (e.g., staff meetings) focused exclusively on the study's participants (e.g., NGO staff) it was deemed appropriate to expand the scope of observation in order to effectively address the research questions.

Given that the study sought to understand how an NGO functioned within Latina immigrants' experiences of IPV, situating observations at the nexus of staff/client interactions, during group sessions, allowed me to study the NGO/client relationship and its potential impacts on Latina immigrant experiences of IPV. Attending client workshops expanded my scope of the study by allowing for the continued observation of staff/client interactions while incorporating individuals that were outside of the NGO and had differing degrees of social interaction with the NGO clients. Finally, the inclusion of client workshops provided the opportunity to observe possible differences of collectivism within the NGO and other organizations, thus further advancing my study of research question two (e.g., operationalization within a collectivist perspective).

Semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were conducted with 11 of the 18 staff members. Eight of the interviews were conducted in person except when accommodations were requested by participants. In these instances, virtual interviews via Zoom were conducted. Preliminary interview questions were drafted from a previous understanding of the literature on Latina immigrants and their lived experiences, individual resource utilization, individual help seeking practices, experiences of coping within SPM, and NGO operationalization and service delivery techniques. Incorporating a LatCrit approach within this process meant interview questions were also situated alongside my own experiential knowledge as a second-generation Latina immigrant with 10 years' experience in NGO settings.

Interview questions were designed to address staff perceptions of 1) self and self-positionalities, 2) the NGO and fellow staff, 3) clients and client interactions, and 4) a collectivist perspective. Interview questions focused on these four areas due to their ability to capture differing degrees of staff experiences (e.g., personal v. professional life) and perspectives (e.g., positionality within the NGO, relationality to fellow staff and clients) within the NGO, the staff/client relationship, and how their experiences related to collectivism. Intentionally demarcating questions between personal and professional social spheres also

provided the flexibility to observe how these two areas may diverge, converge, or interact. This flexibility in observation is crucial given that research question 2 (e.g., operating from a collectivist perspective) draws heavily from an interpersonal, micro-level understanding of collectivism. As such, it could be assumed that collectivism would only be present within close, personal, intersectional social ties (e.g., immediate family or extended friends) and lacking in more informal, professional settings such as an NGO. Therefore, positioning questions to gather insights into both aspects (e.g., personal and professional) of staff's lived experiences helps to understand how and if collectivism is present and operationalized at the professional, social setting of NGO. Once preliminary questions were drafted, observations from the first phase of field work, from June to August 2023, were utilized to finalize the interview questions. A LatCrit approach allowed for the interview questions to extend past the literature and further center the social, cultural, and historical contexts pertinent to the environment (e.g., NGO setting) and participants (e.g., Latina staff) studied.

The demographic questionnaire asked for staff's identifiers such as age, gender, ethnicity, and language. It also included two sets of Likert style questions that asked staff to rate individual and group (NGO) level agreement with a collectivist perspective. The goal of these questions was to gain another level of insight into how collectivism may be formed or put into everyday practice by staff, both as individuals and as a unit, when working with clients. These two sets of questions were designed from an ongoing synthesis of the literature on collectivism and focused on the following six areas that asked how individuals with a collectivist perspective might: 1) focus on the immediate group over the individual, 2) strive to cultivate harmonious and friendly relationships, 3) prioritize order within their immediate group, 4) practice individual selflessness or sacrifice, 5) support those within their immediate group, and 6) share their culture and values with others. In the questionnaire presented to staff, there was a section with additional information to provide further clarification on what was meant by these six areas of collectivism.

Data was analyzed following an inductive approach that moved between the raw data (fieldnotes, questionnaire, transcribed interviews), developing codes (coding schema, initial themes), research

questions, synthesized literature (SPM, LatCrit, Intersectionality, Collectivism areas), and Latina experiential knowledge.

RESULTS

Before moving forward with the results and findings sections, further context on the NGO will be provided to situate the staff (e.g., study participants) and their experiences. All staff names noted within this study were pseudonyms to maintain participant confidentially, with a similar approach applied to the organization. Throughout this paper, the organization has consistently been referred to as the NGO out of privacy for organization and staff, as well as to maintain the safety of the NGO's clients. At the time of the study, the NGO was a relatively young organization at four years old, with 18 staff (e.g., 15 of are part-time, contracted employees, 3 full time employees) that have been added throughout these four years. All part-time employees work full-time at various organizations within the area and note a personal reason for having decided to be a part of the NGO. Reasons include a passion for working with the Latinx community, a desire to give back to their community in some capacity, recognizing they can meet a community or organizational need through their role, and having a cursory introduction to the organization that led to their wanting to become a part of the work being done.

While at the time of the study, the NGO did not have a formal, operational strategy I observed how they implicitly operated from a client-centered model that tailors services and adds staff based on client needs. For example, the NGO provided one on one advocacy, client groups sessions, individual therapy, individual life coach sessions, educational workshops, GED classes, Zumba/workout sessions, served as a resource distribution site (e.g., clothes donation, food baskets, gift cards, bicycle donations), and offered minimal financial and transportation assistance. However, during my time there, I also noted staff having a meeting with clients to discuss current and future services as well as to ask for program feedback and insight. Feedback requested included asking clients which services they found beneficial or what they thought of the current programming schedule. Program insight included asking clients how the NGO should address low attendance rates (e.g., minimal Zumba attendance) and what future services could be provided.

While some of the services listed (e.g., GED classes, workout sessions, resource distribution) are applicable across multiple settings, I want to take a moment to speak on the advocacy, group sessions, and life coach services as these may differ between other service organizations. The NGO's advocacy service

involved having a staff member connect with a client to be their service delivery guide while with the NGO. The NGO advocate ensures the client's needs are being met, which included assisting with referral to external resources, providing translation/interpretation services for appointments or with paperwork, helping their client secure a personal protection order, and meeting with their clients as needed to help them effectively address their experience(s) of IPV. Group sessions consisted of client group meetings lead by at least one staff member and centered around a theme or follow up discussion from the previous session. Group sessions consisted of client introductions, especially when new clients joined in, checking in on personal well-being, having the staff member lead a discussion, and ended with announcements. Life coach meetings involved a one-on-one setting to help the client move past life barriers by helping them connect with their personal abilities (e.g., emotional, mental, physical) and self-identified goals. With the exception of individual therapy services, which have a one-year limit, all services were provided as long as the client expressed a need for them.

With this context provided, I now move on to Table 1 which presents results from the questionnaire. Results from the study show that the majority of staff are women, bilingual (English and Spanish proficient), and Hispanic self-identifying (10). Of the 10 staff that self-identified as Hispanic, they noted being either first or second-generation immigrants. Nine of the staff work in roles that provide them with direct client service opportunities (i.e., meeting with client, advocating, searching for resources, providing mental health support), while the two remaining participants provide both direct client services and took on administrative responsibilities (i.e., human resource, budget, programming coordination, community networking, etc.) within the NGO. See Table 1 in Appendix A for full details.

FINDINGS

Client Demographics

The findings section will start off by presenting details on client demographics and how the NGO functions as a social resource, before presenting findings that address the proposed research questions. All quotes are presented as they were originally shared by staff, as such some will be in English, Spanish, or a combination of both. All names listed are pseudonyms, chosen by the staff, and all quotes are identified by a format (e.g., Name, Age, Country of birth) reminiscent of my time with the NGO. I chose this specific format as a nod to my time in the NGO's group sessions where at the start of each session we were encouraged to share our name, a short fact about ourselves, and country of birth for context. When asked to describe the clients they work with, in terms of demographic characteristics, staff speak to client's ethnicity, country of origin, gender, language, income, family size, education levels, and immigration status. Isabel speaks to this client variability below:

A lot of them sometimes Spanish is not their first speaking language because they speak a dialect. A lot of them don't know the laws of the United States. So, I see that. So that's where they get a little bit confused and need a little bit more assistance. (Isabel, 34, Mexico)

Through my field work observations, I corroborated that the majority of the clients were born outside of the U.S. (Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela, Dominican Republic, and different towns in Mexico) with a larger proportion of the group being from Mexico. The clients also spoke Spanish, or a regional dialect of their country, and may have lacked a primary or had a limited education in a formal setting. The lack of formal education, present within some clients, may have also impacted literacy as noted by one encounter towards the end of my fieldwork.

On that particular day, attendance was low, so at the suggestion of a staff member, I had the opportunity to sit with the clients and assist them in filling out applications for a local health clinic. Familiar with providing translation services I sat next to a client, introduced myself, asked if I could help, and began to dictate in Spanish what was on the form in front of her. Quietly, yet firmly, the person turns to me and says, "No se. No puedo" (Translation: I don't know. I can't). Instantly my mind drew back to an initial visit

when the executive director, in passing, remarked how some of the clients did not know how to read or write, even in Spanish. I quickly apologized, grabbed the form, and calmly explained that I would be happy to help her fill it out while she dictated her information. Thus, within the NGO we find staff working with a client group that intersects at the diverse identities of ethnicity, country of origin, language, immigration status, and social economic status.

