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Latina adolescents : exploring the dynamics of family experiences, gender role beliefs and dating relationships

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Running head: FAMILY, GENDER ROLE BELIEFS AND DATING

Latina Adolescents: Exploring the Dynamics of Family Experiences, Gender Role Beliefs
and Dating Relationships

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ABSTRACT

Using a feminist multicultural approach, this qualitative study explored eight Latina young women's experiences with witnessing domestic violence among caregivers, family dynamics, dating experiences, and development of gender role beliefs. A focus group of staff women from an adolescent mothers' domestic violence shelter was used to further illustrate, in their roles as witnesses and facilitators to healing, the young women's experiences of negotiating multiple identities. Five central themes were found that illustrated the young women's journey in self-discovery as they attempted to make sense of the violence they witnessed and/or experienced in their relationships. The findings suggested that the young women often received mixed cultural messages from their families about their gender roles within multiple relationships. Also it was found that the young women greatly benefited from positive relationships with female role models (i.e., mother, program provider) who guided them through the process of constructing their identities as Latinas. In conclusion, the implications for clinical interventions and further research are discussed.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

Several legal and policy reforms now exist to protect women and children from domestic violence such as the recognition of intimate partner abuse as a crime and a social problem, and the development of programs to support victims (Erwin, 2006). Despite this, many families still suffer in silence. According to the Center of Disease Control, 5.3 million women per year in the U.S. experience intimate partner violence (as cited by the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, 2005, Domestic Violence in the General Population section, para. 1). These include women from a wide spectrum of social classes, racial and ethnic backgrounds. The number of children who witness domestic violence in the United States is also staggering. One report, based on a national survey, found that the prevalence of children who witness domestic violence varies from 3.3 million to 10 million children per year (Tjaden & Theonnes, 2000, p.150). The ramifications of a child witnessing domestic violence between caregivers can have a life long impact on a child's psychosocial functioning. Children and adolescents with witnessing histories are more likely to experience depression, anxiety, aggression towards peers and intimate partners, substance abuse, and engaging in risky sexual behaviors (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Pelcovitz et al., 2000; Winstok, et al., 2004).

Domestic violence is known to occur in families from all racial and ethnic backgrounds, and social classes. Yet, Bogard (2005) points to the lack of concise

research among minority groups that either overestimates or underestimates the prevalence of domestic violence in these groups. It also makes it difficult to understand the specific social and cultural factors associated with domestic violence. Perilla, Bakeman, and Norris (1994), for example, found that for immigrant Latino families, the breakdown of their traditional social support networks and the shifting of gender roles expectations appear to add stress to a group that is already experiencing distress associated with immigration.

Aside from the social stressors, the literature has cited several factors associated with an increased risk of intimate partner violence for women and adolescent females. Factors such as witnessing interparental violence and experiences with childhood abuse have been associated with an increase risk of experiencing intimate partner violence (Easton, Davis, Barrios, Brener, & Noonan, 2007; Rosenbaum & Leisring, 2003). The effects of witnessing or experiencing abuse (low self esteem, psychological distress) have also been associated with this risk. Noticeable gaps have been observed in the literature related to the themes related to culture, gender role beliefs, and intimate partner violence among Latina adolescents. Quite a few studies have investigated the impact of interparental violence on male gender identity development, yet the research is scarce on its impact on the development of gender identity development in young women. Research on domestic violence has leaned towards identifying predictors that may help with perpetrator/ batterer prevention and treatment. Researchers have expressed concerns regarding the scarcity of in depth research about prevention efforts for potential victims of intimate partner violence and especially efforts geared towards addressing adolescent

dating violence (Glass et al., 2003; Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004). Prevention programs that include adolescents who have witnessed domestic violence in their home may help in lessening the perpetuation of intergenerational pattern of violence.

Significance of the Problem

Prevalence of children witnessing intimate partner violence

As mentioned earlier, up to 10 million children per year witness domestic violence in the home. A multi-site study found that among those women who reported being abused in the past year, about 78% of them had children present at the time of the abuse with 45% of the children being under the age of 5 years (Frantuzzo, Burch, Beriama, Atkins, & Marcus, 1997, p.118). Adolescents are also exposed to interparental violence and conflict. Results from a study by Kinsfogel and Grych (2004, p.508), found that 29% of their sample of 14-20 year olds indicated that they witnessed in the past year a parent using severe aggression against another parent. From this sample, 31% also reported witnessing a parent “pushed, shoved, or grabbed” by the other parent and 43% reported witnessing the use of verbal threats. In contrast, another study based on the 1995 National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), found that in a group of adolescent females only 4.6% reported witnessing domestic violence between adults in the home. Frantuzzo (1999) attributes these contrasts in prevalence rates on the lack of clear definitions of what constitutes domestic violence when collecting the information. Volpp (2001) also points to problems in underreporting especially from marginalized groups where they are less likely to seek assistance from law enforcement or other institutions due to experiences with discrimination and oppression from those institutions.

Effects of witnessing domestic violence

Witnessing domestic violence in the home has short and long term effects on a child's functioning. Studies have revealed several immediate effects on children such as depression, anxiety, PTSD symptoms, aggression, developmental, and academic problems (Frantuzzo & Mohr, 1999; Kilpatrick, et al., 2003; Pelcovitz et al., 2000). Among adolescents who are exposed to domestic violence, they are also more likely to engage in illicit drug use, risky sexual behaviors, dating violence victimization/perpetration, and delinquency (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Elliot, Avery, Fishman, & Hoshiko, 2002; Winstok, et al., 2004).

Children and adolescents who are exposed to domestic violence experience a wide range of issues across various domains in their lives. For instance, Elliot and colleagues (2002) in their study of adolescent females and sexual practices found that a significant percentage of the teen girls who witnessed violence in their home also engaged in risky sexual practices. They hypothesized that those adolescent females who were more likely to engage in unsafe sex did so because of poorly defined emotional and physical boundaries resulting from the exposure to intimate partner violence. They continued to explain that exposing the child to the parents' conflicts violates the emotional boundaries between the parents and child, thus bringing the child into the parents' relationship. The assumption then is that when these female adolescents are faced with their own intimate relationships they are unable to assert safe boundaries, thus not feeling empowered enough to protect themselves.

As adults with childhood exposure to domestic violence, the effects of the experience are still evident (Von Steen, 1997; Whitfield, Anda, Dube, & Felitti, 2003). Among a sample of women who experienced abuse from a male partner, nine percent reported witnessing their own mothers battered by a partner (Whitfield et al., 2003, p. 170). In that same study, 8.2% of male perpetrators of domestic violence reported witnessing their mother abused by a partner. In another study on men with histories of childhood exposure to domestic violence, those men who were exposed to domestic violence were more likely to engage in more aggressive communication style than those men without this childhood experience (Crossman, Smith, & Bender, 1990). In addition to the increased risk in domestic violence victimization/perpetration, these adults are also more likely to have symptoms of depression, anxiety, post-traumatic related symptoms, and substance abuse (Ehrensaft et al., 2003; Von Steen, 1997). It is clear that children who are exposed to domestic violence run the risk of developing many psychological symptoms and, if there is no intervention provided, will likely pass on the experience of violence onto the next generation.

Dating violence among adolescents and young adults

As stated in the previous section, the experience of witnessing domestic violence during childhood has life long implication reaching well into adolescence and adulthood. One of the risk factors is dating violence victimization/perpetration. Bearing that in mind, the need for researchers to further investigate the risk factors associated with dating violence among teens and young adults is of high importance in order to stop the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence.

The incidence of intimate partner violence among adolescents is equally prevalent as among adults. The Federal Bureau of Investigations, in their 1993-1999 report, stated that 22% of 16-19 year old females murdered were as a result of intimate partner violence (as cited in Hickman et al., 2004, p.124). Another study found in their sample of 9th grade students 8.7% of girls reported experiencing physical dating violence victimization (Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, & Reininger, 2004). When adolescent and young adult females report perpetration of violence, it is likely in response to being assaulted by a partner, as seen in a study by Luthra and Gidycz (2006). Among a sample of college students, 35% reported perpetrating violence against their partner (Luthra & Gidycz, 2006, p.726). Out of those 35% who were perpetrators of dating violence, 25% were female college students. This may give the impression that female college students are as aggressive as their male counterparts, but the researchers clarify the findings by reporting that these same female perpetrators were 108 times more likely to have violent partners versus non-perpetrating females. This is in stark contrast to perpetrating males where they were only 1 ½ times more likely to have a violent partner versus non-perpetrating males. Luthra and Gidycz (2006) refer to other supporting research that states that physical abuse is a major predictor of using physical violence for women. Thus, it appears that many so called “perpetrating” women may in fact be using physical aggression as a reaction to the physical abuse they are receiving from their partners.

As the findings reveal, dating violence among adolescents and young adults is of significant concern. Several psychosocial risk factors have been associated with dating violence as mentioned in the previous section, including witnessing interparental

violence, childhood abuse, substance abuse, peer aggression, teen pregnancy, and depression (Chen & White, 2004; Glass et al., 2003; Hickman, Jaycox, & Aronoff, 2004; Howard, Beck, Kerr & Shattuck, 2005; Howard, Qui, & Boekeloo, 2003; Leaman, & Gee, 2008; O'Keefe, 1998). Addressing these risk factors is important as they provide a first step to a better understanding and hopefully the development of interventions to prevent dating violence and later adult intimate partner violence.

Domestic violence among Latino families

Although several reports have stated that the prevalence of domestic violence in the Latino community is similar to that of other U.S. ethnic and racial groups, accurate statistics appear to be difficult to obtain due to current data collection methodology and other barriers. According to reports from the second Family Violence Survey and the Immigrant Women's Task Force of the Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights, the percentage of Latinas who have experienced domestic violence ranges from 23% to 34% (as cited by The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, 2005, Domestic Violence in Latino Communities section, para. 2). For the Latino population, fear associated with their immigration status and general mistrust of authority has been cited as reasons for the variability in the prevalence rates. When asked for this information even by a researcher, undocumented Latinas may associate the researcher with an authority and as a result deny the violence. In addition, many Latinas underutilize domestic violence services because of language, cultural, and legal barriers. This underscores the importance of both culturally competent research practices and interventions when working with the Latino population. These vulnerabilities appear to

be less among Latina adolescents. Research specifically examining the risk factors for dating violence among immigrant girls found that Latina immigrants experienced fewer incidences of dating violence when compared to other immigrant groups (Silverman, Decker, & Raj, 2007).

When contextualizing the underlying dynamics of domestic violence in the Latino community it is important to consider the social and cultural dimensions involved with this phenomenon. Immigration, acculturation, low income, discrimination and marginalization are some of the factors that have been said to contribute to domestic violence in this community (Bogard, 2005). For example, changes in family roles due to different socio-cultural demands (e.g., the mother needs to work outside of the home) places demands on the partner relationship to accept changes in gender role identity. The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence's (2005) fact sheet further adds that the multiple historical oppressions, such as colonization, classism, homophobia, and poverty, that this ethnic group has experienced in the U.S. and in their native countries, adds another dimension to an ecological understanding of domestic violence. Volpp (2001), however, cautions that researchers should not contribute to the marginalization of minority groups, such as Latinos, by assuming that such cultures are more subordinating and more oppressive than the U.S. This both stigmatizes minority cultures by not recognizing the ways in which women of color practice empowerment in their group and ignores the severity of domestic violence in the U.S.

The methodology used by many researchers is influential in the development of domestic violence interventions for minority groups and if such approaches add to the

marginalization of minorities then the interventions will prove to be ineffective in addressing the needs of this population. Bent-Goodley (2005) and Skoloff and Dupont (2005a) emphasize the importance of including various methodological techniques and theoretical frameworks that will help to accurately contextualize domestic violence in minority groups. They explain that many data methods and analysis techniques used with European American groups are not adequate in understanding the dynamics contributing to domestic violence within minority groups. In her article, Bent-Goodley highlights the lack of cultural competence in research by giving an example of an African American woman who was turned away from a domestic violence shelter because she “did not look upset or in distress” (p.195). Based on conventional domestic violence research and theories, this woman did not appear to fit the image of a typical domestic violence victim in crisis due to the way she was expressing her emotions. Because her situation did not appear to be serious she was not able to receive the services she needed at that time. That case was an example of how findings from research designed from work with a certain population cannot be generalized to other populations; thus, it has an impact on the effectiveness of interventions for other groups. Although appearing “upset” may signify the expression of intense emotions and helplessness in one cultural group, another group may express this “upset” as being withdrawn and unaffected. Because of cultural variations involved in the experiences of domestic violence for women, those studying the field of domestic violence are calling for research that understands the contexts of domestic violence for marginalized populations through multiple methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks (Solokoff & Dupont, 2005a). This involves using

techniques other than the traditional quantitative methods and incorporating qualitative approaches that will offer the opportunity for women from marginalized groups to lend voice to their experiences and contribute to the development of culturally sensitive interventions. Furthermore, multiple methodological approaches also help in identifying the cultural strengths and protective factors within culturally diverse populations.

Issues pertaining to culture, acculturation and gender role expectations

As mentioned in the previous section, the process of immigration and acculturation has been identified as a stressor among Latino families that may contribute to domestic violence. When in their native countries, Latinas were expected to take care of the needs of the family through tending to household chores, being in charge of rearing the children and caring for elderly parents. With the experience of immigrating to the U.S. and the financial need requiring both parents to work outside of the home, the Latino family is experiencing a shift in gender roles that adds stress to the intimate partner relationship. According to Perilla, Bakeman, and Norris (1994), such changes in gender role expectations forces the relationship to shift from an authoritative-male dominated relationship to one that is more egalitarian. They concluded that the cultural scripts that define gender roles in intimate relationships among Latinos and the shift that occurs through immigration “provide an environment ripe for the occurrence of domestic violence” (p.326). Domestic violence, though, is not isolated to Latino immigrants in the U.S. In Latin American and Caribbean countries, the prevalence of domestic violence varies from 10 to 50 percent and legal protections are few for women who choose to escape the abuse (Creel, Lovera, & Ruiz, 2001).

As adult Latina immigrants are faced with different gender role expectations, so are their daughters who either arrive here at a young age or are U.S. born. Through stressors associated with acculturation, adult and adolescent Latinas have been identified as being at risk for certain negative health-related behaviors. These include unplanned pregnancy, STDs, and, as the focus of this study, domestic violence (Goodyear, Newcomb, & Locke, 2002). With regards to acculturation level and HIV risk among Latinas, one study found that condom use among lesser-acculturated Latinas was lower when compared to higher acculturated and younger Latinas (Newcomb et al., 1998). On the other hand, higher acculturated Latinas were also engaging in more risks through having multiple partners. The previous results may imply that sexual empowerment appears to be mutually exclusive of safe sexual practices. This contradiction might be better explained by the Latino female gender role contradiction of “Virgin Mary vs. whore” conundrum (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). A Latina is expected to be sexually chaste and asking a partner to use a condom might imply that she is sexually assertive. On the other hand, if she is sexually assertive enough to ask her partner to use a condom then it implies that she is promiscuous and not monogamous. Such contradictions for young Latina women who are growing up in the U.S. culture can be very confusing and contribute to an undifferentiated sense of identity (Denner & Dunbar, 2004). More investigations must be conducted on how the process of becoming bicultural has an impact on health behaviors in Latina adolescents in order to develop more effectively intervention strategies.