Social Resource (NGO)

For the most part staff describe the NGO as a social resource that strives to mediate the effects of IPV and stressors on their clients. Staff speak to mediation efforts, via an NGO service delivery approach that is holistic, client-centered, empowering, and cognizant of the multiple barriers clients must navigate when overcoming experiences of IPV. Isabel speaks to a holistic, client-centered approach that strives to address multiple client needs. Sarah also speaks to the NGO needing to first center the client before being able to provide support (e.g., resources, assistance, encouragement).

I think [the NGO] brings different aspects because there's like multiple individuals. Like therapists and advocates and teachers with ESL and groups. So, we all bring a little bit different. So like if I have a client, that client also probably talks to a therapist. So, then they're getting both therapy, then they're getting, you know, help with whatever they need. And then they do benefit if they want to go into an ESL class or a Zumba class. So, like we all play our part in a different, different roles, but it can be the same client that's benefiting from a lot of different resources from [the NGO]. (Isabel, 34, Mexico)

So, to help the community, to provide resources to empower the Latino community… To give them an opportunity to, I don't know, to understand them, the suffering, to understand their needs. So, we want to provide, we want to help, we want to find, we want them to find what they need and encourage them to keep going and be better. (Sarah, 55, Chile)

Within their distinct roles and responsibilities, staff work parallel clients to support them with the goal of providing a safe, welcoming space that allows the clients to feel empowered to gain independence and overcome experiences of IPV. Bonita speaks to working alongside clients by providing services tailored to their respective needs. Within her work she is cognizant that tailoring client services may involve

19

looking past material needs (e.g., interpretation services) to personal, emotional needs and remarks on how this act of looking past makes it a unique NGO approach.

I think it's because the services that we do, it's more like personalized, I would say. Like, it's not that we're trying to hold your hand and take you to the path that you need to walk, but we're just by them. [Within this same response Bonita adds] Tu caso, is not el mismo caso que el que paso, ¿me entiendes? (Your case, is not the same case as the one that happened, you understand me). So entonces pues tratamos de acomodar lo que… cuales son tus necesidades nos acomodamos a eso (So then well we try to accommodate what your needs are, and tailor ourselves to that.) Y de esa forma tratamos de ayudar a la persona (And in that way we try to help that person). You know, so hay veces que por ejemplo (so there are times for example) like I said sometimes I'm interpreter for them, but I go as a moral support because they feel alone. So I think that's a main difference of what we do to other organizations. (Bonita, 37, Mexico)

Chanel below speaks of a need to empower their clients to get "out of the hole," a metaphor to signify being in poor or negative mental health, by having clients draw on familial ties as sources of personal support. In this case Chanel's quote also shows how familial ties may serve as a catalyst for coping (e.g., fight for your family) and stress (e.g., loss of spouse), thus when working with clients she helps them channel it as a coping mechanism.

It doesn't matter where you come from. That's what I always told the participants. I had one of my participants. She told me that I can't do this… And I was like, yes, you can. Yes, you can. You can be stronger. You have to fight for your family. And you can do this. Because she lost her husband, but I was like, yes, you can. You have to put that in your mind that you can do all you want. And I like to encourage people to be better than, you know, deep dirt. I would say that… how I can say that? You know, sometimes we are deep down and I like to help them to think, 'I can get out from that hole'. (Chanel, 51, Mexico)

It should be stated that opportunities for empowerment are not solely dependent on direct staff intervention, because as the following story shows indirect effects can stem from clients modeling coping

mechanisms they learned from the NGO. I observed an example of this early on in my field observations while I sat waiting for a client group session to begin. Sitting in a corner of the room, I saw a client sit down next to another woman and begin to ask her how she is doing. The woman next to her responds with a fine, to which she replies, *¿Te acuerdas en el Taller [Nombre]? Donde aprendimos que si no nos sentimos bien podemos decirlo. Podemos decir que no estamos bien.* (Translation: Remember in the [Name of] Workshop? We learned that when we are not feeling well, we can say that. We can say we're not feeling well.)

Here the conversation between the two women presents a clear example of how they were able to take knowledge gained from a service the NGO provided (e.g., workshop) and now they feel empowered to assert this knowledge within their own lives and share it with others. In this case the women speak to how verbalizing internal stress (e.g., *no nos sentimos bien [not feeling well]*) can be used to help address the impact of external stressors within their environment. Interestingly enough, the beneficial effects of the NGO creating this space for empowerment via tailored services that create client feelings of comfort and belonging, extends beyond the intended audience of clientele to the staff. In this regard, the space created starts to become a sustained social environment, due to NGO efforts, capable of impacting others. Emily speaks in more detail to this occurrence below:

Yeah. And one thing I like about [the NGO] is that I think it's really nice as a Latina woman, to work with other Latina women who are like, oh, sorry to say it, bad ass. But they come from all walks of life and I'm just like I just love learning and taking it in and like just being able to like joke in Spanglish and being able to, to just talk in Spanglish and… feel like I'm safe and I'm OK and it's OK to be my true self in the sense of my culture and a sense of, like, my identity. Yeah, I think I've worked at a lot of different organizations that are that I would say are pretty diverse, but never in an organization quite like [the NGO] and… I think it is intentional in part right cause the clients feel like feel more comfortable also like just like I do, so I'm sure that they also feel more safe and comfortable to feel themselves, so yeah.
(Emily, 26, United States)

Lastly, Amah speaks in more detail to the multi-faceted barriers clients face when sharing:

Batallamos con, bueno, es que tenemos mujeres que en ocasiones no tienen donde vivir,

batallamos con necesidad de vivienda, con necesidad de pagar la renta, con necesidad de que bueno se

quedaron sin trabajo. Que se alimenten bien, que te dan de ropa, que a veces no, tampoco el sueldo da

como para comprar ropa. Bueno, entonces les ayudamos con eso. Las necesidades de educación. Porque

la idea no es solamente, bueno, le damos sus herramientas, es que ellos crezcan para poder insertarse en

el mercado laboral donde ellos puedan sentirse soy capaz. ¿Ves? O sea, las necesidades del lenguaje,

entonces es multifactorial las necesidades de una persona que llega aquí. Y puede ser en una sola.

(Amah, 66, Venezuela)

(Translation: "We struggle with, well, it's that we have women who on occasion don't have a place to live,

so we struggle with this need of living, a need to pay rent, a need that they are left without employment.

[We work so] That they're feeding themselves well, that you have clothes, and that sometimes your salary

isn't enough for you to buy clothes. So then, we help them with that. Their educational needs. Because it's

not just that we, well yes, we give them tools, but the idea is that they grow so that they can become part of

the labor market where they can feel capable. You see? It's also like, there are language needs, so these are

multifaceted needs from a person that arrives here. And this can all be within one person.")

As such, the NGO operates as a social resource that strives to provide holistic, client-centered,

empowering services. This approach to service provision in turn creates a space that is cognizant of the

barriers clients navigate when addressing issues of IPV, while indirectly providing opportunities for clients

to share amongst themselves knowledge and behaviors to address IPV.

Social Resource Buffering Qualities

Staff remain cognizant of the ongoing issue of IPV within their clients and the Latinx community at large.

As such while staff share instances of clients overcoming experience of IPV and no longer needing NGO

services, staff are equally aware of the reality that there is much to do in fully addressing issues of IPV in

their area. Thus in returning to Research Question 1 (How do NGOs operate as a resource for Latina

immigrants experiencing IPV?), I posit that the NGO serves as an important buffering resource for Latina

immigrants' experiences of IPV. This is due to the NGO's ability to provide social support to clients, via

their service provision, that weakens and, in some cases, eliminates the effects of IPV within their clients' lives. Second, I propose that in providing this buffering resource, the NGO acts as a collective unit thus moving beyond micro-level (e.g., individual staff and client) interactions. Staff responses below will further elucidate on these buffering resource qualities.

Buffering Quality 1: Challenging Work

When speaking with staff there is an overall understanding that it can be challenging to lack a positive or foreseeable resolution to client issues of IPV. Bonita speaks to these challenges early in our conversation when she shares:

So, but yeah, I do advocacy and I think that's the hardest part of everything that I do in [the NGO] for me. ... dealing with clients and clients' needs sometimes it's very challenging. Because there's not enough resources to find for them. So, you feel useless at some point. So, I believe, and I have seen that we do as much as we can. I haven't seen any of the staff members that they don't care or what they are doing. I have seen them that they actually care for the community and our clients so they try to do as much as they can with whatever they have available to provide for the client. (Bonita, 37, Mexico)

Recognizing these service delivery challenges (e.g., lack of resources), Bonita also speaks to a collective service delivery approach marked by a sense of care and dedication that extends past one person to multiple staff members. Luisa's example below, which revisits the metaphor of the hole, speaks to staff acknowledging they cannot "save their clients", thus recognizing two conditions of client experiences of IPV. First that clients have autonomy and agency within the NGO, their respective social environments, and experiences of IPV and second that this autonomy and agency may indirectly create challenging situations that the NGO cannot fully mitigate.

... it's like you wanna save them, but you can't because first you can't, you can't. You cannot have control of life and people's lives. So what you can do like I said is help them find resources for them to get out of the, the places they're stuck on. But it's not as easy as it sounds. It really does take time. ... I do see a few that, that definitely all of sudden and we were able to get in [and] get them out of the hole. Then they start, you know, they get out of the hole and they start knowing where to go, how to take care of

themselves. But I, many other[s] are still in the hole, stuck in the hole, no matter how much support we

have got them. (Luisa, 42, United States)

Lastly, staff note the precariousness of service delivery due to client participation barriers and Latinx cultural beliefs that impact effective NGO service delivery. This is noted by Isabel and Sarah who share the struggles of helping individuals that have experienced IPV. Isabel speaks to clients lacking follow through, experiencing transportation issues, and miscommunicating thus leading to her having to be persistent in her service delivery approach.

But I don't see it a lot at [the NGO]. Like we just don't say, oh well, you haven't been here a

month. What are you doing? Also, with my clients, like sometimes we'll set meetings they don't come or

they don't show up and then I do follow up with them. So it's not like saying, oh well you missed three of

our appointments I can't see you no more. So I still follow up with them because I know that sometimes

they have transportation issues. Sometimes, you know, I had a client that didn't have phone service so she

wasn't able to contact me. So there's different things that I'm [not] just like, oh, well, she didn't show up

she doesn't need help, I still try to follow up with them. (Isabel, 34, Mexico)

As the following quote shows, Sarah speaks to a broader focus on Latinx cultural beliefs of loyalty that requires the NGO to make it a priority to establish connections with the Latina immigrant population, gain client trust, and remain accountable in their efforts as an NGO.

"Uh, asking them, listening, going to them. We don't wait for them to come to us. We know how

the, it's difficult. It's difficult for the community is that's how, how we get the trust. And getting this trust,

it has to take time . So that's what we do. We listen. I think that is more important, more than put my

priorities. First, we put them. And we go to them. We talk to them. And you know what is one of the bigger

things is for the organization is the idea of the we do what we say we're going to do." (Sarah, 55, Chile)

As these quotes show, in working to mitigate issues of IPV staff must also contend with client and cultural level barriers that may impact effective mitigation of it. Similar to Bonita, Isabel and Sarah both speak to this collective, effort on the part of NGO. Isabel, when noting NGO service delivery efforts, points out how the organization does not terminate services due to client barriers while Sarah details how the need

to address cultural barriers is a priority for the NGO. Despite the difficulty of their work, staff members reconcile it with a contentment in knowing they can address some client needs (housing stability, food security, employment, and need for community) while working to resolve issues of IPV. The following quote by Bonita illustrates this reconciliation between the tensions of not fully mitigating client experiences of IPV but managing nonetheless to buffer client exposure to it.

Like I said, sometimes it's very challenging because we… lack… resources, but I think everyone is trying to do as much as they can and the situation that they are [in] with their clients. Because we have from a client to be like a really high demand client and it's like a lot and to just a client and many of your things. So, I believe, and I have seen that we do as much as we can. I haven't seen any of the staff members that they don't care or what they are doing. I have seen them that they actually care for the community and our clients so they try to do as much as they can with whatever they have available to provide for the client. (Bonita, 37, Mexico)

Buffering Quality 2: Client Empowerment

A second example of the NGO operating as a buffering resource is within their mission of helping clients feel empowered. In this regard, the NGO does not want to solely remove their clients from experiences of IPV, but also from clients ascribed internal meanings around IPV. According to staff, client's personal meanings around IPV such as acceptance that is a naturally occurring life event, belief of remaining subservient to abusers, and conforming to harmful gendered stereotypes, all play a strong role in keeping clients within the same IPV situations the NGO strives to mitigate. As such, a service delivery approach that centers self-empowerment is seen as directly working to counter the effects of these harmful meanings by helping clients create new meanings and experiences to overcome IPV.

As I will further explain below, this approach does not stem from an NGO belief of client victim blaming, but rather it is an approach that understands the effects of interpersonal violence impact a person beyond physical harm, financial instability, or social isolation; thus going to the core of a person's capacity to function. In this regard the NGO exhibits a blending of knowledge (e.g., staff expertise, reality of IPV,

and Latina experiential knowledge) to inform their service delivery goal of empowering clients by addressing IPV issues at the level of mind/body/spirit.

Within the quotes below Emily and Luna speak to how their work as staff, despite encompassing different roles, centers client empowerment. For Emily this involves a holistic service delivery that helps clients overcome difficult situations. While for Luna, she feels that centering empowerment in her work involves being cognizant of clients' autonomy and helping them strengthen it.

So, the function is to provide a very holistic approach to, uhm, not necessarily like escaping, but almost like overcoming. Overcoming like the trauma and overcoming, you know, situations that people find themselves in and like so [the NGO] will do that through like events, through like health and nutrition, the support groups, and all those things are meant to help someone be able to feel like I have a community and I can overcome my trauma and I can overcome the things that have been holding me back, like to feel my, to feel like my full self, you know? (Emily, 26, United States)

But [to have] the strength to say, 'Ya no quiero pasar por eso. Ya tengo mi limite. Quiero la ayuda.'(Translation: I don't want to go through this anymore. I have my limit. I want help.) Like coming [here]. Or calling. It's a lot. I feel like it's a lot. 'Cause you're so used to the same person, and like all that, you probably think it's normal .... (Luna, 20, United States)

Thus for Emily overcoming impacts of IPV (e.g., the trauma) involves clients relying on the NGO's built community and resources to help them self-actualize. While Luna speaks to clients meaning making that "normalizes" IPV as such she draws upon her clients' perceptions (e.g., client strength in requesting service and asserting agency) to guide interactions with clients and service delivery approaches. Finally within Luisa's quote below she speaks to external influences on IPV meaning making that influences how she perceives her work with clients.

Sometimes society feels like the resources out there if you're not making it, that's your fault, but you know sometimes people are so deep into a hole that it's not that easy. Yeah. It reminds me of how much we're blinded and we think because America has all these resources that people are in the place they are because of their own fault. We forget that there's social norms, gender norms, institutional

racism, all these barriers that they're going through. So, you might be going through one or two barriers

but there's a lot of this population [Latina immigrants] ...going through like several type of barriers.

(Luisa, 42, United States)

Despite the NGO's focus on client meaning making and support via empowerment, Luisa's quote above reminds us that the NGO situates these individual level processes within larger social forces (e.g., social/gender norms, racisms) that also impact client experiences of IPV. As such, NGO staff are cognizant that clients' beliefs around remaining subservient to abusers may stem from internal meanings (e.g., feelings of lacking autonomy and "normalization" of IPV experiences) as well as external influences (e.g., racism, xenophobia, and misogyny).

Buffering Quality 3: Functioning within Systemic Barriers

The third way that the NGO buffers clients' experiences of stress is through their awareness of operating within larger systems and situating their work within the Latinx immigrant community and community at large. Below, Emily speaks to issues of misogyny (e.g., machismo) that proliferate into stigma of abuse present within the Latinx community, resulting in clients carrying a "cultural baggage" of IPV.

... our clients come with a lot of, like cultural, like baggage even. And then on top of that, they're

dealing with, like, so like the stigmas of like machismo and like abuse and machismo in their countries

and how women are treated. And a lot of like you know impoverished areas, right, and then traveling as

immigrants and then finding themselves as like, like what the culture of being an immigrant is in the US

and how immigrant women are treated and how they feel like it's just it's a lot. And I feel like when they

come into these spaces where, where everyone understands, or at least has some sort of knowledge of like

what we've all been through like, I feel like it's a sense of like shared, like I see you, you see me, you

know? (Emily, 26, United States)

This secondary stressor, as expressed via the metaphor of cultural baggage, is also presented as operating alongside clients' intersectional identities (e.g., women, immigrant, Latina, and SES) thus exasperating the primary stressor (e.g., IPV) that results in clients feeling that, "...it's a lot". Therefore, for

Emily, the NGO co-creates a space, in resistance to cultural stigmas, thus providing the opportunity for Latina immigrants that have experienced IPV to feel understood and validated by others.

Within the surrounding community staff speak of having to help clients navigate limited resources, accessibility issues stemming from documentation insecurity or language barriers, and an overall sentiment of racism and xenophobia that targets Latina immigrants. Below, Maria speaks to how her clients express a deep fear when trying to escape experiences of IPV that are influenced by these broader factors.