Limitations of research on Latina adolescents and DV

As will be explored in the next chapter, there is limited research in identifying the factors related to domestic violence, in particular, among Latinos. This is especially true regarding dating violence among Latina adolescents. What research does exist on dating violence among Latino youth does not take into account the relational, social, and cultural context in which it happens. In particular, exposure to violence in the home and community, and gender role socialization has been minimally explored. It is important to use various forms of data collection techniques and analysis when studying dating violence among Latino youth in order to consider the various risk and protective factors associated with this behavior. Such research could be helpful in developing prevention programs that address adult intimate partner violence and intergenerational transmission.

Statement of the problem

Research has examined the process by which children learn to be aggressive and/or normalize aggression within personal relationships through exposure to intimate partner violence. For example, McCloskey and Lichter (2004) found that adolescents exposed to domestic violence were more likely to engage in aggression toward peers. However, the impact of witnessing interparental violence on children's gender role beliefs and its later implications in their own intimate relationships later on as adolescents and young adults has not been well studied. Sociocultural expectations of male and female roles within the child's culture need to be considered in any conceptualization of this dynamic (Lichter & McCloskey, 2004; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Villarruel, 1998). This is especially true for girls and young women who have witnessing histories.

Unfortunately there has been a paucity of research on the issue of domestic violence within communities of color. Critics have called for more research with ethnic minority and immigrant populations particularly using qualitative methods which would give a voice to the experiences of these marginalized families. Examining this aspect by giving these families a voice might have implications in developing prevention and intervention programs that address male and female roles within intimate relationships for women of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to expand on the existing literature on gender role beliefs in dating relationships among female Latina adolescents. As of yet, research has not focused sufficiently on the impact of witnessing domestic violence and the development of gender role beliefs among adolescents, although there is emerging research on gender role identity development among young men with childhood witnessing histories. Other researchers have pointed to the need for more analysis into the cultural factors associated with intimate partner violence risk especially for marginalized populations (Bent-Goodley, 2005; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005). Thus, this paper aims to add to the literature by examining the impact of witnessing domestic violence on gender role and dating violence beliefs among Latina female adolescents; and secondly, to add to the research on Latina adolescent cultural grounding, and gender role development.

Major research questions

1. How do young Latina women who have witnessed violence between their parental figures define feminine and masculine gender roles (marianismo vs. machismo)?
 - a. What gender role expectations do they have related to family relationships?
 - b. What gender role expectations do they have related to relationships in the community (i.e., male-female relationships)?
 - c. What gender role expectations do they have related to academic achievement and career expectations?
 - d. In what ways have their gender role expectations been influenced by the media (e.g., music, magazines, internet, etc.)
2. How do these girls who have grown up witnessing violence view gender roles within a dating relationship?
 - a. Which is each gender's role in a dating relationship?
 - b. How is sex negotiated, if at all?
3. What beliefs do these young women have about the use of violence (verbal, physical, sexual) in dating relationships?
 - a. Under what conditions, if at all, would they endorse the use of violence in a dating relationship?

Guiding Hypothesis:

- It is believed that endorsement of dating violence among Latina adolescents is a function of exposure to domestic violence that is mediated by traditional gender role

beliefs. This hypothesis will be examined within the multicultural-feminist framework.

Potential Benefits of the Research

The potential benefit of the study is to bring to the forefront beliefs and attitudes about gender roles as risk or protective factors among young Latina adolescents. By adding to the body of literature that currently exists, the hope is that it will influence the development of teen dating violence prevention programs that are culturally competent. Instead of providing a curriculum that provides a brief overview of gender roles, a culturally competent program would incorporate information regarding culture-specific gender roles. Such a program would help Latinos and other ethnic minority adolescents begin to reflect on ways their cultures portray gender roles and its impact on relationships without diminishing cultural pride. Research has indicated that cultural pride is a protective factor against sexual risk behaviors, depression and violence (Goodyear, Newcomb, & Locke, 2002).

Definition of the Terms

- Gender role beliefs:
 - Definitions of Latino gender roles of *marianismo* (femininity) and *machismo* (masculinity) will be based on various literature sources including definitions provided by Gil and Vazquez (1996) in their book *The Maria Paradox*. They are defined as the following:
 - Marianismo: The strictest definition of the ideal Latina is seen as a woman who is self-sacrificing towards husband, children, and

parents; always obeying the wishes of her husband; strictly maintains family traditions; and sexual chastity.

- Machismo: The strictest definition of the ideal Latino is seen as dominant, authoritarian, sexually virile, provider, and protector of the family.
- Domestic Violence/ Intimate Partner Violence/Interparental Violence:
 - Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence:
 - In the literature, these terms are used to refer to the experience of psychological, sexual and physical abuse from one partner to another (Jouriles, McDonald, Norwood, & Ezell, 2001). It is recognized that other forms of abuse such as economic abuse and gender oppression are left out of the above definition, thus the definition of domestic violence described by the Duluth “Power and Control Wheel” is used in this study (National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence, n.d.). The Power and Control Wheel includes the following forms of abuse: physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, cohesion and threats, blaming victim for abuse, utter financial control, and other acts of control that infringe or violates the rights of the partner. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Male Violence Against Women also provided a comprehensive definition of violence which includes acts that have the effect of

hurting and degrading the female partner “and/or taking away her ability to control contact (intimate and otherwise) with another individual” (Kross et al., 1994, as cited in Jouriles et al., 2001, p.216). It is recognized that there is debate among domestic violence researchers about the terms used for specifying whether the violence is between partners or violence against women (Jouriles et al., 2001; Sokoloff & Dupont, 2005b). In this study, the terms domestic violence and intimate partner violence refer to violence against women without regard to the status of the relationship (e.g., dating, cohabiting, or married)

- Dating Violence:
 - This term will be defined in the same manner as intimate partner violence using the Duluth “Power and Control Wheel”.
- Witness to intimate partner violence:
 - Study participants are asked to share their experiences witnessing domestic violence during the interview. For this study, intimate partner violence is violence from one parental figure to another (father/mother; mother/mother, father/father, grandfather/grandmother; foster father/mother, etc.) in their households that are/were involved in an intimate relationship with each other. The participants will be asked in the data collection process about their parental figures.

- Age:
 - The sample includes adolescent and young adult females between the ages of 15-20 years old.
- Latino/Hispanic:
 - This ethnic construct was defined as a person who is from or has at least one parent from a Latin American country (Caribbean, South and Central America, Mexico).

Chapter Review and Summary

This chapter introduced the social and cultural background related to domestic violence in the Latino community. Key issues and research limitations related to the study of domestic violence in this community and especially to the study of the effects of childhood exposure to domestic violence were introduced. It concluded with a statement of the problem, a brief description of the study, a presentation of the research questions, a description of the potential benefits, and a definition of the terms.

Chapter two reviews the relevant literature of the theoretical perspectives that are used to understand the social and cultural context of gender role beliefs and dating violence among Latina adolescents. It also reviews empirical literature relating to socialization of gender role beliefs in Latino families, effects of witnessing domestic violence for children and adolescents, and research on the risk factors contributing to dating violence in youth.

Chapter three presents the methodology for the study. A detailed description of the study methodological approach is provided which includes a description of the

sample and setting, a review of the qualitative methods procedures, a review of the research questions, and description of the qualitative analysis approach.

Chapter four presents the results of the study. A description of the demographics of the study sample is presented. Following that description, the themes generated by the data will be outlined along with supporting narratives for each theme.

Finally, chapter five will provide a summary of the results along with literature that supports or refutes the themes. Limitations of the study will be discussed in this section along with implications for clinical practice and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

At 15%, the Latino population is the fastest growing ethnic minority group in the United States (Fry, 2008, p.1). This increase has been said by researchers to be attributed to both to rates of immigration and birth (Fry, 2008). . Another report estimates that 34.4 % are under the age of 18 as compared to about 20% of non-Hispanic Whites. Among Latino youth under the age of 18 years old, over 80% are U.S. born (Ramirez & de la Cruz, 2002, p.5). With a significant percentage of the population under the age of 18, many of these children and adolescents face the arduous task of acculturating to American mainstream society whose values conflict with those of their Latino heritage. Research has indicated that the stress experienced from this conflict puts Latino youth at risk for negative health-related behaviors such as substance abuse, depression, violence, and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV (Ebin et al., 2000). Some researchers have attributed this to emotional vulnerabilities associated with experiences with discrimination and teens distancing themselves from the collectivism associated with Latino culture that “place adolescents’ behavior in the context of the family” (Ebin, et al., p.71). In addition, the ramifications of these risk behaviors also have an impact on school success and subsequent employment opportunities. For example, Hispanics have the highest high school drop out rate when compared to blacks and whites (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). With the risks that many U.S. born and immigrant Latino youth

face, it is important to examine risk behaviors within a cultural and sociopolitical context that will help in developing appropriate intervention strategies.

This chapter will provide a theoretical and critical review of the current literature on exposure to domestic violence, gender role beliefs and dating violence among Latina adolescents. The chapter will begin with a review of the theories used as frameworks for the research on this topic and will present the theoretical orientation of the study. Then the chapter will continue with a review of the literature, highlighting strengths and limitations. Finally, the chapter will end with implications of the literature for future research and intervention efforts.

Theoretical review of childhood exposure to intimate partner violence

The literature on childhood exposure to intimate partner violence (IPV) has leaned towards using particular theoretical frameworks to understand the relationship between exposure to interparental violence, gender role beliefs and intimate partner violence. Various studies and literature reviews have cited social learning, cognitive-developmental, ecological, multicultural, feminist and psychodynamic theories to provide a framework in understanding the link between exposure to interparental violence, gender roles and IPV among adults and adolescents (Almgren, 2005; Arraiga & Foshee, 2004; McCloskey & Lichter, 2003; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994; Reid & Bing, 2000). The following section will provide a review of one of the most commonly used theories along with theories that will provide the framework for this study.

Social Learning Theory and related theoretical frameworks

In the literature that has investigated the impact of interparental violence on adolescent dating violence, social learning theory is the framework that is most selected by researchers as a way to ground this phenomena. Social learning theory, along with other related theories, such as the model of dating violence, and intergenerational transmission theory, has been used to explain the risk factors associated with intimate partner violence victimization. The thought among these researchers is that social learning and related theories offer a better understanding of the influences behind an adolescent's behavior within a developmental perspective (Arraiga, & Foshee, 2004; Kinsfogel, & Grych, 2004).

Social learning, as grounded in developmental theory by Bandura, is based on the idea that expectations, beliefs, self-perceptions, goals and intentions give direction to behavior; there exists a reciprocal causation between the adolescent's behavior and the environment (Bandura, 1989). It is felt that this interaction influences the development of cognition, and self-regulation of behavior and emotions. With that definition, the thought among researchers is that social learning based theories offer a better understanding of the influences behind an adolescent's behavior in that it considers the environmental impact on adolescent development (Ehrensaft, et al., 2003).

Intergenerational transmission theory is one such social learning based theory that is frequently used in the literature on the effects of children witnessing violence. Based on social learning theory, it states that violence is learned by being abused or through exposure to violence among parents or caregivers (Ehrensaft, et al., 2003). Hence, it

concludes that a child raised in a violent environment will learn through her parental role models aggressive and negative ways to resolve conflict that may then become reinforced by the environment. According to this theory, children exposed to violence will also develop self-perceptions and interpersonal beliefs that condone violence and aggression.

Another theory heavily influenced by social learning theory is the model of dating violence proposed by Riggs and O'Leary (as cited by Luthra & Gidycz, 2006). They hypothesize that there are contextual and situational variables linked to dating violence in young adults. These variables include contextual factors such as exposure to models of aggression in intimate relationships, exposure to parent-child aggression, acceptance of violence as a means to deal with conflict; and situational factors such as substance use, partner's use of aggression, relationship length, and problem solving skills. As in social learning theory, what the child observes in his environment and the way the child interacts with that environment reinforces the behavior.

In the end, learning through observations and role modeling may not account for all aspects of intergenerational transmission of violence in the family. Re-conceptualizing social learning into social cognitive theory, Bandura (1989) stated, "The adoption of values, standards, and attributes is governed by a much broader and more dynamic social reality" (p.72). Therefore, the interaction between parent and child only takes into account home environmental influences in the formation of self, cognition and behavior leaving out additional sociocultural influences that come from outside of that relationship such as peers, media or society in general.

Ecological Model

As one of the frameworks used in this study, the ecological model by Bronfenbrenner (1979) addresses the dynamics between the individual and the environment across various systems and across time: the macrosystem (world views and ideology); the exosystem (social and government institutions, culture, media); the mesosystem (the interaction between the microsystem and the exosystem), microsystem (family, peers, and neighborhood); and the individual. Based on his theories of child development and family dynamics, Bronfenbrenner theorized that nature and nurture are both influential in the developmental process. Each system interacts with the other systems and the changes in these systems are constantly occurring as they interact with each other. In the most recent adaptation of his theory, Bronfenbrenner emphasized the importance of the child's biology as a primary environment for stimulating her development. It has since been renamed the "bioecological systems theory" (Bronfenbrenner, 2005). Here, as in his ecological systems theory, Bronfenbrenner emphasizes the importance of not relying on a deficit model in working with children and their families. On an intervention level, this theory does not believe in waiting until a family is in crisis to provide a certain level of intervention (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

Using a more sociologically related approach to the ecologically based theories, Almgren (2005) examines the link between community crime, institutional discrimination and interpersonal violence among inner city minority populations. This author explains how the theory of social disorganization provides a framework for the occurrence of

intimate partner violence in urban areas. She cites that collective efficacy as reflected by a sense of environmental control among neighbors provides a means for social cohesion and “informal social control” (p.221). Referring back to Bronfenbrenner’s terminology within ecological systems theory, Almgren is proposing to address intimate partner violence at the mesosystem level as a way to acknowledge that intimate partner violence does not occur in a vacuum and involves systems outside of the family.

Integration of Feminist and Multicultural Approaches

This present study also examined the topic of dating violence beliefs among young Latina women who have witnessed domestic violence as children within the multicultural and feminist frameworks. It is believed that these frameworks will present an approach to this topic that encompasses the young Latina woman’s interaction with her environment including the intersection of race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender. As Reid and Bing (2000) indicated in their meta-analysis of the domestic violence literature, theoretical frameworks such as social learning theory do not take into account behaviors that do not get reinforced or why some behaviors are more salient than others and that such assumptions are based on “white, middle class lifestyles” (p.146). Since the focus of the study was to understand the impact of witnessing domestic violence on gender role beliefs within a social cultural context, these frameworks provided the most inclusive approach to this topic.