Yes absolutely because I know for a lot of these clients they have shared you know I've always been so fearful of like reporting this or sharing this. So, whether it be like an abuse that was going on in their relationship, a lot of these women have stayed like in toxic relationships out of fear of what is going to happen to them or just not knowing what to do like what their rights are as you know as people. They're women, they're Latina, they're immigrants. Those are like the most common reasons that I hear. It's always like, well, I just don't know what to do. I'm not powerful enough because I'm a woman. Perhaps the man is the only one working in the household or I've even experienced where like the woman just doesn't have like the capacity to kind of reach out to other resources. She doesn't know how to communicate with them. She doesn't know how to explain it to them. Or sometimes too, they fear not even being deported. 'What if I call the police and not only do they take him, but they take me as well because of my status.' So it's really sad to hear that they avoid getting help because of that fear sometimes. (Maria, 27, United States).

For Maria's clients this fear moves beyond the abuser-abusee dyad resulting in actual and perceived resource utilization barriers. Actual barriers may include limited English that inhibits effective communication of need, limited financial resources due to unemployment, and experiencing documentation insecurity. While client perceived resource limitations may include fear of taking next steps and having a limited understanding of their legal rights in the United States. Whether these barriers are actual or perceived, ultimately the fear experienced alongside IPV results in clients' inability to reach out for assistance thus limiting their ability to mitigate the effects of IPV experiences.

Even when clients do manage to connect with available resources, as it will be further detailed, notable systemic barriers to effective mitigation of IPV persist. Barriers are present when navigating legal aid, in law enforcement racially profiling or specifically targeting clients, and with outside community members' labeling of IPV as a cultural trait or denying the existence of IPV within the Latinx community. Awareness of these systemic barriers in turn impacts how the NGO communicates with clients and provides services. One of my earlier field observations involved sitting in a group session with clients and two staff members. During this time, a client made a comment of how they are working with a local legal aid organization and Sarah was quick to comment, "Ten cuidado con ellos. Hacen trabajo [al lote] con muchos clientes de aqui." (Translation: Be careful with them. They do messy work with a lot of clients from here.) This brief comment on legal assistance results in switching the overall group conversation to further discuss navigating systems in the United States. A second client then shares how she has issues understanding the system here. Sarah replies that, "…one of the biggest barriers for [us, Latina immigrants] is that the lawyers here do not speak Spanish".

The second client goes on to say that she feels like that person [her lawyer] is not my lawyer. Sarah responds to her directly, but also in a manner that addresses the whole group by stating, "Remember these attorneys work pro bono which means they are not getting paid. And remember that they have so many clients, so they are working with a lot of people. So, they are working hard and late and sometimes they 'cut corners' and do a poor job. And remember that not all of them have the same ethics, unfortunately. So, everyone [the lawyers] will act differently." Within this conversation, Sarah presents various levels of insight to help address client barriers of legal aid accessibility. She begins her conversation addressing potential safety issues and levels of trustworthiness when navigating legal systems, validates client frustrations around language use, shares insight into how commonly used legal aid resources (e.g., pro bono attorneys) function and operate, and does all this while promoting a space of collective knowledge sharing and support amongst the women via group discussion.

The following month I attended an immigrant rights' workshop conducted by a local legal aid group. Before starting the workshop, the presenter decides to open with a question on how everyone feels

about the police, but not before being very explicit with the group that they in general do not like law enforcement. In asking for feedback, the clients share the following: the police extort people, they don't enforce our PPO's, and the police are not here to help but to take advantage of us. One client notes that even though she has a driver's license she still experiences great fear around the police due to, *my face and skin color*. The presenter opens up this final comment to the room asking if anyone has ever felt a similar fear and 11 of the 26 women present raise their hands. Here the women collectively speak to a fear stemming from a lack of confidence in law enforcement and perceived racial/ethnic profiling.

Luisa below speaks to similar fears expressed by the clients she works with, however, she expands to how these fears are also influenced by macro-level factors such as political representatives and acting policies.

Yeah, is they're going through a lot of barriers, a lot of them. And then there's racism, where people don't want to help the immigrants because in everything also the supports [to immigrants] are based on who's on, who's on the chair when it comes to politics? So there could be more services, less services, and then also them [Latina immigrants], you know, not wanting to call the police and they're, they're at home going through all these issues. And if they do call the police, sometimes, they get scared or they get threatened and they, they [redact their call] and they say no, it wasn't true or I want to take the charges away. (Luisa, 42, United States).

Sarah by sharing her story speaks to racial tensions, stemming from hegemonic misconstruction and denial of the prevalence of IPV within the Latinx community, that as a result impact the NGO and subsequently the clients.

White people who live here believe, or Anglos, believe that it's a [Latinx] cultural problem. So, and I every time, I'm more and more aware that the West Michigan was not prepared to see the problem the Latino community was having, because there is a lot of resentment to believe that there is domestic violence. And I see it when we need to apply for grants, for example, if it's the same thing, we see organizations who refuse to support it [IPV work] more with men. They don't want to support it. We have

denial, some, of our grant applications for men because they don't see it. They think, no, that's [male

IPV] not possible… (Sarah, 55, Chile)

Lastly, Amah speaks to how these macro level influences within the US immigration system results

in the perpetuation of violence towards clients.

Hay necesidades inmigratorias, porque hay también muchas mujeres y hombres que están en

riesgo de deportación. Y para mí, o pienso yo, para la organización, la deportación es un acto de

violencia. O sea, después que te has quedado aquí, que has hecho 20 años aquí de vida, que tienes tu

familia, tus hijos, tu tal, que tú estés en riesgo de deportación, es un acto de violencia. (Amah, 66

,Venezuela)

(Translation: There are migratory needs because there are also many women and men that are at risk of

deportation. And for me, I think, for the organization deportation is an act of violence. You know, after you

have been here, you have more than 20 years of life here, you have your family, your children, and then

maybe, perhaps, you're at risk of deportation, that is an act of violence.)

Thus, within Luisa, Sarah, and Amahs' stories, we see how the NGO remains aware of the need to

situate their work amongst larger issues of racism, xenophobia, and sexism that hinder clients' access to

services for IPV, complicate client experiences of violence, and limit the NGO's ability to provide services.

Co-Stressor: Documentation Insecurity

Within my work of how the NGO mitigated experiences of IPV there was an overall theme that emerged

regarding client experiences of IPV, which was the co-stressor of documentation insecurity. Within SPM a

co-stressor emerges when a factor other than the originally identified stressor (e.g., in this case IPV) is co-

occurring to such a degree that there is a notable impact within or on the population being observed. As

such, while some clients have some form of immigration documentation, staff were quick to note that many

of their clients deal with issues as a result of their immigrant status or lack of legal documentation.

Documentation issues include stress stemming from applying for a visa for the first time, being in the

process of renewing documentation, or never having had documentation to begin with. It should be noted

that within this study, this variability of immigrant documentation status (e.g., work permit, visa, or lack of

documentation) will be referred to as documentation insecurity. This wording was intentionally chosen to describe the at times precarious situation immigrants may find themselves in when navigating the U.S. immigration system, while also drawing parallels to other forms of social inequities (e.g., healthcare, employment, housing, and food) and the causal effects these inequities have on individuals' experiences of stress. Luisa and Emily speak to these characteristics of documentation insecurity present within their clients. Luisa's story shows how a client's documentation insecurity, which limits their legal presence in the U.S., intersects with the belief that they lack rights in other spheres of their life. Thus noting an extension of a client's documentation insecurity that impacts their experiences of IPV where a client feels they, *need to do what their husband says*.

> *So, people who are here, and mostly some of them, have papers, but some of them don't. But even if they have papers, what I've noticed is that they are still living in a world where they think they are part of they need to do what their husband says, or they need to put up with everything that they are put through and they think they have no rights.* (Luisa, 42, United States)

Emily's story echoes Luisa's to show how the effects of documentation insecurity proliferate to and disrupt other areas of a client's life (e.g., employment) that would otherwise have remained stable.

> *Like I have one client that. She's a single mother, but she was, she had a full-time job and she had, like, a very nice home she was renting and things were fine. But then her work permit fell through, and she lost her job. And, and there was a lot of stuff that happened because of that. But now like she just received her documentation and she's at work. Like she's working the next day, she found a job.* (Emily, 26, United States)

Documentation insecurity is noteworthy because while IPV (e.g., physical, sexual, mental, emotional, or financial abuse from spouse, partner, or relative) is the salient stressor presented by clients, staff note documentation insecurity to be a prominent co-stressor that produces cumulative adverse effects alongside the main stressor of IPV, proliferating into other areas of their clients' lives. In Emily's case her client was fortunate to have received a work permit shortly after, however she is still aware of the negative outcomes document insecurity may have as well as how severely limiting it can be for her clients. These

cumulative outcomes and limitations are illuminated more prominently in Maria's story when she shares the following:

"Yeah, I think a common problem within all my clients is just that a lot of my clients are undocumented. So, I do see that as a common problem. I do see the frustration, the fear sometimes because of their situation. 'Cause obviously when you're undocumented, it's you have limited opportunities out there in terms of work because all these women that I help, they're hardworking women, hardworking women and sometimes the majority of them tend to be the only parent in the household. So, I can tell that they're just going through a lot of stress, a lot of stress because perhaps the job they're in, it's very low pay. They don't have an additional adult in the home to help support. So, then they're leaving their children for long periods of time. And yes, a lot of them have teenagers, so they're able to take care of themselves. But then it's like, they feel this guilt because they're not always present in their lives and they're always constantly working because they need to provide for their families. So, I see that as a common stressor, just like the finance, that financial piece is always like a common stressor for all of my clients." (Maria, 27, United States)

Thus Maria's story highlights the proliferation of stress (e.g., frustration, limited employment opportunities, financial insecurity, lack of in-home support, guilt from leaving children for work) that stems from documentation insecurity. Luisa, when asked to elaborate upon her experiences with clients, was eager to share and advocate on behalf of them and their difficulties that stem from experiencing documentation insecurity:

"Had one clients (laughs and claps to accentuate her point) who, when she was assigned to me, uhm she needed support. … she was caught driving without a license and had court because [the landlord] wanted to evict her. And when she was doing that, she had a stable job, but then because of all this courts that she had to go through and all these struggles that she was going through, once you know, she was evicted…. And then eventually I was able to get them shelter and then once they got shelter, they got fired… [from] their stable job. Because they had so many misses. And even though we provided a letter from [the NGO], [letting her employer know] you know this client is going through a lot of things.

Please [be] patient, she's going to have several appointments. They still didn't care, and they still fire her because she missed a lot. Like I was trying to find housing for this… client and eventually she got… fired which added to her being more homeless and, and finding her place and, and right now, [even until] right now she can't find a job because nobody's hiring without papers." (Luisa, 42, United States)

Luisa's story highlights various recurring themes regarding clients' demographic characteristics that include poverty, employment instability, housing insecurity, and a limited understanding of U.S. laws. Luisa's story also outlines the broad reaching impact of the salient co-stressor of documentation insecurity. While a U.S. citizen or documented immigrant may have minimal adverse effects from a routine traffic violation, here we see how the client's documentation insecurity affects various outcomes such as increased court hearings, employment insecurity, and an inability to secure new employment. Already having to contend with issues of IPV, which is assumed given the client's presence at the NGO, Luisa's client now has to deal with the effects of her documentation insecurity and how it is impacting other areas of her life. Given the broad reaching impact on clients' lives the co-stressor of documentation insecurity secures a prominent role within this study.

Collectivist Perspective

Returning to Research Question 2 (Does the NGO operate from a collectivist perspective), I propose that the NGO operates within a collectivist perspective through the staff coming together as a unit in support of their clients.

Before progressing to the staff interview responses that speak to these areas, I want to take a moment to situate them alongside staff questionnaire responses. Tables 2 and 3 show results of the two sets of Likert style questions that asked staff to rate individual (Table 2) and group (Table 3) level agreement with a collectivist perspective as it relates to their work with clients. See Table 2 and Table 3 in Appendix A for full details. In Table 2, the majority of the staff either strongly agreed or agreed with the six areas of collectivism noting, for example, that during their work with clients they helped clients "cultivate harmonious and amicable relationships" with those around them or helped clients "prioritize order within their immediate group". However, there was one notable exception within Area 4. When asked to rate their

level of agreement with helping clients "practice selflessness or sacrifice" towards others, there is less of a strong agreement with, more neutrality towards, and even strong disagreement with this area of collectivism on the part of staff.

Given the nature of the NGO's work (e.g., a focus on addressing client experiences of IPV) it follows that staff would not want their clients to exhibit further patterns of sacrifice or selflessness given the violence already sustained. On the contrary staff would probably convey messages to clients that asked them to focus on self-worth and actualization as exemplified by the staff's use of empowerment within the service delivery approach previously described. Thus it follows that out of all the areas of collectivism presented for questioning, Area 4, that focuses on aspects of selflessness or sacrifice present working not be fully supported by the staff.

In Table 3 when asked to rate their perceptions on group level agreement to collectivism there is a small yet noticeable difference. We see a shift in having more responses strongly agree or agreeing within all six areas of collectivism and less disagreement (i.e., no one strongly disagreed, and less people disagreed) compared to Table 2. Comparison of staff's perceptions of collectivism within their role and as an NGO are noteworthy for two reasons. First, because we see a notable disagreement with one of the six areas of collectivism (e.g., Area 4) at the individual level, thus potentially indicating a nuance in how staff might choose to practice collectivism within their role and by extension within client interactions. Second, because we see how collectivism practiced at the individual (e.g., staff roles) and group (e.g. NGO) level has the potential to vary, with greater agreement with collectivism occurring at the latter instead of the former level.

This difference in agreement with collectivism sheds insight into potential intergroup differences within the NGO that can help us further understand how collectivism is operationalized. This intergroup difference is critical for future understandings of collectivism as it has traditionally being viewed as a form of social control within Latinx communities that influences and dictates individual social norms and expectations. However here we see that group level influence (e.g., a marker of collectivism) may not extend to the individual. Thus, staff may continue to act collectively at the group level when working as an

NGO, but do not feel socially obligated to follow all areas of collectivism at the individual level (e.g., help clients practice selflessness or sacrifice) when working one on one with clients.

In order to speak more on how the NGO operates within a collectivist perspective, I now turn to staff interview responses and how they illustrate the NGO exhibiting the following areas of collectivism: 1) focusing on the group over the individual, 2) prioritizing order within their immediate group, 3) supporting those within their group, and 4) practicing selflessness or sacrifice for others.

Focusing on the Group

When operating within a collectivist perspective that focuses on the group over the individual means the NGO chooses to focus their resources (time, money, physical energy, emotional/mental load, etc.) either intentionally or unintentionally towards the group (i.e., their clients) instead of themselves. Maria in speaking to how the NGO puts focusing on the group into practice shares the following:

… I know a lot of clients, like they stress out because of food or sometimes money. And so, I see the organization trying to make changes in order to meet their needs. So, making sure that they do have like fresh fruits and vegetables on the table, or if they need help with their bills. And we do help out with that as well. We don't necessarily have to do that, but we do because we're able to and we know it's going to help out the client as well, especially if they're in a very, very tight spot. (Maria, 27, United States)

Maria's response speaks of intentional shifts by the NGO to meet client needs, as well as a staff service delivery approach that moves beyond meeting minimum obligations (e.g., "*We don't necessarily have to do that…*") to one that focuses on helping clients due to an awareness of the severity of the situation clients find themselves in (e.g., "*, but we do because we're able to and we know it's going to help)*.

Prioritizing Group Order

In prioritizing order within their immediate group, the NGO makes it a priority to have a group (e.g., the staff) that functions in an orderly fashion enabled by having a shared trust amongst themselves, communicating with one another, having synergistic relationships, establishing mutual understanding of roles and responsibilities, and creating a space where staff feel comfortable speaking up. Within the NGO, group order is maintained with the ultimate goal of meeting client needs. As such we begin to see how these

36

different areas of collectivism (e.g., focus on the group and prioritizing group order) intersect to create an overall collectivistic approach by the NGO. Flora speaks to this shared trust and relationship within the following quote,

> *...I think because we all have different roles and different skills and knowledge and backgrounds and so but we all have this same goal and so because of that like we don't compete with each other at all. You know, so if for example, if a client comes to me and needs help with X thing, and I'm like, I have no idea, like, I don't know. Like, this is my specialty, not this. I, but let's say I know that [my coworker] knows a lot about that thing. I'm going to go to [them] and be like, 'Hey, can you speak into this area and help this client with this thing?' And then if she's like, 'Oh yeah, sure, it does that.' Well then like [my supervisor] is not going to get mad that I went to [my coworker] and not to her. Because [my supervisor] is going to be like, 'Yeah, awesome!' We all own this mission and this you know goal.* (Flora, 32, United States)

In this quote Flora speaks to a level of trust and "give and take" dynamic evident amongst staff, yet she shares how staff work independently on their specific caseloads. Thus staff understand their individual role and responsibilities but situate this individuality within the larger context of the group (e.g., the NGOs work with clients) due to it being essential for the success of the NGO's work. As such, despite staff's individualized approach to how they work within the NGO, they are quick to lean on one another to discuss difficult client situations, share resources, or create solutions to help clients. Princess expresses a similar "give and take" sentiment when sharing the following:

> *O sea, trato de quitarles ese peso de encima de no tratar de que estén atrás de mí, asegurándose que estoy haciendo mis cosas, de que ellas se enfoquen en atraer mejor, tal vez, ¿no? nuevos donantes o apoyar a otras mujeres en lo que yo hago, lo que se me asigno. Entonces, yo siento que yo la apoyo haciendo mi trabajo al 100% sin que ellas se tengan que estar preocupando si lo estoy haciendo o no lo estoy hacienda.* (Princess, 42, Mexico)

(Translation: You know, I try to take away that weight that's on them so that they are not always having to be on top of me, making sure that I'm doing my things. So that they can focus on bringing in better,

perhaps, I don't know new donors. Or support other women through what I do and with what has been assigned to me. So then, I fell that I support us by doing my job at 100% without them having to worry if I am doing my work or not.)