The feminist and multicultural approaches introduce to the ecological model the perspectives of race/ethnicity, class, sexual orientation and gender across the various systems within the model. As the focus of this study was on urban, low income Latina

young women, the feminist perspective allows for the analysis and inquiry of this topic as it relates to the formation of gender role beliefs. The multicultural approach considers the cultural and sociopolitical context in which gender role expectations exist, especially as it considers the history of oppression that specific ethnic and racial minority groups experience at the hands of mainstream society (Volpp, 2005). There have been efforts to apply feminist principles to interventions and research with women of color. Comas-Diaz (1991) identifies five feminist principles that are applicable to ethnically diverse women that include the following: relevance of women's contexts, differences are not deficiencies, equalization of power, empowerment, and social action. These principles integrate the needs of women of color as both women and a person of color.

Gender role beliefs have been said to have a significant role in health risk behaviors among the Latino population. Several research studies have looked at the ways in which Latino cultural gender role beliefs and practices play a role in adult risk for HIV (Talshek, et al., 2004). In Latino culture, the gender roles of *marianismo* and *machismo* are influential in that they dictate the behavioral expectations of Latino women and men. Both are rooted in values of interconnectedness, family, and tradition, yet have elements of male authority and female submission (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). To better understand the cultural expectations of Latina women, a definition of femininity needs to be elaborated upon. For the Latina women, *marianismo* is a female gender role in Latino culture where the expectation is to please her family, obey her husband, and maintain traditions. A woman who adheres to the gender role is considered a *Buena mujer* (good woman). Chastity and martyrdom are also feminine expectations (Gil & Vazquez,

1996). The historical roots of this gender role are primarily influenced by Catholicism's image of the Virgin Mary and Catholicism's influence in Latin America's sociopolitical system. Although seen as oppressive by our American (feminist) standards, in traditional Latino culture the role of the marianista woman had its purpose by making the wife the gatekeeper of family and ethnic traditions which in turn serves as the foundation for generations of family members.

In recent times, the traditional view of womanhood has been changed due to the separation of family members from immigration, economic reasons (the woman must work outside of the home), and the new cultural expectations of the dominant culture. In this context, being self-sacrificing for the sake of the family is no longer rewarding since the Latina woman is not the center, now that the family is dispersed across different parts of the country or the world. Due to the conflicts and contradictions between the expectations between the Latino culture and that of mainstream America, many Latina women experience acculturative stress that results in low self-esteem and depression (Vazquez, M.J.T, 1994). Gil and C.I.Vazquez (1996) theorize that many Hispanic women when confronted with acculturative stress, tend to hold on to their traditional familiar values as a way to cope with the changes; this, however, may leave these women at risk for increased feelings of low self-esteem and interpersonal conflicts. As the adults are struggling with redefining their cultural gender roles, adolescents are receiving messages from their families on their expectations regarding their own gender roles and sexuality. Research has found that despite the negativity associated with the process of

redefining their roles as Latina young women, Latina teens can go through this process in a healthy and positive manner (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Ebin et al., 2000).

Together both the multicultural-feminist and ecological models take into account multiple environmental, cultural and societal factors that influence gender role beliefs among a diverse population (Perilla et al., 1994). Although these theories have been mainly used in studies that have looked at adult females, the same could be applied to understanding the influences of gender role beliefs among Latina adolescents (Reid & Bing, 2000). For example, Perrilla and colleagues (1994) state that the ecological model allows a researcher to use a more systemic approach to understanding domestic violence among Latinos. While other theories may not include the family, the ecological approach might include the views of both the husband and wife as affected by cultural and environmental pressures. The integrated feminist-multicultural and ecological approaches that Reid and Bing (2000) use to explore the sexual roles of ethnic minority girls and women brings together feminist-multicultural theories of sex roles and diversity with the systemic approach of the ecological model. Because this current study examined gender role beliefs and Latinas, this model was used as a framework for this investigation.

Review of the Empirical Literature

The literature on Latinas' experiences with domestic violence and related factors is limited. In studies that have addressed some aspect of this population's experiences in the area of domestic violence and gender role beliefs, investigators have used both quantitative and qualitative methods. More extensive research has been done on the

impact of exposure to domestic violence during childhood for young children, adolescents and later on into adulthood. This also includes research on dating violence risks for adolescents and intimate partner violence for adults. The remainder of the chapter critically reviews contemporary literature regarding the impact of witnessing interparental violence on the gender role beliefs of Latina adolescents. First, research is presented on the cultural influence of gender role socialization among Latinos. Secondly, a number of studies will be discussed that illuminate the relationship between intimate partner violence, gender role beliefs, and the impact of witnessing intimate partner violence during childhood. Then, studies on the correlates of dating violence among adolescents and young adults will be presented in relation to the aforementioned research. Finally, limitations and implications of the existing research will be discussed, especially as it influences this study.

Latino culture and gender role socialization

Studies investigating the dynamics of culture and gender role identity have shown the importance of family in sending direct and explicit messages of femininity and masculinity and its influence on behaviors (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Villarreal, 1998). In their study of parenting practices and gender-related socialization, Raffaelli and Ontai (2004), in two separate phases, used open-ended interviews of twenty-two Latina women via opportunity sampling (i.e., participant referrals), and structured surveys of 166 college Latino women and men to assess how family cultural beliefs and parenting practices were related to differential treatment of male and female children. Overall, female participants reported that boys in their

families were granted greater freedom and privilege outside of the home; boys had less household responsibilities and parents encouraged the girls to act in a feminine manner. Male participants confirmed what the female participants reported in that they also observed that greater social activity restrictions were placed on women during childhood than on their male family members. From these results the researchers concluded that Latinas and Latinos experience differences in gender socialization. Although the findings are consistent with the results of other studies such as Villarreuel's (1998), the methodological approach of this retrospective study highlights concerns regarding the generalization of the findings on the U.S. Latino population due to its sampling method and that male participants were not included in the first portion of the study.

As demonstrated in the previous study, gender role expectations appear to be influenced by cultural and family values. Gender role socialization has an influence on behavioral expectations for both boys and girls. In her study about safe sexual practices among Latina adolescents, Villarreuel (1998) aimed to reveal the influence of familialism, gender-role expectations, and religion on sexual attitudes among Latina adolescents. With 49 adolescents and 21 mothers of Puerto Rican and Mexican descent recruited for the study from community-based social service agencies, the researcher selected an ethnographic design using focus groups to collect data related to family values and sexual attitudes. Findings revealed the importance of family and extended social support network in thoughts about respect for self and family, protection of self, child, and family. As in the Raffaelli and Ontai (2004) study on gender role socialization among Latinos, this study also confirmed cultural beliefs about protectiveness of families

towards girls and gender differences in rules regarding social activities. Findings from this study underscore the importance of developing culturally sensitive interventions in decreasing health risk behaviors that incorporates family-based approaches.

Research has shown that Latina adolescents are socialized by their families' cultural beliefs to value home and family that is supported by the definition of *marianismo* presented by Gil and Vazquez (1996). As Latina adolescents growing up in U.S. culture are exposed to other definitions of femininity, they must learn to negotiate a bicultural version of femininity. As Gil and Vazquez describe in their book on clinical work with Latina women, many Latinas, when faced with the stress of acculturation, tend to embrace even more their cultures' definition of femininity. It could be assumed that this coping mechanism is also seen among Latina adolescents, but this was not the case as seen in a study by Denner and Dunbar (2004). Their study explored the process under which Mexican American girls discovered how to balance both U.S. and Mexican cultural constructs of feminine identity. These researchers explored how Mexican-American adolescents negotiated gender roles in their relationships. Using semi-structured interviews with low-income Mexican American girls who attended a girls' group in a community center, they found that girls both critique and accept differences in sexual and social rules for girls and boys, yet perceived high levels of power in their relationships. These young adolescents reported negotiating their gender roles by moving across different roles in relation to others (e.g., caregiver, peacemaker and advocate). Overall, their data suggested that Latina girls negotiating social and cultural notions about femininity and perceptions of power was based more within the dynamic process of

relationships versus a static, individual construct. The results of this study offer a more positive view of the Latina gender role or *marianismo* in that these girls are able to feel empowered in their ability to negotiate their roles in a way that honors their culture yet forges a new Latina identity. According to Gil and Vazquez, this is the goal of many of their clinical interventions with Latina adult, i.e., the ability to negotiate and/or change their roles at home, work and in society. Other authors have noted the importance of fostering a sense of empowerment that incorporates and honors their cultural values (Comas-Diaz, 1991; Comas-Diaz, 1994; Espin, 1997).

Gender role beliefs and IPV in adult relationships

Holding traditional gender role beliefs is related to various outcomes such as intimate partner violence and psychological distress especially when they clash with mainstream gender role expectations (Gil & Vazquez, 1996). Studies have suggested that certain traditional gender role beliefs may be linked to higher risk of intimate partner violence (Boonzaier & de la Rey, 2003; Crossman, Smith, & Bender, 1990; Ellington & Marshall, 1997; Finn, 1986; Gentemann, 1984; Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994). For male batterers, Crossman and colleagues (1990) attempted to clarify previous findings on sex role egalitarianism and marital violence. In their study, it was found that men who reported using severe violence against their wives tended to report lower levels of egalitarian beliefs than men who reported using minor violence. On the other hand, together as a whole, the batterers in the group did not differ in levels of egalitarianism when compared to men who were non-abusers. These findings appear confusing yet the researchers provide a convincing explanation for their findings and that of other, similar

studies. Using a feminist approach they state that male-dominant beliefs are so embedded in our U.S. culture that it makes it difficult to find differences in egalitarian attitudes among batterers and non-batterers. Their results might have more to do with their less than optimal sampling (i.e., small sample size and only men in substance abuse/anger management treatment) which has an impact on generalizability to other men, but their explanation offers an understanding of why studies on gender role beliefs are not successful in establishing a clear relationship between IPV and gender role attitudes.

Research by Ellington and Marshall (1997), and Perilla and colleagues (1994), also confirm Crossman et al.'s results in that they did not find a relationship between traditional gender role beliefs and intimate partner violence. Using a mixed methods approach Ellington and Marshall studied a community sample of 93 psychologically abused women in three groups: psychologically abused only, with moderate violence, and with severe violence. The researchers found that all the women identified their idealized and characteristic gender role as feminine and egalitarian. Although the women endorsed gender role adjectives that were more feminine, they also idealized mutuality and independence in a relationship. On the other hand, they categorized their male abusive partners as more masculine than yet not as traditional as the researchers had hypothesized. The women who reported being more severely physically abused were found to rate their partners as more traditional and masculine than women who were moderately or not physically abused. Ellington and Marshall suggest that overall, gender role beliefs and physical abuse are significantly more related to the attitudes of the

perpetrator than that of the victim. They speculated that the women's expressed value of independence and egalitarianism may have reflected, especially for the severely abused women, "a desire to be free of this relationship" (p. 366).

On the other hand, Finn (1986) and Gentemann (1984) found that traditional gender role beliefs were related to endorsement of intimate partner violence among men and women. Concerns that should be raised about both studies with regard to validity, include sampling bias and with respect to the time period that both studies were conducted. First, both Finn and Gentemann sampled from a specific population with the former using undergraduate students and the latter sampling from a specific state county. Although Finn's sample was limited to undergraduate students, he was able to obtain a varied representation of race and gender among the participants. On the other hand, Gentemann's sample had an under representation of "non-white" participants. With these limitations, it is difficult to generalize the results to other groups of people. Secondly, both studies were conducted 20 years ago and it is likely that the cultural constructs of gender roles have changed thus making it difficult to generalize the findings to the 21st century.

Using a qualitative and narrative research design, Boonzaier & de la Rey (2003) contextualized black South African women's experiences with intimate partner violence. In many of the women's experiences, they recounted the times their male partners used violence and other forms of abuse in order to exert control and power in the relationship. The partners especially used violence as a means to regain a sense of masculinity and control when faced with unemployment and when their wives appeared "too

independent” (p. 277). Although this study was conducted in another country, both Boonzaier & de la Rey’s sample and U.S. ethnic/racial minority groups have a similar sociopolitical history of discrimination and oppression that are reflected in several aspects of these groups’ lives, including violence against women.

Witnessing IPV and gender role beliefs in adolescents

Despite some findings that do not support the hypothesis that traditional gender role beliefs are related to a risk in IPV in adults, studies done with children and adolescents appear to indicate otherwise. Research has looked into the impact of witnessing marital violence on gender role beliefs and self-perceptions among adolescents. Lichter and McCloskey (2004) in their longitudinal study examined the relationship between childhood exposure to marital violence and adolescent dating violence among a group of children of battered and non-battered women. Using structured surveys, they collected information regarding the mothers’ experience with intimate partner violence, the adolescents’ experience with dating violence, gender based family roles, gender typed dating scripts, and attitudes about dating violence. Findings indicated that adolescents from highly violent homes engaged in more dating violence (either as perpetrator or victim) than those from lower conflict or nonviolent groups. It was also found that traditional attitudes about family and dating gender roles were related to sustaining violence from a partner. The interesting finding was that adolescents exposed to marital violence did not report traditional beliefs about marital or dating relationships. The authors offer some explanations for this finding including the possibility that those adolescents who witnessed intimate partner violence also witnessed

the mother as actively resisting the violence from their partners. Unfortunately, the authors did not indicate the reasoning why certain adolescents reported more traditional family and dating gender roles. Identifying the reasons related to acceptance of more traditional gender roles within the context of the 21st century may help clarify risk factors associated with victimization of dating violence.

Other effects of witnessing IPV during childhood

Although the link between gender role beliefs and IPV may be contradictory, but research results on the negative impact of witnessing domestic violence on an adolescent's self-perception, levels of aggression and psychosocial well-being are consistent. One recent study by Winstok, Eisikovits, and Karnieli-Miller (2004) investigated the impact of witnessing intimate partner violence among parental figures on the self-perceptions of adolescents. Using structured surveys the researchers measured Israeli adolescents' perception of the violence, and the subjective judgment of themselves, their father and mother. They found that in the presence of mild IPV adolescents tended to identify more with their fathers (the perpetrator), but when the aggression was more severe they identified more with their mothers (the victim). In other words, the degree of violence they witnessed among their parents had an impact on the adolescents' perception of the situation and of themselves. Here, the authors stress the importance of addressing self-image and aggressive behavior in youth as a key component in intervention. In addition, such findings may offer insight into the varied results from the research of gender role beliefs and IPV among adults where their self-perception is linked to the severity of the violence.