For Princess this "give and take" aspect of her work and relationship with her fellow staff is also characterized by a desire of wanting to unburden her co-workers (e.g., remove a weight, minimize worry) and thus free her colleagues to focus on their own tasks (e.g., find new funders or support clients). Lastly, within this area of prioritizing group order staff express the ability to present feedback (e.g., bring up challenging situations or ideas for change) within the group (e.g., the NGO). This is accomplished either via staff meetings or direct conversation with NGO administration. When asked how she might share organizational feedback with her supervisor, and if she feels comfortable doing so, Chanel quickly states, *"I can go directly to her"* and lets out a short, yet hearty laugh. This jovial tone continues as Chanel states, *"I can go directly to her. And say [to my Executive Director] we need this."* Clearly at ease with this part of our discussion, she takes a moment to stop laughing before finally adding*, " No, I would [also] say maybe try to figure it out where and how we can do this together. It's not just letting [her] know what we need"* (Chanel, 51, Mexico).

For Chanel, similar to Princess' response, even though this space was created specifically for feedback between staff and NGO administration, there is an intention of providing feedback via a supportive tone, that centers the dynamics of trust (*"I can go to her…"*), give and take ("*…we can do this together"*), and a reliance on one another ("*And say [to my Executive Director] we need this.", "It's not just letting [her] know.."*). Thus even when presenting feedback that may be construed as critiques of the NGO it is done within the context of prioritizing group order. While not everyone expressed during the interviews having feedback for the NGO, those that did eagerly shared it with me and were quick to note the avenues they would take to share it with the NGO. Luisa speaks to having limited feedback to share, however this does not equate to limited channels of communication when sharing,

...like I said I will share everything. I'm open to sharing and being honest with my opinions, but I feel like she is already doing a lot and I don't know much about organizational growth quite yet to be like this, this is to say where you need to go so being a little. (Luisa, 42, United States)

While Maria shares how the NGO creates a collective space where staff can come together to maintain transparent dialogue, which is essential for the group's order and success.

There's gaps sometimes, some things may not be working as well as we hope. So, I think when we come together and we have this like open communication on what can be done better, that's what NGO does. And that's what we have like those monthly meetings. Maybe we should have them more often, but we do have them like once a month. And we just kind of sit at a table and we dialogue about everything that's going on. It's really important to know how each area is doing, and how can we help out our clients. (Maria, 27, United States)

Supporting the Group

When supporting those within the group, this aspect of collectivism was seen by the NGO as providing clients with emotional or intellectual support, tangible resources, or some other form of support relevant to client's experiences with IPV. Princess speaks in more detail to the emotional and intellectual support given to clients, via resources, when sharing about a recent fundraising event the NGO hosted in the following quote:

Es una oportunidad de ver los testimonios de las mujeres, que tan fuertes, como que su progreso desde el principio y dónde están, que tan fuertes se han convertido con el apoyo que les han brindado con los diferentes recursos que les han brindado y de nuevo empoderarlas a hablar inglés, a proveerles alimentos, ropa. Conmigo les dan ejercicio, les dan lo que necesitan, o sea, las han enseñado a transportarlas en autobús, apenas las enseñaron a cómo utilizar el autobús para que se sientan independientes, les dan bicicletas para sus hijos útiles, o sea, todo lo que les ofrecen para mí. Estoy súper contenta de pertenecer en [ONG]. (Princess, 42, Mexico)

(Translation: It's an opportunity to see the women's testimonies and see their strength, see how they have progressed from the start to where they are now. To see how strong they have become with the support

that's been given them through the different resources they've been given. And so again, we empower them to speak English, we provide food [and] clothing. With myself they're given exercise, they are given what they need, you know, they've been taught how to ride the bus, they have just been taught how to use the bus [public transportation] so that they can feel independent, they are given bicycles for their children, you know, with everything they are given for me. I am super happy to be a part of [the NGO].)

Thus, for Princess, even though the support given is practical (e.g., English classes, food, clothing, exercise, etc.) she is also aware that tangible support creates spaces for individual growth and empowerment thus serving as mediums for emotional and intellectual support to their clients. Emily also speaks to a collective emotional support by the NGO that is relevant to clients' intersectional experiences as Latinas and mothers when sharing,

I think, I feel like you can see this in the culture that has come out of the organization, not, not so much purposefully, but because of, like, the shared culture [from the staff] that's there. But I think it comes with like all of us like gravitating towards collectivism in this definition. So, for example, in like the support groups, I feel like, like, yes, there is a lot of push towards like self-worth and self-value for these women, right? ...like a lot of them [the clients] we know that they, that they do put their families above themselves and like they put like the, like the success of their children above their own or, you know that I feel like that, that's a very normal thing for like Latino mothers. (Emily, 26, United States)

As these quotes highlight, in staff drawing upon their shared cultural knowledge, both amongst themselves but as an extension of client interactions, the NGO creates a culturally relevant space (e.g., support groups) that is aware of clients' obligations and potential stress. A stress that stems from the social expectations of not only motherhood, but as Emily notes a motherhood that is distinctly Latina. Within the NGO this emotional support is extended past the intended, immediate group (e.g., Latina immigrants experiencing IPV) to those near or surrounding it (e.g., family members). This is further illustrated by Luna's story in sharing of her experience as the NGO's preschool educator/childcare provider. Luna notes how as part of her role she has been instructed to share with the NGO executive director if the children appear to be indirectly impacted by the effects of their mother's experiences with IPV.

Speaking further on this topic Luna shares how a 6-year-old boy she cared for did not want to leave his mother's side and was constantly worried about her wellbeing to the point that he did not eat at school or interact with other children. Luna speaks of her broken heartedness at seeing the young boy go through such a difficult time but ends her story on a hopeful note when saying, *And then not that long ago, [the mother] was like, "I'm so grateful that he's able to come here [with you], cause now at school he's doing so much better. He eats, he talks to everybody, he's not shy, he goes and plays." And I'm like, this is why I do what I do.* Thus in helping the children build up their confidence, Luna's work parallels the advocate/client relationship experienced by the women who come to the NGO and receive emotional support.

I'm like, he asks me to like, to fix a problem for him. I'd be like, 'You can do it, you can go try. Try yourself.' So, he can kind of like get his confidence to stand up for himself. And that's always the goal to get their confidence up. So that's my role in the NGO, that's what I do here. (Luna, 20, United States)

In this regard, the NGO expounds upon this area of collectivism (e.g., supporting the group) by broadening the range of support given from the individual (e.g., client) to a larger group (e.g., family) simply by expanding upon who encompasses the NGO's definition of group, to include clients and their family.

Practicing Selflessness for Others

Lastly, in practicing selflessness or sacrifice for others, it can be seen as the NGO emphasizing the success and well-being of their clients with a secondary emphasis on the NGO's own well-being. One way this selflessness is practiced is through the NGO's recent implementation of a 24-hour client help line, that while it may be common protocol within NGOs that provide IPV related services, staff explicitly acknowledge it as an act of emphasizing client success and well-being. As such, staff see the help line as an individual sacrifice they willingly undertake for clients and as a tangible extension of the NGO's overall emphasis to focus on and support clients. Maria speaks more to the on call service when stating:

So, I think what they were finding now is that like there is a big need to address clients, to help them out. And one way to do this was by creating an on-call system. So, all clients have this on-call

number in case they need assistance, they can reach out to the NGO and the NGO, whoever has the phone at that moment will try to address their needs in whatever way they can. But yeah, we have that system so that the clients know we are there for them, like 24/7, if they need anything. (Maria, 27, United States)

Within Maria's quote we see how the NGO's efforts focus on creating services (e.g., on-call system) that stem from acknowledging unmet client needs, extending client NGO accessibility, and presenting a collective message that clients should feel valued *("clients know we are there for them")* by the NGO. This message, one that reaffirms to clients of the value they hold, is critical to effectively framing the NGO's efforts as collectivistic (e.g., sacrificial or selflessness) because it signals two key points: First, that the support being given by the NGO goes beyond expected social or professional practices or norms and second, that this support is freely given because of the high regard clients are held to within the NGO/client relationship. As such, I propose that one way the NGO is able to employ a collectivist perspective of selflessness is via this continued client messaging that we value you and your well-being. Isabel below shares a similar sentiment of wanting to focus on the clients' well-being when speaking to her experience with the on-call system.

So like if, yeah, so if, let's say something happens at two in the morning, even though you can be sleeping, there's a client that called that's going through a major issue. You know, whoever's on call, they'll go and assist or we'll, you know, share it with [Executive Director] or anybody else about the issue. So, we put them first, even though we can say, oh, well, I will sleep or I didn't hear the phone. So, I think we do that a lot. (Isabel, 34, Mexico)

During field work observations, I saw this messaging of client well-being expressed at various levels. Within staff meetings, NGO administration voices a need for this system as a way of providing client support during potentially life-threatening situations, thus once again bringing to the forefront clients' well-being is a reason for implementing a new support service protocol (e.g., on-call system). Within client group meetings, staff present a messaging that the on-call system is one more service the NGO is adding to provide support to the clients' overall success (e.g., assisting them with issues of IPV, increasing client

42

accessibility). As such, we see a consistent messaging of the NGO acting in the clients' best interest that is transmitted from administration to staff and in turn extends from staff towards the clients. Thus, it is through this combination of service delivery (e.g., on-call system) and NGO overall messaging of client well-being that we can see the NGO practicing a form of selflessness present within collectivism.

A second way selflessness is put into practice is in the NGO's belief that centering clients' success and well-being goes beyond providing services and involves ensuring the effective reception and utilization of services by clients. For staff, this going beyond may involve taking extra time with them, providing services despite having limited resources, reminding clients that their feedback and autonomy is valued, and having an open access policy that extends duration of service delivery. As with other aspects of the NGO's practice of collectivism, the goal of the NGO going beyond is to ultimately help clients effectively address their experiences of IPV. Below Sarah, Chanel, and Emily speak to examples of "going beyond" within their client interactions. Sarah below speaks in more detail to elements present within client sessions and the NGO/client relationship.

First, because we speak the language. And we take the time to learn about that culture. And we have built the trust with the community because we do what we say we're going to do. And that's the difference. We have clients that have been in many organizations. And we have been the only ones even having less resources, [than] the biggest organization weren't able to solve their problems, help them. So, because we're more dedicated, I think. They feel that [the NGO] is like a big family. Is not like an organization… (Sarah, 55, Chile)

As such for Sarah this going beyond involves culturally competent and client responsive practices such as NGO language proficiency, cultural literacy, acquiring group trust, and exercising NGO accountability. Sarah notes how incorporation of these different elements helps the NGO effectively meet client needs, despite being a younger organization with less resources compared to other NGOs, and in turn elicits familial feelings on the part of the client. Emily below speaks to a sentiment of client autonomy within NGO service provision. However, within her quote we can see Emily addressing two points, first

43

the continued practice of client inclusivity by the NGO as well as the mechanism by which this practice permeates the NGO.

"*But I feel like in this organization because I know that that's a thing that these clients can always come back and that this is, this is a place that they can. All that is very welcoming. And that they can always find their way back to it if they need it, if they need supports and ask for support. Again, that it's almost there's a lot of grace in that, and so then as a worker, as a staff member, I want to be like that. I want to be like I want to give grace to the clients that I'm working with…*" (Emily, 26, United States).

For Emily, in the NGO "going beyond" and creating a counterspace where inclusivity and extended service provision (*"clients can always come back")* becomes a professional practice (*"that's a thing")* it in turn proliferates amongst staff members ultimately becoming an accepted norm *("…as a staff member, I want to be like that"*) within the NGO. Thus through the establishment of this norm (e.g., counterspace for inclusivity and extended service provision), we begin to see how the perspective of collectivism (e.g., selflessness and sacrifice) begins to permeate the NGO as whole. Therefore it is no longer an individual acting in this capacity with one client, but rather it transforms into the NGO acting as a community level entity with a group (e.g., Latina immigrants).

CONCLUSION

This study situated itself within the literature (e.g. Latina immigration, community-level interventions, interpersonal violence, LatCrit, and the stress process model) to ask how NGOs function as a social resource of support for Latina immigrants experiencing IPV. In exploring the concept of NGOs as a social resource, this study asked how NGOs operate as a resource for Latina immigrants experiencing IPV and does the NGO in question operate from a collectivist perspective. In sum, this study provided a critical and necessary extension of the stress process model within the context of IPV and Latina immigrants. One that considers NGOs as an important stress-buffering resource that can be harnessed to orchestrate meaningful change at the individual and community levels. At the same time this study expands our applicability of LatCrit by focusing on the lived experiences of Latina staff to deconstruct how NGOs navigate service delivery approaches and employ a collectivist perspective when addressing Latina immigrant experiences of IPV.

Study limitations included a lack of generalizability and limited exploration of intersectional identities. Given the study's reliance on qualitative methods (e.g., ethnographic field works) it should be assumed that current findings are not generalizable to the Latinx community or broader population. As such, while I can speak to the rich detail of the NGO's service delivery approach and the impact on their clients' experiences of IPV these findings are limited in speaking to broader trends within Latina immigrant populations, community-level interventions, and IPV. Secondly, it should be noted that while efforts were taken to grasp as much information on staff and client intersectional identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, country of origin, ses, etc.) as possible, in hindsight I was limited in fully exploring the indigenous identity of staff and clients. This was noted within the questionnaire and interview protocol with the former lacking a question specifically addressing indigenous status, while the latter did not probe for follow up responses when staff mentioned potential indigenous identities (e.g., clients speaking a Spanish dialect). As such while there is an understanding that indigeneity may have been represented within NGO staff or clients, this study cannot speak in full detail to the potential intersectional impacts of indigeneity, Latina immigrants, IPV, and the NGO. Given these limitations future studies can look to expand upon this current work in one of two ways. First by focusing on multiple Latinx-serving NGOs to see how they impact Latina

immigrant experiences with other stressors besides IPV. Future studies could also compare Latinx-serving and non-Latinx serving NGOs to study if and how collectivism is present within organizations that serve distinct clients. Lastly, future studies will be mindful to explore in more detail the impacts of indigeneity on Latina immigrant's experiences of stress and IPV.

Despite these limitations, findings presented addressed three critical gaps within the literature. First, by addressing how community-level cultural and contextual factors impacted Latina immigrant experiences of IPV. Second by deconstructing service delivery approaches of NGOs that work with the Latina immigrant community in observing what is culturally responsive and effective about their approach. Finally by incorporating a LatCrit lens that is able situate the experiential knowledge of Latina service providers while also positioning collectivism beyond a Latinx cultural trait and instead utilizing it as an interpretive framework to assess NGO service delivery.

Interestingly, out of all the areas exhibited by the NGO, "practicing selflessness" is one that is noticeably different from traditional understandings of selflessness or sacrifice within the Latinx community (Ai, Weiss, and Fincham 2014; Sangalang et al. 2019). Staff, at differing levels of the organization and both as individuals and as a collective, understand the need to practice selflessness or sacrifice in service delivery but within certain conditions or boundaries. In this regard, staff are cognizant that working at the intersections of IPV, social services, and Latinidad requires a level of closeness and familiarity with clients not present in other social spheres (e.g., other organizations or community spaces). However, while this increased closeness and familiarity that staff express is necessary for effective service delivery, they are aware it also calls for a finer line within established boundaries to protect the well-being of staff and clients alike. Thus, within this area of collectivism we find an NGO working to intentionally balance the tension of maintaining that fine line of providing holistic, effective services to Latina immigrants while avoiding individual burnout, NGO overextension, and client harm.

In speaking to this balance, staff highlighted the importance of caring for themselves and their clients while noting a relational closeness distinct from other organizations. Throughout the interviews staff spoke of implementing boundaries to avoid a co-dependent client/NGO relationship and framed this

boundary work from the reality that NGOs may not be a permanent solution to addressing client needs of IPV. As such, even when speaking of something as individualized and personal as self-care and boundaries, staff were quick to bring these practices back to notions of collectivism. These notions included prioritizing group order (e.g., NGO practicing a unique closeness in their service delivery approach) and supporting the group (e.g., being a listening ear to clients, empowering them) and thus continue to think of others (e.g., the clients) even when focusing on the NGO practice of boundary making. As such, it can be presented that this NGO is practicing collectivism within a new dimension, one that continues to bring to the forefront the need for selflessness or sacrifice, but within boundaries that do not lead to negative effects for the individuals practicing it. In this regard, we are observing a new presentation of collectivism that, contrary to previous findings within the literature, is not associated with negative adverse outcomes amongst the Latinx community that practices it. In light of this conclusion I propose that future studies would greatly benefit from considering a collectivistic interpretive framework when seeking to understand Latina immigrant experiences of stress. Incorporating collectivism beyond our previous understanding of it as a cultural trait has the potential to provide insight into Latina immigrant experiences of stress that considers relevant social and contextual factors that influence individual and group meaning making, interactions, and dynamics through a new interpretive lens. Lastly, given collectivism's previous broad applicability, within the literature, it follows that this new approach to utilizing it as an interpretive framework has the potential to help us understand social phenomena beyond those that impact Latina immigrants, to the Latinx community at large.