Aggression has also been related to exposure to violence for children, adolescents and adults. Baldry (2003), in her sample of Italian youth, found that children with self reported witnessing histories also admitted to engaging in animal abuse. Although the large number of variables analyzed might have impacted the strength of the final results, the outcomes remained consistent with previous research regarding childhood aggression and exposure to violence.

Children who are aggressive with peers and have poor conflict management skills may also, as adults and adolescents, continue to experience difficulty with conflict management abilities particularly within intimate relationships. Skuja and Halford (2004) explored intimate relationship communication styles of men with childhood witnessing histories. Results indicated that men who were exposed to family violence exhibited more aggressive and dominant communication styles with their female partner when compared with non-exposed males. This appears to support the hypothesis that those with witnessing histories tend to experience more interpersonal conflicts.

Aside from an increased risk in engaging in peer and dating violence, children and adolescents who witness domestic violence also display symptoms of depression, anxiety, risky sexual practices, and illicit substance use (Davies & Lindsay, 2004; Elliot et al., 2002; Goodyear, Newcomb, & Locke, 2002). The research on children reveals that boys tend to exhibit greater vulnerability, but other researchers have found that once in early adolescence teen girls tend to exhibit more internalizing symptoms as seen in the Davies and Lindsay (2004) study. Collecting information from both adolescents and their mothers, it was found that girls experienced greater instances of depression and anxiety

from the interparental conflict than their male counterparts. Based on the theories of gender role socializations, the researchers hypothesized that girls exhibited more distress partly due to a greater interpersonal connectedness with the family. This greater connectedness they state is due to the gender role expectations of girls to place personal value into their relationships.

Research on exposure to domestic violence and adolescent girls has also shown that such experiences place girls at greater risk for engaging in unsafe sex as seen in a study by Elliot, Avery, Fishman, and Hoshiko (2002). Although their sample included girls who were abused by their families, the experience of exposure only, was also significantly related to having multiple partners in the past 12 months or having sex with someone who was engaging in sexually risky behaviors. Elliot et al.'s findings support other research demonstrating that exposure to domestic violence has an impact on a child's sense of self and how they relate to other around them via aggression or other risk taking behaviors.

To measure the long term effects of childhood exposure to violence into adulthood studies have used retrospective methods by asking adults about their memories regarding their childhood. Such a method has its limitations in that subjective memories about one point in time are not as reliable as recording information as it is happening. Ehrensaft et al. (2003) were able to follow a sample of 543 children over 20 years to measure the effects of exposure to domestic violence along with other variables, including child abuse and adolescent conduct disorder. They found that with regard to risk for victimization, exposure to domestic violence was significantly related to partner

violence victimization. Exposure to violence was even found to be a greater risk than experiencing child abuse. Although their sample contained a large number of participants from a specific racial group, Caucasian, their findings regarding risk of victimization is beneficial in understanding the effects of witnessing domestic violence during childhood in young adulthood.

Dating violence during adolescence and young adulthood

As presented in the previous sections, multiple ecological factors have been linked to higher risks of dating violence among adolescents including exposure to family violence, experiencing childhood abuse, lack of adequate parental supervision, poor school performance and exposure to community violence (Elliot et al., 2002; O’Keefe, 1998; Sanderson, Coker, Roberts, Tortolero, & Reininger, 2004). Several studies on teen dating violence have begun to include more ethnically and racially diverse study participants. This was seen in studies by Howard, Beck, Kerr, and Shattuck (2005) and Howard, Qiu, and Boekeloo (2003) where they included Latino and African American participants. The first study found that risk factors associated with an increased risk of dating violence were aggressive peer interactions and depressive symptoms such as suicidal ideation. On the other hand, Howard et al. (2003) identified protective factors that inhibited the dating violence such as parental monitoring and attending religious services. In both studies there existed a key concern regarding the validity of the results in which they only asked one question regarding experiences with dating violence. This question only included physical violence and not other forms of abuse (e.g., “Have you ever been intentionally hit by your boyfriend/girlfriend?”). This is reflected in the

relatively low rates of dating violence victimization of 7%-9% in these studies, which are inconsistent with the FBI Supplemental Report (1993-1999) of 22% for this same age group (as cited by Hickman, Jaycox, & Arnoff, 2004, p. 131).

Although the prevalence of dating violence varies from group to group, O'Keefe (1998) found that among a group of adolescents with histories of witnessing domestic violence, 55% reported experiencing at least one incident of dating violence. Here, although O'Keefe focused on physical abuse by a partner, she also provided a questionnaire that contextualized the abuse by presenting different scenarios which was not done by the aforementioned studies. Her results further revealed that among the female adolescent participants, poor school performance and experiencing child abuse was associated with an increased risk of dating violence victimization. Thus, success in school for females was a protective factor against dating violence victimization. It is possible that other factors associated with school success, e.g., such as high self-esteem, and greater parental involvement, might reduce the likelihood that teen girls will stay or become involved in an abusive dating relationship.

For Latino youth, research has also indicated that several cultural factors are related to involvement in abusive dating relationships. Sanderson et al.'s (2004) study of Latino ninth grade students and dating violence found that acculturation and ethnic pride were associated with dating violence. For the Latina adolescents, higher teen acculturation and experiences with ethnic discrimination were linked to greater likelihood of being victimized by a partner. For those Latina teens whose parents were not U.S. born and who expressed a greater sense of pride in their Latino identity, they were less

likely to be involved in an abusive relationship. These results highlight the cultural stressors associated with acculturation for this ethnic group and the risks for those struggling with their identity.

A great deal of the literature on adolescent dating violence focuses on quantitative approaches that help in providing information on prevalence and relationships among distinct variables, but usually do not provide a cultural and social context to better understand the phenomena (e.g., Eaton et al, 2007; Marquart, 2007; Wolitzky-Taylor, 2008). Kennedy (2005) and Rosen (2004) use qualitative methodologies to explore the cultural context in which low income adolescent mothers from diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds experience and resist dating violence by their partners. A common thread found in both studies revealed that participants' experiences with intimate partner violence began around the time of pregnancy and escalated from there. Support from parents and from extended family also mediated the likelihood of continued involvement in an abusive relationship in that family were either able to provide shelter or other means to escape the abuse. School involvement also provided the young women with a sense of control over their situations that empowered them to leave the abuse. Finally, the young women revealed how the abuse was centered on issues of power and control especially when the partner was struggling with financial and legal stressors. These findings support other research on dating violence yet it offers information in a contextualized manner that may assist in developing more appropriate interventions for this population.

Limitations of the current literature

The literature has referred to many factors associated with an increased risk of intimate partner violence for women and adolescent females. According to the research presented in this chapter, factors such as witnessing interparental violence, experiences with childhood abuse and lack of parental monitoring have been associated with an increase risk of intimate partner violence victimization. For immigrant and U.S.-born Latinos, low ethnic pride and experiences with discrimination have also been linked to an increased risk of intimate partner violence. Additionally, the effects of witnessing or experiencing abuse (low self esteem, psychological distress) have also been associated with this risk. Studies have also explored the impact of cultural identity and pride on the development of self in young women of color and its relationship as a protective factor against involvement in abusive relationships. Yet, there are noticeable gaps and limitations in the domestic violence literature, especially related to gender role beliefs and intimate partner violence among Latina adults and adolescents. Some of these limitations have been partly due to the methodological approaches used by researchers.

Hickman, Jaycox, and Aronoff (2004) in their analysis of the adolescent dating violence literature indicate a couple of methodological issues in the research. First they point out the different prevalence rates across various national epidemiological studies and such varied rates may underestimate the significance of adolescent dating violence. Among the reasons they indicate for the differing rates are the data sources (teens in school vs. teens at home) and data collection method (paper/pencil questionnaire vs. interview in the presence of an adult). Hickman and colleagues also indicated the same

methodological issues for single study prevalence estimates, “further limiting the ability to draw conclusions” (p.126). They also highlight legal and ethical dilemmas to collecting information from minors serving as a deterrent for researchers to explore the topic of intimate partner violence with this specific age group. One of the dilemmas is the need for parental consent. For a young woman to participate in a study, even if they are adolescent mothers, they must obtain guardian consent which further complicates data collection.

Aside from Hickman et al.’s (2004) critique, other limitations that pertain to research with both adults and teens have also noted narrow definitions of intimate partner violence, not including representation of minority youth, and not contextualizing the results to the relevant social and cultural dynamics of the particular group. As stated by Hickman et al., narrow definitions of intimate partner violence have resulted in differing rates for dating violence that are usually underestimations. It is of equal concern that several of these studies only ask the youth for instances of physical violence and not sexual assault or threats of violence. A more panoramic picture of the issue could be seen if the studies included all forms of intimate partner violence when collecting data from adolescents. Another limitation is the lack of representation of ethnic and racial minorities in the some of the research. Such narrow sampling, despite the rigorous data collection methods, limits the studies ability to generalize their results to other populations. Lastly, the majority of the results have not been contextualized to include the cultural and sociopolitical dynamics that influence the risk and protective factors for these teenagers and young adults. Conceptualizing risk and protective factors out of

context may further stigmatize marginalized groups and inhibit the development of culturally appropriate interventions efforts.

Implications

The research presented in this chapter support continued study into the relationship between exposure to domestic violence and risk of dating violence among adolescents and young adults. Of particular interest is the growing population of young Latinos in this country and the need to conduct research that supports the development of culturally appropriate prevention and intervention strategies, especially in addressing

Latinas' reconstruction of gender role expectations. This is especially seen in Latino immigrant families as roles shift and become redefined during the process of acculturation. Sometimes, as a result, tensions from the role shifts build, thus increasing the risk of conflict that could lead to violence. The literature on intimate partner violence among adults and adolescents presents the relational risks associated with the abuse, but does not sufficiently illustrate the social, cultural, and historical context under which those risks exist. As Bent-Goodley (2002), and Sokoloff and Dupont (2005) discussed in their domestic violence literature reviews, one cannot ignore the interaction of race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and culture when studying the topic of violence within marginalized populations. They mention giving an opportunity to have women of color voice their experiences with violence as a way to bring light to their struggles and highlight the ways in which they resist the abuse. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to give Latina adolescents who have witnessed domestic violence an opportunity to

share how they make meaning of the violence and how that meaning influences the choices they make within dating relationships.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Participants

The participants originally included nine adolescent females of Latino background who were between the ages of 15-20 years old and have had a dating relationship of at least one-month duration within the past 12 months. One participant, a 20 year old young Dominican mother from the domestic violence residential program, was excluded from the final analysis as she neither experienced domestic violence in any of her dating relationships nor did she have a history of witnessing domestic violence or high parental conflict in her family. The remaining participants were included because they either had a history of witnessing various forms of domestic violence among family members and/or experienced dating violence. The final group consisted of eight young women between the ages of 15-20. All participants were of Latino heritage. This entire sample was recruited from three programs within a domestic violence organization, Casa Myrna Vazquez.

The focus group participants consisted of program staff was recruited from the Adolescent Transitional Living Program (ATLP), a residential program of Casa Myrna Vazquez for adolescent and young adult mothers who were survivors of intimate partner violence. Ten staff people participated in the focus group discussion. The focus group met once for this discussion.

Setting

Casa Myrna Vazquez, Inc., a domestic violence agency for women and their children in Boston, was where all participants were recruited for this study. The families served by the agency come from a wide range of racial and ethnic backgrounds, and are from all over Massachusetts and from a variety of other states. This agency offers residential, legal, and community services to women and children who are experiencing domestic violence. Their residential program contains three shelters: an emergency, 90 day shelter with occupancy for up to eight families; a transitional, 12+ month shelter with occupancy for up to seven families; and an adolescent mothers program (Adolescent Transitional Living Program [ATLP]), that can accommodate up to eight adolescent mothers between the ages of 16-21 and their children. That residential program allows for a 12-month stay with the “clock” starting after the teen turns 18 years old, if residents arrived before the age of 18. Within each shelter, multiple support services are offered to the women and their children including child care, assistance in enrolling in educational and job training programs, assistance in locating permanent housing, legal representation, and individual and group counseling. Participation in certain program services, such as group counseling and assistance in housing placement is required participation of all residents. Other program requirements are that the women must not allow the abuser, his family or even her family know the exact location of the shelters for safety reasons. They are also presented with guidelines for living in the residents including engaging in community cleaning chores and abiding by set curfews. Again, this is to maintain a level of safety in the home. Each program is managed by a Program Coordinator. Other staff

people include Guest Advocate, Family Services Advocate (in charge of children's services), and Relief Advocate (staff person available to work a variety of shifts as needed). At ATLP, there is an additional position of Transitional Family Advocate who helps the young women successfully transition to independent living or other settings when they leave the program.

For women who are not ready or able to leave their abusive relationship, they are offered important supportive services including individual and group counseling, and legal advice. Other programs offered by Casa Myrna Vazquez include the 24 hour statewide domestic violence hotline and a dating violence peer outreach-mentoring program for high school students.

As the researcher of this study, I worked as a practicum student then a mental health clinician for three years offering counseling services to both community and residential clients at Casa Myrna Vazquez. The inspiration for this study came from my experiences facilitating a teen mothers' domestic violence group at Casa Myrna Vazquez for which I co-developed a 20 session curriculum. Many of the young women's stories and ideas about relationships helped shape that curriculum, and provided the motivation to continue exploring the impact of culture and gender socialization on views about dating relationships. Returning to this organization as a researcher instead of a clinician enhanced my professional development as I merged both my clinical experiences and research interests. Additionally, my identity as a Latina women informed my work with these young women as both clinician and researcher. In this study, I aimed to take the role as "psychologist as witness" (Espin, 1997). Espin further elaborates on this role by

stating, "...when silence is given voice, it becomes real; when life is witnessed, it becomes presence" (p. 14). In this research, I took on the role of observer, but also became a participant through my identity as a Latina woman. These experiences were deeply influential in this research, but may also serve to bias my interpretation of the data.

Instrumentation

Individual interview demographic questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire contained questions pertaining to the participant's age, primary caregivers while under 18, ethnic background, and length of most recent dating relationship (see Appendix A). This information was collected in order to obtain demographic data and to assess if a young woman qualified for the study.

Open-ended individual interview

The open-ended interview served as the major focus of data collection (see Appendix B). The aim of the interview was to address the main research questions: 1) How do young Latina women who have witnessed violence between their parental figures define feminine and masculine gender roles (marianismo vs. machismo)?; 2) How do girls, who have grown up witnessing violence, view gender roles within a dating relationship?; and 3) What beliefs do these young women have on the use of violence (verbal, physical, sexual) in dating relationships? The interview covered the themes of gender role expectations within various social contexts: home, school, neighborhood and social class; gender role expectations within a dating relationship; and views about the use of psychological, sexual, and physical abuse within a dating relationship. The

interview initially asked if the participants have witnessed domestic violence between adult caregivers. As stated in chapter one of this study, domestic violence is defined as the following: physical and sexual violence, emotional abuse, intimidation, isolation, cohesion and threats, blaming victim for the abuse, unconditional financial control, and other acts of control that infringe or violate the rights of the partner. The remaining interview took the form of a conversation via open-ended questions that covered the themes of gender role beliefs, dating experiences, and views about dating violence. The interview and consent process took about 1 ½ hours per participant. All interviews were recorded on audiotape and transcribed by either the researcher or a professional transcription service.

Focus group demographic survey

The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix C) contained questions pertaining to the participant's age, length of time worked at Casa Myrna Vazquez, position worked at CMV, ethnic background, and educational level. This survey provided important contextual information about each staff member.

Focus group open ended interview

The open-ended interview was the major focus of data collection and analysis (see Appendix D). In examining the research questions, the following themes were discussed via open ended questions: teen dating violence (risk factors, how it starts); gender role beliefs within a sociocultural context; experiences of working with the young women; and personal influences that led them to choose to work with young mothers who are

survivors of intimate partner violence. The interview and informed consent process took about 1 ½ hours.

Procedure

Since the focus of the study was on Latina young women, gender role beliefs, and witnessing domestic violence, the study took a purposeful sampling approach that aimed to include young women who have witnessed domestic violence. At the data collection site, the participants were recruited by the researcher with assistance from staff. Participants who qualified had been in a dating relationship of at least one-month duration in the past 12 months. Similar studies on dating violence have limited participants to those who have dated since they are able to reflect on actual experiences in their reporting versus what they would do in theory with a partner (Kennedy, 2005; O'Keefe, 1998). Conflicting results were found when dating and non-dating teens were not differentiated from each other and included as one group in the data analysis (Lichter & McCloskey, 2004). This study also included participants from ages 18-20 since the research on adolescent mothers also includes young women up to age 20 (Leaman, & Gee, 2008; Kennedy, 2005; Rosen, 2004). ATLP offers services to young women up until 21 thus the decision was made to extend the age to 20 to mirror the age groups represented in the literature.

Since a couple of the participants were minors, consent was obtained from the parents for participation in the study. Assent was also obtained from the participants to assure that they understood and agreed to the study. Those over 18 years old had legal standing to consent for the research and consent was obtained directly from them. The

consent and assent described the nature of the study, the risks and benefits, and the researcher's role as a mandated reporter if there was child abuse reported in the survey or interview process. If a concern arose during the interview or survey process, the researcher offered to work in collaboration with the staff at each site to insure the proper steps were taken and the family was referred to the appropriate services. Additionally, confidentiality was explained in that no names would be attached to any of the information provided to the interviewer. In an effort to conserve anonymity, pseudonyms were used throughout the transcription process of the taped interviews. Since the families and the young women were likely to speak both Spanish and English, the parental and individual consent forms were also provided in Spanish and English.

In order to become familiar with the settings, and for the participants and staff to get a sense of my intentions as the researcher, I spent some time at the site before beginning the data collection phase. For the Casa Myrna site, I sought guidance from the staff to interact with the adolescents in the shelters abided by the agency's guidelines regarding client confidentiality. A regulation in this agency is that only current employees are allowed to visit shelters. This is to insure the safety of the families by preserving the confidentiality of the residential programs. Thus the researcher obtained authorization to collect the data from the Executive Director and Director of Residential Services. In qualitative data collection, becoming familiar with the setting is recommended. Becoming familiar with the setting allows participants to become comfortable with your presence, which would further enhance their willingness to engage in the interviewing process (Marshall & Rossman, 1989).

Data Analysis Strategy

Qualitative or mixed methods studies that have described the topic of adolescent exposure to violence, gender role socialization, and intimate partner violence have used detailed qualitative data analysis strategies that have examined themes embedded in the stories told by the participants (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Kennedy, 2005; Rosen, 2004). For this study, thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from the interviews. Arson (1994) provides an overview of the steps in thematic analysis. First, the conversations are transcribed and overarching patterns identified from the narratives. From those patterns, the entire data is classified in relation to the patterns. Then related patterns are broken down into sub-themes. After this process the literature is used to validate the patterns, themes, and categories.

The thematic analysis approach primarily used in this study has been outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). They describe six stages in thematic analysis. Due to the detailed nature of this approach, these were the guidelines used in the analysis of the study's data. The stages are described as follows: Phase 1- Familiarizing yourself with the data; Phase 2-Generating initial codes; Phase 3-Searching for themes; Phase 4- Reviewing themes; Phase 5-Defining and naming themes; and Phase 6-Producing the report.

Phase 1 recommends becoming familiar with the data through carefully reading through the transcripts. For this study, half of the audio recordings were sent out for transcription by a professional transcription company and the other half were transcribed by the researcher. Despite that, all audio recordings were listened to and compared to the

transcription in cases where the researcher did not transcribe herself. If needed, a transcription was corrected, e.g., where there were inconsistencies. Initial impressions of the data were recorded. Notes taken during the interviews were also reviewed to become further familiar with the data.

Phase 2 involved initial coding of the transcripts. This part of the analysis also included the use of NVivo 8, a qualitative software program, to organize the coding stages of the data analysis. Each data item was coded into free nodes that led to the creation of tree nodes with parent and corresponding child nodes. Each interview was carefully and thoroughly reviewed during this stage.

In phase 3, the initial tree nodes were searched for emerging themes. If parent nodes appeared similar in their coding categories, they were merged with each other. Likewise if the narratives contained within the parent nodes did not appear consistent with the other narratives within that coding category, they were re-categorized to other nodes.

In phase 4, themes identified were reviewed and compared to the narratives for consistency. At this point, the themes were further refined and some were merged together. Using the NVivo8 program, the tree nodes were sorted by the researcher into several sets or themes. An initial model was also created to help facilitate with the process of refining the themes. This process then led to phase 5, where the sets or themes were defined and all the nodes categorized under each set were reviewed for consistency. A final set of themes and subthemes were created from this phase. Lastly, phase 6 involved the creation of the report with supporting narratives.

It is also recognized that qualitative studies have a process of verification or validity. Creswell (1989) recommends at least two forms of verification in qualitative studies. As stated by Arson (1994), using the literature is a way of verifying the credibility of the selected themes from the data. For this study, the writer has presented a detailed description of the topic in the literature review. Two other options discussed by Creswell that are used in this study were the following: triangulation and peer review. The first process was done by comparing the narratives of the individual interviews and the focus group for consistencies in themes regarding intimate partner violence and gender role beliefs. The second process of verification included a peer review consultation with a graduate student who is familiar with the topic via exposure to the literature and experiences with the targeted population. She provided feedback regarding the themes in relation to the data and offered suggestions for other forms of verification, bringing the data back to the young women and the focus group.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Description of the Sample

The final sample of individual interviews contained a heterogeneous group of young Latina women with diverse life experiences. This section provides a description of the sample obtained through the demographic survey and from the open ended interview questions. Further information about the participants' background obtained through the interview process is presented along with the qualitative findings. As described in the methods section, a richer description of the participants will allow the reader to make decisions about transferability to other similar populations. Information including their pseudonyms, ages, country of origin, Latino ethnicity, number of years in a dating relationship, whether they witnessed domestic violence in their families of origins or not is contained in Appendix E.

The young Latina women who participated in the study and were included in the final analysis had a mean age of 17.8 (± 2) years. Half (50%) of the eight interview participants were young mothers living in a transitional living program for adolescent mothers who were homeless due to domestic violence. Two (25%), were sisters living with their mother in a transitional living program for families affected by domestic violence. The two remaining participants were in an outreach program trained as peer outreach workers to teach other adolescents about dating violence. The Latino ethnicity for this group reflected 50% Puerto Rico, 25% Dominican Republic, and 25% Columbia. Seven of the eight young women (88%) were raised in a household with their biological

mother as their primary maternal caregiver. One participant's mother passed away when she was five years old; she was mostly raised by a paternal aunt for several years before moving to the U.S. to live with her biological father. All of the participants lived in households for some part of their lives with a father figure that was either a biological father (38%), or stepfather (63%). Two of the participants, who were sisters, also reported living for some time with their mother and her abusive boyfriend. In addition to these two sisters' experiences, most of the other participants reported witnessing high parental conflict and/or domestic violence against female caregivers or other relatives. Only one participant reported never witnessing domestic violence or high parental conflict in her household. With respect to their own experience with dating violence, four (50%) reported being abused by a partner; one (12.5%) reported a relationship in which she experienced instances of emotional humiliation, control, and physical aggression; however, she did not identify it as abuse. The remaining three participants did not report experiencing any form of dating violence in their relationships. All of the participants reported at least one dating relationship of 1 month or more within the last 12 months. Three (37.5%) reported having been with one partner for 4 years or more. Out of the participants who were young mothers, two of them co-habitated with their abusive partners before moving into the adolescent domestic violence residential program. Six (75%) of the interviews were conducted in English and two (25%) were conducted in Spanish. The two Spanish language interviews were with young women whose primary language was Spanish.

One focus group was conducted using staff members from Casa Myrna Vazquez' Adolescent Transitional Living Program (ATLP). There were ten women who participated in the focus group of staff persons and all worked at the adolescent mothers' residential program. The participants were diverse in ethnic backgrounds, experiences, and involvement in the program. The average age of the staff was 35 years old (± 12 years). The ethnic backgrounds of the women reflected 30% Haitian, 20% Puerto Rican, 10% African-American, 10% Dominican, 10% Dominican/Puerto Rican, and 10% Cuban/Italian-American. The positions represented in the group were represented relief staff (40%), guest and children's services advocates (40%), family transition advocate (10%) and the program coordinator (10%). Overall, the average years working at Casa Myrna Vazquez, including the adolescent program, was about 4 years although the years varied from as much as 11 years down to 1 year. The staff who participated in the focus group had at least 2 years of college education in the areas of social services. About 70% of the participants either had another job and/or were attending college. 50% of the groups were themselves mothers often times as head of the household. The table in appendix F presents most of the demographic characteristics described about the focus group. Further information about the participants is included in the qualitative findings section.

Qualitative Findings

Initial coding from the eight individual interviews and one focus group interview transcripts resulted in 25 parent tree nodes with 193 child nodes (see Appendix G). From this arose eight main categories or themes about gender role beliefs and dating

relationships of young Latina women: family relationships, making sense of witnessing domestic violence, adolescent dating experiences, multiple influences on gender role beliefs and sense of self, coping with abuse, risks of dating violence, staff's own views of their role in the young women's lives, and sources of interventions. As the text files were coded and categorized into the initial themes, a pattern started to emerge reflecting the young women's challenging experiences of navigating multiple identities within their families and dating relationships. Further analysis led to the development of an overarching construct of young Latina women as negotiators of their gender role identities within their families and in their dating relationships as seen by the following five main concepts with 15 corresponding subthemes (Appendix H). The five main themes are the following: conflicting feelings about dating relationships and gender roles, family relationships and views of self transitioning to adulthood, strategies to cope and begin healing from abuse, negotiating culture and family notions of femininity and masculinity, and staff as witnesses and facilitators to healing and self-discovery. It was found that the staff's own experiences as women of color also related to the young women's experiences with negotiating cultural and family gender role beliefs. Their responses are at times integrated in this section with the young women's responses further supporting the experiences of the young women.

Conflicting feelings about dating relationships and gender roles

The young women described instances in which they had positive views of dating relationships and at the same time held strong negative views of past and potential partners, specifically males. Among the young mothers, this conflict was particularly

strong as they struggled with negative experiences of the past relationships and messages received by family about female- male intimate relationships against more optimistic views for the future relationships. Four subthemes were identified as the following: men are dangerous and controlling, men as protectors and providers, desire to be free from intimate relationships (“I don’t need a man”), and desire to be cared for, loved and respected. Since this overarching theme is illustrating conflicting thoughts about dating relationships and gender roles, the subthemes is presented in contrast to each other to further emphasize the conflict the young women were experiencing. Furthermore, views from staff will be presented to support the young women’s experiences.

Men as dangerous and controlling vs. men as protectors and providers

Amanda, an 18 year old Puerto Rican mother of a 1 year old girl and 2 year old boy, stated her views on relationships, “I always felt like guys always yell at girls. You're not supposed to yell at girls. Like boys are not supposed to yell at girls.” In one of her recent relationships with a male, she expressed falling “in love” with him as he fulfilled her expectations of being a protector and provider:

One day I was crying and stuff because my kid didn’t have one pamper. And their father’s friend wasn't picking the phone, to get in contact with his (child’s) father. I didn’t have no money. I was stressed out. And...he (new boyfriend) came down here, to bring me \$80. He said, “Take it all.” I said, “No.” He said, “...I go out of my way to do stuff like this. And I went out of my way. And I want to take it.” And I said like, “All right” and I took it.

At the same time she expressed deep mistrust of males, especially as she made reference to her mother's childhood sexual abuse experience and quickly connected her mother's trauma experience with the traumatic experiences she had with her own abusive partner, the father of her children:

...but when I found out, that really hit me, I'm like yeah, I can't be messing with dudes....A guy out there hurt ...my mother. And it wasn't just that this guy was older than her, (it's that) her own mother didn't want to believe her. And that really set it off...that's serious. And that's how I think of my kids' father.

She continues to express feeling weary of males in their intent to hurt her. Although feeling weary of males, it appears that the most recent brief relationship with a young man provided some hope that her dreams of "being treated like a princess" could become a reality.

Sofia, an 18 year old Puerto Rican mother of a 13 month old son, did not appear to have generalized feelings of mistrust towards males despite experiencing intimate partner violence and witnessing her mother being abused by a stepfather who also killed her. She made very distinct statements in her experiences of intimate partner violence, "Él como se trato de aprovechar de mi, como que 'la tengo en mis manos' (*He tried to take advantage of me, like 'I have her in my hands'*) and "Él me tenía como un control remoto. Ahora aprende o apaga..." (*He had me like a remote control. Now turn on or turn off...*). Yet she also cited positive relationships with male family members, namely her brothers and biological father, who were positive allies and protectors throughout her

life. She also reported having positive dating relationships before the relationship with her son's father, a young man seven years older than her when they started their relationship about four years ago. Despite her abuse experience, several months after leaving her abusive relationship she developed a new relationship with a young man she met via a phone chat line in which she describes the relationship in this way "Yo digo que por ahora él está bien pendiente a mí,...nunca me falta el respeto. Nunca me alza la voz. Nunca ha peleado a así." (*I say that for now he is very attentive to me...never disrespectful towards me. Never raises his voice. He has never fought with me*). In describing her ideal partner, she emphasized the importance of respect for one another and "...los pantalones, como uno dice, los pantalones en su sitio como un hombre" (*The pants, like one says, keep the pants in their place like a man*) or self-confidence in his masculinity. She went on to explain that "tu tienes que pararte firme, y estar allí firme. Tener sus pantalones en su sitio es ser un hombre, hombre, hombre (*You have to stand firm, and be there firm. Have your pants in their place is being a man, man, man*)." For her, a man was both someone who treated others with respect but also has the confidence to assert himself. Although she used the word "celoso [*jealous*]" to describe her interactions with them, it appeared that her male family members' *jealousy* was consistent with the Latino cultural view that a male's role is to be protective of his family. In this case, her brothers and father were immediately stood in to support Sofia when she asked for help and even while living in the shelter her brothers continue to support her decision. Her view of the male as secure, respectful and protector appears to be more of a result of her positive experiences with her male family members, who

advised and guided her during the abusive relationship with her partner. Her experiences with the abusive partner appeared to be contrary to her general gender role beliefs about males, as he was a drug addicted person who appeared out of control and overly dependent on his family.