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Table 1: Participant Survey Demographics (n=11)

Variable	N
Gender	
Female	11
Male	0
Age (years)	
Range	26-66
Average	39
Language	
English	11
Spanish	11
Race/Ethnicity	
Hispanic	10
White	1
Country of Birth	
United States	5
Mexico	4
Venezuela	1
Chile	1
NGO Position	
Advocate*	4
Wellness Advocate*	1
Therapist	2
Childcare Provider	1
Mental Health Coach*	1
Dual Role**	1
Executive Director	1
Time in Position (months)	
Range	02-56
Average	16
* Part- time position ** HR and Advocate positions	

Table 2: Staff Perceptions of Collectivism within their Role (n=11)

	SA*	A	NA/D	D	SD
Area 1: During my work with clients, I help them "focus on their immediate group over the individual" in their lives.	5 (46%)	2 (18%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
Area 2: During my work with clients, I help them "cultivate harmonious and friendly relationships" with those around them.	3 (27%)	8 (73%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Area 3: During my work with clients, I help them "prioritize order within their immediate group" of relationships.	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
Area 4: During my work with clients, I help them "practice selflessness or sacrifice" towards people in their lives.	1 (9%)	4 (46%)	3 (27%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)
Area 5: During my work with clients, I help them "support those within their immediate group".	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	1 (9%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
Area 6: During my time with clients, I help them "share their culture and values" with those around them.	3 (27%)	6 (55%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
*SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NA/D= Neither Agree or Disagree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree					

Table 3: Staff Perceptions of Collectivism within the NGO (n=11)

	SA*	A	NA/D	D	SD
Area 1: NGO works with clients to help them "focus on their immediate group over the individual" in their lives.	5 (46%)	3 (27%)	2 (18%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)
Area 2: NGO works with clients to help them "cultivate harmonious and friendly relationships" with those around them.	6 (55%)	5 (46%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Area 3: NGO works with clients to help them "prioritize order within their immediate group" of relationships.	4 (46%)	4 (46%)	3 (27%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Area 4: NGO works with clients to help them "practice selflessness or sacrifice" towards people in their lives.	2 (18%)	5 (46%)	2 (18%)	2 (18%)	0 (0%)
Area 5: NGO works with clients to help them "support those within their immediate group".	5 (46%)	5 (46%)	1 (9%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Area 6: NGO works with clients to help them "share their culture and values" with those around them.	6 (55%)	5 (46%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
*SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, NA/D= Neither Agree or Disagree, D= Disagree, SD= Strongly Disagree					

Demographic Questionnaire "Exploring the Relationship of Social Resources on Latina Immigrants' Use of Personal Resources"

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. To provide a little background, please complete this brief demographic questionnaire. It should take 10-15 minutes to complete.

1) Name: _____

2) Position/Title: _____

3) Length of time in this position. List by year and month.
   List by year and month. EX: 1 Year, 2 Months. 0 Year, 11 Months. 3 Years, 1 Month.
   _____ Year, _____ Month

4) Age: _____

5) Gender/Sex:
   (____) Female
   (____) Male
   (____) Transgender
   (____) Gender Nonbinary
   (____) Other. Please specify in Q6: _____

6) Gender/Sex Specification: _____
   Use this space to enter your answer from Q5.

7) Relationship Status
   (____) Single
   (____) Partner/Significant Other
   (____) Married
   (____) Separated
   (____) Divorced

8) Ethnicity: _____
   Ethnicity refers to a category or group of people that share a common culture (e.g., language, traditions, views on life, religion, etc.).

9) Race: _____
   Race (i.e. White, Black Asian, etc.) may refer o how you classify yourself based on skin color, ethnicity, or how you see yourself.

10) Country of Birth
   (____) United States   (____) Dominican Republic
   (____) Cuba   (____) México
   (____) Puerto Rico
   (____) Central America. List country in Q11: _____
   (____) South America. List country in Q11: _____
   (____) Other. List country in Q11: _____

11) Country of Birth Specification
Use this space to write down your specific country.
_____

12) If you were born outside the U.S. in what year and at what age did you arrive?
List year of arrival followed by age. If you were born in the U.S., please leave blank.
_____ Year   _____ Age

13) Language 1. Please list the language you know. There is space to list up to five known languages.
_____

14) Language 1
Check all that apply.
(_____) Speak
(_____) Comprehend
(_____) Read
(_____) Write

15) Language 2. Please list the language you know. There is space to list up to five known languages.
_____

16) Language 2 Check all that apply.
(_____) Speak
(_____) Comprehend
(_____) Read
(_____) Write

17) Language 3. Please list the language you know. There is space to list up to five known languages.
_____

18) Language 3
Check all that apply.
(_____) Speak
(_____) Comprehend
(_____) Read
(_____) Write

19) Language 4. Please list the language you know. There is space to list up to five known languages.
_____

20) Language 4
Check all that apply.
(_____) Speak
(_____) Comprehend
(_____) Read
(_____) Write

21) Language 5. Please list the language you know. There is space to list up to five known languages.
_____

22) Language 5
Check all that apply.
(____) Speak
(____) Comprehend
(____) Read
(____) Write

23) Education (choose highest level)
(____) Less than HS
(____) High School
(____) GED/Diploma
(____) Some College
(____) Associates
(____) Bachelor's Degree. List Major in Q24: _____
(____) Some Graduate
(____) Master's Degree. List Major in Q24: _____
(____) Doctorate Degree. List Major in Q24: _____
(____) Technical School/Training. List School/Training in Q24: _____
(____) Certification. List Certification in Q24: _____

24) Education:
Use this space to write down your specific major, training, school, or title.
_____

25) Religious Affiliation (choose all that apply)

(____) Jewish   (____) Jehovah's Witness
(____) Muslim   (____) Nondenominational
(____) Catholic
(____) Christian, please specify: _____
(____) Other, please specify: _____
(____) None

26) Religious Affiliation:
Use this space to write down your specific religious affiliation.
_____

27) MY WORK WITH CLIENTS
OPTIONAL: Clarification on what is inside the quotation marks is provided on Page 2.

During my work with clients, I try to find ways to help them "focus on their immediate group over the individual" in their lives.

( ) Strongly Agree
( ) Agree
( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
( ) Disagree
( ) Strongly Disagree

During my work with clients, I try to find ways to help them "cultivate harmonious and friendly relationships" with those around them.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

During my work with clients, I try to find ways to help them "prioritize order within their immediate group" of relationships.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

During my work with clients, I try to find ways to help them "practice selflessness or sacrifice" towards people in their lives.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

During my work with clients, I try to find ways to help them "support those within their immediate group".

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

During my time with clients, I try to find ways to help them "share their culture and values" with those around them.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

28) NGO WORK WITH CLIENTS
OPTIONAL: Clarification on what is inside the quotation marks is provided on Page 2.

The NGO works with clients to help them "focus on their immediate group over the individual" in their lives.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

The NGO works with clients to help them "cultivate harmonious and friendly relationships" with those around them.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

The NGO works with clients to help them "prioritize order within their immediate group" of relationships.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

The NGO works with clients to help them "practice selflessness or sacrifice" towards people in their lives.

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

The NGO works with clients to help them "support those within their immediate group".

   ( ) Strongly Agree
   ( ) Agree
   ( ) Neither Agree or Disagree
   ( ) Disagree
   ( ) Strongly Disagree

The NGO works with clients to help them "share their culture and values" with those around them.

(   ) Strongly Agree
(   ) Agree
(   ) Neither Agree or Disagree
(   ) Disagree
(   ) Strongly Disagree

OPTIONAL: CLARIFICATION OF SURVEY QUESTIONS 27-28

1: Center the Group over the Individual
Clarification 1: A group may be a person's immediate family, people you care for that are not related by blood, and/or community members. To center means to choose (intentionally or unintentionally) to focus your resources (time, money, physical energy, emotional/mental load, etc.) towards this group instead of yourself.

2: Cultivate harmonious and amicable relationships
Clarification 2: To choose (intentionally or unintentionally) to work towards building and supporting friendly relationships within your group. Once relationships are established you work (intentionally or unintentionally) towards maintaining a harmony between yourself and your relationships.

3: Prioritize Group Order
Clarification 3: To make it a priority (intentionally or unintentionally) to have a group that functions in an orderly fashion. Order can be seen as, but is not limited to, having shared trust within your group, people communicate with one another, there is an idea that everyone in the group must give and take in the relationship, everyone understands their role and responsibilities, or you provide one another with emotional, informational, or tangible support, etc.

4: Selflessness or Sacrifice for Others
Clarification 4: To emphasize or prefer the success and overall well-being of other first and a secondary emphasis or preference for your personal success and well-being. This may be demonstrated via thought, word, or action and can be done either intentionally or unintentionally. To a person outside the group this may appear to be at the individual's expense although that does not have to be the case.

5: Support those within the group setting
Clarification 5: To support via word or action those within your group. Support may be expressed by providing another person with emotional support, knowledge support, tangible (money, labor) support, or some other form of aid. This support may extend past your group to those near or surrounding it.

6: Shared cultural values
Clarification 6: To make it a priority to share your cultural values with your group and/or to have group members that share your cultural values. Cultural values may include, but is not limited to, respecting elders and those in authority, family members should support one another, spending time with family is important, everyone should always try to do their best, working hard (whether in a job, school, or life) is important, my purpose in life goes beyond myself, if someone needs help, I feel I should step in, etc.