“I don’t need a man” vs. desire to be nurtured, loved and respected

There appeared to be a conflict between a desire to be in a loving relationship and ambivalence about engaging in dating relationships. There were differences in attitudes about dating relationships between the young mothers and non-mothers. The young mothers experienced much longer dating relationships with a few even living with their partners. Amanda, the 18 year old mother, who was weary of males and stated, “I can’t mess with them” also held romantic views of male-female relationships as illustrated by her statements, “I always felt like a girl always have to be treated like... a princess” and “The boys asks her on a date. Really casual you know like remember how old people used to grow up...More romantic, yeah”. Amanda also had a strong desire to be nurtured and loved in an intimate relationship. The young man who she had a brief relationship with after left her abusive boyfriend fulfilled her notions of being attended to, and cared for as seen by her statement, “ He would come and pick me up from school and then drop me off at [train station] and then go back home, every single day. And nobody never did that for me. He did that for me...”

On the other hand, in her new relationship with her current girlfriend, her role in the relationship shifted from being cared for to the one who is being asked to show her

caring emotions. She also expressed feeling much more in comfortable in a relationship that offered both equity and a sense of control:

It's like equal but mostly I'm more in like in demand. And I'm not; sometimes I want her to be in demand. You know, what she wants to do, but she's not like that. She's more soft than me. In the relationship, if you look at it she's like the male in the relationship because she dresses like a boy. Yeah..I'm more tough. Like she says I'm cold hearted, like I don't care about nobody but myself... It's really hard to me to be like, 'oh you're crying, oh'. Like it's not hard for me to just hug you, it's really hard for me to care about certain things. Like she wants me to care like if her ex-girlfriend calls, I'm supposed to get mad. I don't care if she calls, she calls. She really wants me to like, I guess to her that's me her showing that I care. I do care, but I just don't care.

Amanda's shift in her role within relationships depends on the gender of her partner illustrated differences in expectations in herself and her partner. With a girl, Amanda felt more at liberty to express her feelings and be empowered, with a boy she felt a need to accept unwanted behaviors thus needing to "stick with it." She continues with "I still talk to them [boys] to see if anything will work out, but in the end nothing works out and they get on my nerves, even when I'm with them, they get on my nerves, but I still stick with them. We argue but I still stick with it..." This "stick with it" sentiment was expressed by the other young mothers in their relationships with their male partners despite feeling that the relationship was becoming highly conflictual or even abusive. Maria, a 20 year old Dominican-American mother of 1 month and 12 months

old daughters, also illustrated this conflict between being in love and feeling the need to commit to the relationship even in the face of abuse in addition to having no other options, “I was kind of scared of him. I did everything he said. At one, he knew I had nowhere to go, and two, I loved him. He was my first love.” In this instance, the combination of Maria’s feelings for love and the lack of other options resulted in remaining in the relationship. Maria stayed in her relationship due to love and remained loyal when things became difficult. At the same time, she stated that she has little desire to be in a future relationship if it will restrict her independence, “I don’t need man. I’m fine, I don’t need a relationship. Somebody I can get along with that won’t tell me what to do, but other than that...”

Among the young women who were not mothers, their dating relationships were not as deeply involved as the young mothers. Even if the relationship lasted more than a year, the adolescents reported no sexual activity in the relationship and contact with the boyfriend was mostly limited to time spent in school or extracurricular activities. They did not express the same level of internal conflict as the young mothers. These young women mostly expressed some weariness about dating relationships and strong preferences for relationships where there was equity with limited experience with relationships that were not. When asked about their opinions about gender roles and dating, they came from multiple sources including personal experiences, observations of peer relationships and messages received from family. Bianca, a 15 year old Puerto Rican girl, described a recent dating relationship with a boy, “We had like a lot of trust in each other...Joe’s the kind of boy that....His parents raised him right.” She expressed

feeling respected as an equal by her boyfriend and these expectations were also heard in her views of marital relationships where she expects her male partner to be flexible in his role within the family:

Someone who wouldn't just want to lie around the house while I do everything, while I work and take care... basically someone who wouldn't just be home knowing that the kids are home and wouldn't like fix them breakfast, lunch, dinner, stuff like that. Like someone who can like be independent upon himself and like kids, like to be able to watch them when I'm at work and I watch them when he's at work. Like little rotating cycles... Equal in respect, equal in like just being there for each other.

Younger than the other participants in the study, Bianca held clear expectations of her role and the role of her partner in an intimate relationship despite witnessing her mother struggle with her own intimate relationships and observing her peers in conflictual dating relationships.

The other participants also shared accounts of witnessing high conflict or abusive situations among peer dating relationships. Participants shared stories of friends who were raped and beaten by partners. Others told of instances when they witnessed friends gradually make adjustments to themselves in order to acquiesce to their boyfriend's wishes and hold on to the relationship. Lola, an 18 year old Dominican-American, described how she tried to intervene with a friend:

I was telling her that he has no say on what you're wearing because that's your choice, he has nothing... he has no input in that. But girls don't really think that way. They're like, 'But I'm with him, and I'm going to be walking around with him, and we're together. He kind of owns me,' even if they don't say that... but you know.

Lola appeared to understand that her female peers were willing to accept demands from their boyfriends in order to "stick with it" and keep the relationship. Here the boyfriend takes a more controlling role of the relationship with his needs being seen as primary. This is in clear contrast to Bianca's expectations of equity in dating relationships.

Staff also reported that the girls often expressed attitudes that they did not need to be supported by a male partner, but at the same time expressed fears of being alone. Sometimes staff felt astonished at how quickly these young women, with histories of family trauma and intimate partner violence, moved on to new relationships. This was seen as too quick with little time to reflect on their recent experiences of abuse. The staff felt this lead to confusion about who to trust and how to engage in healthy relationships as said by Madeline, a relief staff and licensed clinical social worker, "But I mean I think, with the girls here you have to kind of give them kind of both of that (of relationships where person is being helpful vs. controlling). Because they don't, they have an obscure image of relationships, they don't understand healthy relationships." It appears that "the girls" own conflicting views about male-female gender role expectations within intimate relationships was influenced by their experiences in their families of origin.

Family relationships and views of self transitioning into adulthood

Living in a home with domestic violence and high parental conflict, family members take on various roles that affect the young women's beliefs about self and others. In this section, three subthemes are presented as the following: experiences of witnessing domestic violence or high parental conflict, mother as advisor, ally, and role model, and father as provider and aggressor. The subthemes reflect how the young women's views of their parents' gender roles also influence their view of themselves. Finally, the focus group of staff women provides insight as observers into the role of the family on the young women's views of themselves.

Experiences of witnessing domestic violence

Among the eight participants, four reported witnessing among their parental figures male to female intimate partner abuse ranging which included physical and psychological abuse such as in the case of Isabel, an 18 year old Columbian-American:

Yeah, my dad, when I was young, he used to I guess threaten my mom especially because...she didn't have her residence card but she had, she had a permission or something to be here and he'd be 'Oh we'll get separated, you won't be here, blah, blah, blah. You owe everything to me. If you didn't marry me, you'd be with one ugly man, like in Columbia still.' He's like... 'he's [I'm] the best you can do.' He'd say really mean things like that.

Two young women reported witnessing high conflict among their parental figures, but did not label it as abuse of either parent. High conflict included constant yelling (e.g., insults, threats to call the police), and/ or throwing objects during arguments. Both of

these participants, Amanda and Lola, were queried to assess their views on the power dynamics during those arguments between their mothers and father figures (stepfather, biological father). Both denied that either parent was imposing control on the other as stated by Lola:

It was always one of them that started it. And it wasn't like someone was taking control of the other person, it was just that they were dysfunctional; they were just both abusive towards each other. It wasn't like one person was more powerful, like... I don't know how to explain it.

Only one participant, 18 year old Natalia and mother of an 8 month old son, reported never witnessing parental domestic violence or high conflict. Natalia, who emigrated from Colombia, described the way her parents resolved interpersonal conflicts as the following, “Ellos dos discutían y no se hablan y después cuando se contentaban mi papa llegaba abrazado a mi mama y se le quitaba” (*They argued and they did not talk to each other and later when they felt better my father came back with a hug for my mother and it went away*). The way her parents' resolved conflicts was through talking it out, giving each other space if emotions became intense, and then making amends.

Father as provider and aggressor

A few of the young women who witnessed mothers in conflict with partners expressed strong views against male to female violence and, if needed, they stood up to their mother's partners to stop the abuse. At times, these partners were also the biological fathers of these young women. The interactions they witnessed informed their

views of their father, fatherhood, and males roles in the family. Adriana, who witnessed her mother abused by a live-in boyfriend, viewed her mother's boyfriend as out of control and flawed in his role as father and partner, "because if it wasn't for my mother you would be dead right now... none of his kids like him." On the other hand, Adriana spoke highly of her stepfather who was not abusive of her mother, "...I've never heard of them fighting. They'll have little conversations, but it never gets into an argument. My mom and daddy never argued...My dad's not dangerous at all. He wouldn't kill a fly."

Isabel, daughter of Columbian immigrants, also used her experiences of witnessing domestic violence to make sense of male gender roles in the family. During her early childhood, Isabel witnessed her father use physical violence and emotional control against the mother. Despite the father's efforts to exert control on his family, Isabel expressed seeing him as a man who lacked control and was immature:

...he does things like that so it's like...it's not like an adult, like when you get mad you talk about it and he shows his emotions through and he just does that and when he's mad, he crosses his arms. Yeah so he's very much like a kid. Even when I'm with him sometimes I'm so embarrassed, especially when I drive with him.

At the same time, she valued him as a hard worker in his employment experiences as a janitor. She expressed positive attitudes about his role as provider. Even with these positive views, her experiences in witnessing her father abuse her mother had a deep impact on her views of relationships in that she views herself as someone vigilant for "control issues" in dating relationships. In order to avert a potential control situation and

prevent being in a relationship like her mother and father, Isabel stated that she was quick to take the initiative in the relationship and selecting partners with whom she felt empowered in order to prevent being in a disempowered position like her mother.

Mother as advisor, ally and role model

Whether the young women identified it as intimate partner abuse or high interparental conflict, they expressed the impact it had on their views about family relationships and themselves as they transitioned into young adulthood. For those that had this experience, almost all reported explicitly supporting the female caregiver in the conflict. For those whose mothers were involved in the conflict, they openly defended their mothers. As in the case of Adriana when her mother was being abused by a boyfriend:

And then my mom was being nice and considerate, but she moved him here, and then he became a jerk, and then I was always telling him that you should really consider how you treat my mom..... And he used to get mad.

Amanda, whose mother and stepfather regularly engaged in fights that included yelling and throwing things especially when they were intoxicated, also stated:

I used to get so serious like, 'Don't yell at mom, don't yell at my mom!' And all the time he'd be like, 'Why you say that, that's all you say.' That's all I'd I keep repeating and repeating like 'Don't yell at my mom, you're not going to yell at her.' You're not supposed to yell at a female.

In both cases, the young women developed strong views against the use of male to female physical violence or verbal threats. “It’s never okay at all. Not even if it’s your father . . .” was representative of the sentiment expressed by the young women. This message was also consistent with the other young women who witnessed intimate partner violence among other family members or their peers.

As with all of the young women in this project, Isabel strongly identified with her mother and other females in her family. In seeing her mother cope with the father’s abuse and alcoholism, Isabel expressed admiration for her:

She would push back too but I think like my father is more aggressive than my mother. But my mom, I only see her cry when she fights but I hardly ever see her fight. She’s like, she like has this strong personality. To see her, she’s like she’s 4’9”.

Throughout her interview, Isabel used these same words to describe herself now and as she moves on into adulthood. In general, viewing the mother as strong and independent was reflected in the young women’s current view of herself and in her aspirations of her self in the future. Isabel’s mother expressed the expectation that her daughter needed to attain high academic achievement and expressed great pride in her daughter’s recent achievement, for example, her acceptance to an Ivy League college. Isabel strongly identifies with being academically oriented, “Because I’ve always gotten praise for my grades and I think it builds part of who I am, in my family at least. I feel like everyone has a certain role and I feel my role always was to get good grades.”

The closeness between mother and daughter appeared to also offer a protection to the witnessing of domestic violence as illustrated by Isabel's strong positive sentiments for her mother. This was consistent with others who felt their relationship with their mother was a source of support and nurturance. Even when they found themselves in an abusive, intimate partner relationship, as seen with the young mothers of this group, if they viewed their mother as a source of strength they expressed more positive views about their own future. Natalia, a Columbian immigrant, witnessed her mother make the tough decision of moving to the United States alone with her two daughters shortly after her husband and brother were killed by local rebel militia. Natalia described her mother's resilience after the attack, "A ella le toco todo sola con nosotros y aprendí ser muy independiente por ella. Porque nunca hemos necesitado de un hombre para salir adelante (*She was left to do everything alone with us and I learned to be very independent because of her. Because we never needed a man to move forward*)." Despite her dating abuse experience, Natalia felt strongly that she could move forward and attain the goals she set for herself as seen by her efforts to complete her high school education by attending day and evening classes. Young women like Natalia and Isabel found positive role models in their maternal figures that shaped their views as resilient women.

On the other hand, some of the young women reported experiencing high conflict with their mothers, thus expressing some ambiguity about their family relationships and about themselves. Amanda, an 18 year old Puerto Rican mother, expressed feeling somewhat emotionally neglected by her mother, "Well, me and mom would just yell all the time. If I wanted to talk to her, I'd doubt that she would really want to talk to me or

pay attention. Hardly pay attention.” At the same time, she described quickly coming to her defense if the mother was engaged in an argument with the stepfather. Despite feeling neglected in the relationship, she viewed her mother as “strong” in the ways she has handled adversity, “cool” in the way she accepted her preference for dating girls, and often took her mother’s advice regarding balancing education and motherhood. Although if she needs someone to confide in, she usually seeks the emotional support of her stepfather. These mixed emotions about her mother have given this young woman both positive aspirations about her future and a sense of feeling unsupported. Maria, a 20 year old Dominican-American mother, also stated that her relationship with her mother influenced her views about her self. She strongly endorsed views of female strength and independence but as more of a rebellious contradiction to her mother-daughter relationship. In reference to her family relationship, she often stated that, “No one paid attention to me” and “I didn’t pay any attention to them.” Additionally, she even felt that her mother did not love her because of what Maria may have reminded her of, “Because my real father tried to kill her...So that’s why, I never really put mind to her because I always knew she never really loved us like she was with those two (stepsiblings)” She listed the many perceived negative messages her mother told her regarding female roles in the family and relationships. When asked about her future, she stated that, “It’s not that I know what to do, I know what not to do. Everything my mom did to me I’m not doing to them. Which is everything good (because), my mom did everything negative.”

As mentioned in an earlier section, Maria voiced one of her reasons for staying with her abusive partner as having no social supports outside of the relationship. This

lack of support, not only from her mother but also from her family as a whole, appeared to make her vulnerable to the abusive relationship and to feeling uncertain about her future. Staff cited how the lack of support and experiences of childhood abuse from the family can place teens at greater risk of falling into abusive relationships. Michelle, a 25 year old Cuban-Italian Family Transition Advocate and social work graduate student, elaborated on this risk factor:

I think that's especially true here because a lot of the girls that we see have traumatic family history. So it's almost like the guy is the next step to get them away from the family. We've seen that a lot.... It's like this is the only person that's going to love them. That's going to take care of them, and like save them from a situation that was already bad a lot of the times. And also like other aggressive violence, they become isolated, they don't have support.

Lack of support from family can lead young Latina women to remain in unhealthy and dangerous relationships. In the case of Maria, feelings of emotional detachment and neglect by her family limited her ability to safely leave her abusive relationship. As presented in a later section, Maria needed to seek support from outside her family to help her end the relationship.

Negotiating culture and family notions of femininity and masculinity

When asked about messages from their families regarding gender roles, the young woman described conflicting messages between things that their family explicitly stated versus what they observed their family members implicitly convey through their actions. All of these messages were also embedded within the context of the Latino cultural

expectations of female and male gender roles. The young women made attempts to integrate the messages heard and messages observed, in order to arrive at gender role beliefs that they endorsed for their own lives. In this section, three subthemes will be presented which include: explicit versus implicit messages about gender roles, different expectations for daughters and sons, and family messages reflecting onto gender role expectations in dating relationships.

Explicit versus implicit messages about gender role beliefs

Explicit messages about being a woman were communicated by several family members including fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, aunts and uncles. Several of the young women shared that their families expected them to have a feminine and modest appearance. Adriana who identified as a “tomboy” shared that her mother advised her about her style of dress, “She’s like, ‘Adriana, there’s places that you need to do stuff like that and there’s places you don’t. Sometimes you need to be a girly girl.’” Thus Adriana has incorporated the gender role belief that she should sometimes be a “girly girl” and “classy girl” in order to fit in with the cultural and family expectations of femininity. On the same note, modesty is also a trait that is valued by Adriana and she points out that her sister Bianca, fellow study participant, dressed in more form fitting clothes that challenged the notion of modesty and she shared how her mother was also addressing that, “My sister, Bianca, gets like ... if my mom takes a shirt from Bianca, she’s like, ‘What happened to my shirt?’ She always throws Bianca’s clothes in the garbage.” Adriana placed high value in modesty as she criticized other Latina teens who, in her opinion, dressed provocatively, “There was a whole bunch of little Puerto Rican girls

yesterday walking down the street with just Daisy Dukes on, and sports bras... What they do walking outside with thongs and bras...? Horrible!”

Families also transmitted cultural attitudes about womanhood and their sexuality. Lola felt conflicted as she struggled with her family’s fearful, negative expectations that she would become pregnant before graduating high school:

It’s so bad because a lot of girls in my family have become pregnant in the past year and ...it’s so sad because you know, you don't want people in your family to fall, and things like that. And now, like everybody’s expects me and my sister to do the same thing, like they’re waiting for us to fall now and my mom gets like mad at them, but then, she turns around and tells us, like, ‘You’re not going to do that, right?’ And it’s like, ‘Do you know who we are? We would never do that.’ And so it’s hard, like living with that stereotype because it’s real...

Hearing her mother’s fears that she and her twin sister will become pregnant also communicates another message: women have limited sexual control within intimate relationships. This is partly due to a lack of knowledge about their bodies and sexuality. Although her family feared that she might get pregnant, her family did not talk about sex or give her the explicit message of abstinence. In her resentment about the expectations her family has for her, Lola turns to her religion for direct guidance about sexuality and has based her values on those teachings: “... they talk to them a lot about like what is love and like sex is not love, and things like that. So those are the messages I get in church like, what is love for and stuff like that. That helps me a lot...No sex before

marriage.” Lola felt that the more explicit message the Catholic Church teaches has been helpful in guiding her decisions about sex and relationships.

Other young women heard more direct messages about sex such as keeping safe from males who may prey on them. Sofia often heard from her maternal figure, the paternal aunt who raised her from ages 5-12 after her mother died, the importance of a woman knowing how to fend off unwanted sexual advances or not to let men take advantage of her, “Ella que nos decía a nosotras era ‘Cuídense que hay hombres malos en la calle’ (*What she told us was ‘Take care of yourselves there are bad men in the street’*)”. Here, the girl is told that men are dangerous and they need to protect their virginity against males, who are out to take it. Although Sofia’s aunt also shared more information about sex and birth control with her and her female cousins, the other young women reported that no one in their family spoke to them about sex or other were simply told that boys will try to manipulate them to have sex, “Don’t listen to boys, boys are liars.” Culturally, not sharing information about sexuality was aimed at preserving the sexual inexperience and virginity of the girl, but at the same time perpetuated the fears that pregnancy could occur outside of the girl’s control of the fear that she may be vulnerable to a male’s sexual advances. Maria points to the lack of communication about sex and relationships in her family leading to her current situation, “If at least she would have at least communicated with us a more maybe I would not have kids right now or I would not have left my house so young and done things that I wasn’t supposed to be doing.” In trying to protect her by not talking about sex, it appeared that the lack of communication made her vulnerable to her current situation, young motherhood.

The young women also heard messages the family stated about a woman's role within the family and in relationships. A consistent message was that it was hard work being a Latina mother and wife as she needs to be a caretaker and attend to everyone's needs above their own. Maria remembered that her mother tried to mold her daughters to tend to the home, "she was trying to make us stay at home. Cook for her husband. Tend to her husband...She was trying to mold us into a good woman who stays at home and stuff like that. But I wasn't having it." Lola heard this message clear when her mother told her, "Well, you have to learn how to cook for your husband..." In fact, both expressed resentment at their mother's insistence about learning to be caretakers as they witnessed their mothers stretching themselves thin, but not appearing to receive any recognition for their effort. Lola stated how, "My mother is like she has to do it all. She can't let somebody else do something, because it's not right. She has to do it because she knows how to do it right. So that's what I see in like being a mother." Along with being the nurturer and caretaker, Maria was also told that it would be in her best interest as a woman to find a husband who could provide security, "She was talking that it was a good idea to marry a man twice as old as us with money." Isabel also heard the same message from an aunt, "Recently the older I got my Auntie's like, 'Oh yeah find a rich boyfriend in college.'" In both cases, the young women received the message that it was important to find a partner who could be an effective provider for their own sense of security. Despite the traditional cultural gender role beliefs, the young women also reported hearing clear messages about being independent and to "not depend on a man" by educating themselves and getting good jobs to support themselves.

Even among the mothers who might have advised their daughters to find a partner who was a good provider, the majority of the mothers both worked outside of the home and took the role of primary caregiver. Thus the advice given and the message conveyed through actions sometimes contradicted each other. In cases where they were told that it was important to find a man who could be a dependable provider, they also witnessed their mothers taking charge of the family. Not only as nurturer, but also as the one who set and enforced the family rules. Isabel, for example, described her mother as “the boss” of the family: “She’s the boss. She’s the one who looks at our grades and if we’re not doing well, she’s the one who makes...she puts us, well not me, but my brother, she puts him in line...” As stated earlier, many of the young women viewed their mothers as strong and independent women who they witnessed coping with and surviving abuse.

Different expectations for daughters and sons

The participants described different messages about gender roles conveyed to their brothers versus themselves. Their brothers, as males, were afforded all the freedoms of an adult male, even if, the brother was younger. Daughters were expected to stay at home and actively help the mother with the household chores. If the brother was given any chores, they were usually only obligated to maintain their rooms, but not the rest of the home. Maria expressed great discontent with the way she and her sisters were more restricted than her younger brother:

And in Spanish, moms they always treat the females different than the boys. The daughters..., their sons have more freedom than their daughters...He was allowed to

go out to the park with his friends. Being younger than us. He was allowed to stay up longer than us. He was allowed to basically do whatever he wanted.

Lola saw the different gender role expectations among the female and male children in the family eventually putting the male children at a disadvantage:

Yes, because, I don't know, he grew up with people telling him, like, "Oh, you're the man," and stuff like that, and "you're supposed to do this; you're supposed to do that. Don't do the dishes because that's the woman's job." And I hate that so much. He can't pick up after himself; he can't do the dishes; he can't wash because he's a man. And, man, it's so ironic because my father does it, too. Well, my father is not living with us and he does his dishes, and he does his laundry now.

And it's like, "Did he learn anything?.... Yes, who's going to do it if not him? It's bad.

By not exposing the brother to flexibility in gender role expectations, she saw that he then became dependent on the women in his life to be the caregiver. Lola felt that, in an attempt to raise the son to be the "man of the house," her mother also unintentionally left in a position of disempowerment with the only way to attempt to feel in control, was to impose control on his girlfriend through insults and put downs.

Family messages reflecting onto gender role expectations in dating relationships

For the young mothers of the study, their partners also expressed particular gender role expectations that dramatically changed when their child was born. Upon learning that she was pregnant, the young mothers reported a shift in gender role expectations from the boyfriends. Where in the relationship they generally felt respected, the

boyfriends became controlling and increasingly jealous, in reaction to stressful changes in the relationship. Sofia described a relationship that began with mutual respect with a boyfriend who waited three years before they had sex. When the relationship became sexual, Sofia began to notice that he was becoming increasingly possessive. Upon learning she was pregnant, they engaged in an argument and he assaulted her. She remained in the relationship and he became ever more controlling eventually forbidding her from going to school and talking to her friends. She described what he expected of her now that she was pregnant:

Me amenazaba con cosas. Me decía que si yo iba a la escuela, que me iba sacar de la escuela por jalones. Cosas así, pero por miedo pues yo decidí quedarme en mi casa. Porque él decía que, 'Tu eres una mujer. Ya tú no eres una chamaquita so quédate en tu casa. Tu eres una mujer de la casa. *(He threatened me with things. He told me that if I went to school he would take me out of school by my hair. Things like that, out of fear I decided to stay at home. Because he told me that you are a woman now. You are no longer a girl so stay in your home. You are now a woman of the house).*

Now mother of his child, the boyfriend's perceptions of her transformed to more traditional and rigid gender roles. The other young mothers also described very similar shifts in the relationship in that the boyfriend expected them to place the boyfriend's needs above theirs and to take the role of the decision maker. Where traditionally the Latino male's role is of protector and provider, including financial and security, the young men, in a moment of distress, took on an extreme version of the male role.

Unfortunately, all of these young fathers struggled greatly in achieving the provider/protector aspect as none of them either could or refused to support their young families. The families of these young men appeared to be influential in fostering the boyfriend's controlling and abusive behaviors. Maria, Sofia, and Natalia in their situations witnessed many of the same abusive behaviors among male members of the partner's family. Cultural views of gender role beliefs appeared influential, but even more influential was the family's attitudes about the controlling behaviors and extreme expression of traditional gender role beliefs. Sofia shared her experiences with her partner's family when she was being abused:

Ellos no hacían nada...la familia siempre decían 'allí que eso es bueno que te de desayuno, almuerzo y cena pa' que aprenda lo que es tratar a un hombre' (*They didn't do anything...the family would always say 'There you go, that's good that he gives it to you for breakfast, lunch and dinner so that you learn how to treat a man.'*)

As much as the young women's gender role beliefs are influenced by their family, their boyfriends also acquired certain gender role beliefs pertaining to the male's role in the relationship. For these young men, it appeared that they learned gender role beliefs that endorsed male dominance through aggression.

Strategies to cope and begin to heal from abuse

Whether they witnessed intimate partner violence or directly experienced it themselves, these young women shared several ways they attempted to cope and survive from the abuse. Some ways included help from family during and after the abusive relationship and others included community resources. Either way, the young women

demonstrated ways they survived and left the abuse. In this section, two subthemes are presented: family supports and community resources.

Family support

Family support encompasses support from within the shared abuse experience (witnessing domestic violence) and support from those outside of the abusive relationship (dating violence). For the teens who witnessed their mothers abused by a partner, all viewed their mothers as strong women who found strategies to survive the abuse. However, not all of the daughters agreed with their mother's decisions regarding the partner they chose, as Adriana tried to advise her mother:

...she just became stupid, because she never let him spend the night at our house or sleep at our house or nothing. But then all of a sudden she move up here, she moves him up here. I'm like, "No, you can't save people... like if they are doing drugs, that's them, that's not you... So you can't worry about no one else." And my mom was just like, "I want to be a friend." So... Sometimes I'm supposed to be mad at my mom... 'Cuz I told her, 'You should have listened to me when he first hit me.' She should have listened to me.

These daughters also took up the role of defending the mother and standing up against the abuser either in overt or covert ways. In the example of sisters Bianca and Adriana, both teen girls took up vastly different approaches in managing and confronting their mother's abusive boyfriend. Adriana proudly boasted about her aggressive style in order to fend off the abuser:

And what makes you think I'm going to be scared of some man when I used to play and fight with my brothers. I used to tell him I'm not scared of him. "I don't want you to be scared of me, cause I know I'll beat you up, so whatever." I wasn't scared of that man, so he really didn't fight with me.

Unfortunately she was assaulted by the abuser several times when she confronted him during arguments with her mother. His assaults did not stop her from fighting back: "I'd stand up to him and I'm like, 'Hit me. I dare you to, because I'm gonna hit you back.' Every time he hit me I hit him back because I'm not scared of him." She strongly identified as a young woman who could handle herself in any situation. Bianca's approach also aimed at distracting the abuser, but in a covert manner. She described her style as "I basically dodged the bullet" or "You had to just let him feel like what he's saying is right and then keep it moving." She never reported being assaulted by the abuser yet felt she had more power in her ability to stop the escalation of the abuse since he did not perceive her as a threat to his authority. Both were vastly different styles of coping within the same family that were aimed at diffusing conflict and stopping the abuse against their mother. These sisters found ways to help each other cope with the abuse. In their situation, the violence escalated to the point that their mother needed to be hospitalized and the sisters were placed in the custody of child protective services until the mother recovered. The girls both shared that the aftermath was as equally frightening and traumatizing as the abuse they endured. For this mother and her daughters, their relationship helped them resist and ultimately survive the abuse.

A couple of the young mothers described that family support helped them escape their abusive relationships. Sofia shared how her brothers drove over 300 miles from one state to another in order to pick her up and help her move away from her abusive boyfriend. Although she cites her father's sudden death and subsequent isolation from other family members as trapping her into the abusive relationship, when she made her final decision to leave, her brothers quickly provided the support she needed to leave the abuse. Helping her find refuge in a domestic violence shelter, they continue to act as a safety barrier from the abuser by keeping her information about her whereabouts confidential.

Community resources

When family support is lacking, the young women spoke of community resources that helped them leave the abuse. Community resources mentioned by the young women include shelter, peers, social and legal services. Maria shared that she endured her abuse in secrecy from her family and eventually found help through a stranger, another adolescent mother, while in a doctor's office, "I went to a doctor's appointment and I met some girl and she was like oh I was in at a shelter, you should go live in shelter." As mentioned previously, Maria grew up feeling uncared for in her family. Not trusting her family as a source of support, she took matters into her own hands and decided when it was the right time for her to leave:

...and then one day I was just like, 'You know what! F**k you!' and then that's when the whole thing started and he said, 'What? Are you talking to me that?!', and I said, 'I don't care about you. You go to hell! Piece of sh*t you treat me like sh*t

now I'm gonna treat you like sh*t!' and then I punched him and then he hit me back and then I called the cops.

Although she presented this approach as setting up her partner to assault her, she described throughout the interview ways her partner isolated, controlled, intimidated and emotionally abused her. Having no social supports to help her and no other safe place to live, she demonstrated resourcefulness enough in planning a way to leave the relationship because she now had a way out of the relationship, a domestic violence shelter.

Women living with intimate partner abuse voluntarily seek assistance through family, friends, or community resources. Another way that victims of domestic violence leave abusive relationships is under the threat of child protective services. Amanda described moving into a domestic violence shelter after child protective services temporarily removed her children from her care. This was after the father of her children attempted to burn her home. Often the possibility of losing the children gives the young mothers a reason to end the relationship:

And I told him like, 'I'm done with you.' And he said, 'Why?' I told you DSS, I'm good with them. And they took them away from me for five months...it felt like my life was taken away from me. Those are my life. Never again, I don't want to talk to you...No relationship, that's what I told him.

For Amanda, although she contemplated ending the relationship, as the abuse escalated, the safety of her children was of primary importance and a motivator in her decision to seek an end to the abuse.

Staff as witnesses and facilitators to healing and self-discovery

The staff women of the adolescent mothers program shared observations that were consistent with the young women's narrative of struggles to survive childhood and intimate partner abuse, and trying to negotiate gender roles within family and dating relationships as women of color. The staff focus group noted several factors that both contribute to young women's risk of intimate partner violence and that help in the healing process. In sharing their observations, they were able to describe the life experiences of other adolescent mothers who were not available during the data collection process. Additionally, the staff women were insightful about their role in the healing process as positive role models who are women of color and women who have shared similar life experiences as the girls. This section reviews the central themes of staff as witnesses and facilitators to healing through three subthemes: advocacy and mentoring, using their own experiences as women of color to inform with work, and rewards and emotional costs of the work.

Advocacy and mentoring

As seen in the description of the program there are many services offered to the families who reside in the shelters of Casa Myrna Vazquez. The staff cited several formal and informal interventions they provide in the program. One informal intervention was the staff's mentoring role with the young women. With many of the young women coming from chaotic home environments where parental supervision, support, safety, and nurturance was limited, the staff-young mother relationship offered an opportunity to experience safe and caring relationships. The focus group participants

made many references to the importance of their role as “positive role models”. Paola, the Program Coordinator, emphasizes how essential this relationship with “the girls”:

I think that we are individually, there is a lot of work is being done in this program, outside of case management. It’s not very openly. We’re also sitting down watching movies with them, we’re cooking with them. That’s when things come out. Even listening to music. We are in different ways making difference you see how sometimes we kind of get a little more closer to some one than to others. It is because they are bonding more and they are seeing that person as a role model. And they don’t need to know their personal lives to see a role model. They see a strong woman who may have kids, who is going to college, who has maybe 3 or 4 jobs...The youth have to see all the different experiences and how you see their role models and how we're able to (interact) with the girls.

Past childhood trauma and negative relationships with their families were seen as major risk factors for intimate partner violence. In the focus group’s view, these early experiences then set the foundation for unhealthy views about relationships. Thus, the focus group felt that their purpose was to introduce, teach, and advise the young women on healthy relationships. Teaching about “healthy relationships” was not limited to dating relationships, but also included relationships with family members, other young woman, their children, and with themselves. Liz, an African American Relief Advocate and youth worker in her 40’s, described how she uses the opportunity of casual conversation and turns it into a teaching moment:

Whenever I see a repeated cycle over and over again, I start doing role playing. Because a lot of times if you role play, they see that....And I'll say well this is what you're doing. I got their whole attention, so they're really stuck on what you're talking about....Even with their daughter up there... make believe I'm your daughter. And, no, you're the daughter, and I'm you. And I start saying stuff. 'No I don't. Yes you do.' I think role playing with the teens is very effective. You know, because like a lot of times they're tired of hearing, but when they start seeing something different, they said, they start looking at that. So I try to do different things, you know. When I seen a current thing like that, [point out] this is you.

Although the young women who come to the shelter generally come from chaotic home environments and conflictual family relationships, the staff made attempts to foster supportive family relationships. If that's not possible, the program worked to establish relationships with community supports. In this way, the staff was encouraging supports outside of the program. The goal is to foster independence and self-reliance in the young women as they prepared to leave the program much in the way a parent would for their child.

The staff described having to balance both fostering a nurturing environment and holding the young mothers accountable for abiding by the program rules. With an emphasis on following the program structure and expectations (i.e., attending groups, completing assigned chores, abiding by the curfew), the staff was far from punitive or negative about the young women. The staff is empathetic to the traumatic experiences of

the young women and often saw these “girls” as driven by the will to survive and to help their families also survive:

To help them. Because now they feel are, like a role model they are kind of strong enough to help them around because they are such a... so now here I am and I'm going to take care of all my siblings because I don't want them to go through the same things. So then I got my apartment so I can bring them.

Thus the learning process appeared to run both ways, as the mentors taught the young women about healthy relationships and the mentors learned about resiliency in the face of great adversity from the young women.

Own experiences as women of color informing their work

As illustrated under the earlier themes, the women working as staff in the program have experienced firsthand, the difficulty of trying to develop a sense of self as a woman of color while negotiating cultural and family values. The staff women of the program also shared many examples of negotiating culture and family messages of gender role beliefs in their own lives. Paola, who witnessed domestic violence as a child, always remembered seeing her mother as an independent self sufficient woman who engaged in activities that were not traditional for a Dominican woman, “My mother was very independent. You know, building houses in Santo Domingo with, you know, kind of like the man telling them what to do where to go, doing a business here and there, completely.” From seeing her mother she learned she also needed to be self-sufficient and be a hard worker. As previously mentioned, her mother did not want Paola to work hard as a woman. In reaction to this Paola stated, “But this is what she create, but tried not to.

This is person that she kind of molded.” Similar to what the young women also expressed, it is challenging to sort out the message that you hear from the one you observe. Madeline, a 28 year old Haitian Relief Advocate and licensed clinical social worker, witnessed her mother struggle with self sufficiency after her father left the family. From that experience, Madeline strongly emphasized the importance of both partners to take equal roles in the relationship based on their own individual strengths and capabilities:

But I feel like it's always a balance. Like for me, there's no male role and there's no female role, when a relationship there's roles. There's things that need to be done, and there's things that don't need to be done...so I think if that balance is with, you kind of have to figure out if something, you know, do you want to be that, you know, typical wife, or that typical person where that cookie cutter person, or you want to be that versatile kind of person where you know this is your niche...So you got to know your strength and your weakness to work on that. So that's the way you have to look at it.

This view also matches that of Bianca in her concept of “little rotating cycles” where couples take turns in taking on different duties in the family as needed. Jackie, a 23 year old Dominican/Puerto Rican-American Family Services Advocate and full time college student, talks about trying to take on different duties in her family and insisting in learning traditional male duties:

And I try to lift up an AC and he was like what's the matter with you? And my mom too. And it's like, hard, because I feel like growing up and being, you know, growing up here is different because I try to be independent...And my mom is like, 'Why are you like that. You're so Americanized. We're family, why are you acting like that?'

After much insistence and debate with her parents, she shared that her father taught her how to change a tire. She was completely amazed:

But when it came to my car getting broken down and for me not knowing how to change a tire...He's like, come let me teach you, so you won't have to be calling that guy or asking a guy... 'Let me teach you so you know how to do it.' But in a way he was being kind of strange.

This example demonstrated that change and adaptation of gender role beliefs is possible without losing cultural values as Jackie's father retained his role as protector/provider by teaching her the task of changing a car tire.

Liz explains how in her family, as an African American woman, she was raised to expect to contribute equally to a relationship. When she married, she was faced with her husband's different gender role expectations:

My husband wanted me... He didn't want me to work. It drove me crazy. Like, you know, like you said, you have to wait around for the paycheck come around just sitting there. I don't know, my mother didn't raise me up like that. And it really frustrated me. We got into a lot of arguments and stuff, because that's just

what, it just didn't settle at all with me. Even though, you know, like I said, everything, you know, everything was fine. But, it's just me. It was, what was inbred in me to, just couldn't do that. So I mean, and so, it's just boring.

She was able to talk it out with her husband and negotiate other gender role expectations in the relationship. Liz was able to refer to this experience when discussing with young women healthy and safe ways to discuss differences of opinions with a partner.

Not all staff members shared such positive experiences in relationships. A few experienced intimate partner violence and stated that these experiences inspired them to help others heal from those experiences. Mayte, a 37 year old Peruvian mother of three sons and Relief Advocate, shared how being an employee at Casa Myrna Vazquez actually helped her leave her abusive relationship:

So when I started working here. I remember the first week of training at my job, I was children's services. I was in a abusive relationship. It was abusive in every aspect of the way. Economically, emotionally, physically, verbally, everyway. And being able to..I remember watching this movie at the training where through the eyes of children, how they saw the abuse. That was like, that was it for me.

From this experience she related it to her continued desire to work at this program as she directly benefited from its services. Mayte and the other staff shared an overall passion to work with young women, and provide an environment for healing and self-empowerment.

Rewards and emotional costs

The young women are very responsive to the staff's nurturing guidance and remain connected to the program well after they leave, even if they are prematurely asked to leave. Michelle, a 28 year old Cuban-Italian American Transitional Family Advocate, illustrates this point, "And when someone left and that's the worst way possible from this program, calls back, like out of nowhere. It's just, like years later, to ask like, 'How are you doing?' Like wow, like out of everybody we made an impression on someone." Asking a young woman to prematurely leave the program due to a violation was very difficult for everyone involved yet the strong bond developed between the young women and the staff remains intact even years later. This relationship offers the young women an opportunity to build positive relationships with females, thus changing views about themselves and opening up new possibilities for their futures, such as accomplishing the goal of obtaining a GED. As noted by one staff member: "Faxing their GED certificate here, to show us that 'Hey I got it, here it is' Yeah. You know. Inviting us to graduation." The staff's level of commitment to the young women remains faithful despite the emotional costs, such as grieving the loss of a close relationship with a resident, feeling saddened that the young woman was returning to her abuser, or being the recipient of displaced anger from past traumas, sometimes accusing the staff of being "abusers." Thus the staff's commitment, through the rewarding and challenging times, offers an emotionally corrective experience for the young women. Additionally, the staff women's shared experiences with the young women, as women of color negotiating multiple identities, serves as a bonding experiences between the provider and client.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Summary of major findings

This study examined the impact of exposure to interparental domestic violence on gender role beliefs and dating behaviors among Latina young women through qualitative inquiry. The sample included in the final analysis consisted of a group of young women who represented a wide range of ages, family environments, and personal experiences. The research questions were also examined using a focus group of program staff who worked at a domestic violence shelter for adolescent and young adult mothers who offered their perspectives on adolescent dating violence and gender role beliefs within a sociocultural context. Additionally, the inclusion of the program staff group offered information about shelter-based interventions provided for young mothers who were survivors of intimate partner violence and the staff women's personal experiences as women of color in negotiating multiple identities.

Several themes emerged from the individual and focus group interview data. Among the interviews with the young women and the staff focus group, the themes found illustrated the young Latina women's experiences in constructing identities while coping with abusive and/or high-conflict familial and dating relationships. These themes were the following: negotiating culture and family notions of femininity and masculinity; conflicting feelings about dating relationships and gender roles; family relationships and views of self transitioning to adulthood; strategies to cope, resist, and begin to heal from abuse; and staff as witnesses and facilitators to healing and self-discovery.

The study participants' conflicting experiences of negotiating cultural and family expectations of gender roles has also been found in other research investigating the same topic (Ayala, 2006; Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Gallegos-Castillo, 2006; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004). In this study, the young women reported receiving mixed messages about gender role expectations in the family and in other domains in their lives. All of the participants reported that explicit messages about gender role beliefs were in conflict with observed gender roles in the home. This conflict was further complicated by the presence of domestic violence in the home. Messages to young women with children and without children did not appear to differ. All generally reported hearing messages that they were expected to be caretakers and that it was important for them to find a partner who was a good provider. Many of the young women were warned to be careful when in dating relationships because "boys lie" in order to manipulate them to have sex. On the same note, they generally received messages that men were dangerous and they needed to be careful to protect their virginity. Ayala (2006) found this same warning coming from the mother's she interviewed for her study. As Ayala indicated, in an effort to protect their daughters, Latino parents will also restrict their socialization outside of the home. The young women in this present study also reported being restricted and socialization privileges given instead to younger brothers. As the young women in the Ayala and Denner & Dunbar studies did, the participants voiced concerns about the conflicting messages regarding gender roles. Sometimes, as Gallegos-Castillo found in her study, the participants tried to speak up against the conflicting messages and unequal treatment between siblings. The young women of this study also observed mothers who had many

responsibilities in and outside of the home, and were in charge of enforcing family rules. Gill and Vazquez (1996) discussed how Latina adult women in their process of adapting to the new gender role expectations of the dominant U.S. culture often feel that they live in a world full of contradictions as they try to keep one foot in each culture. This process is also true for their daughters. Supporting this theme were the focus group's observations of the young women's process in addition to personal experiences with the same struggle.

Conflicting messages about family gender roles also translated to their dating relationship experiences. For the participants who were not adolescent mothers, due to their more limited experiences with serious relationships, they generally expressed a slight wariness of male-female relationship. This was due to their reliance on their family's messages as guidance and looking at the mother-father relationship as a model. On the other hand, the young adult mothers used both their family experiences and their dating experiences to construct their own views about intimate relationships. Those who had negative experiences with male family members were more likely to feel wary about female-male intimate relationships. Their abuse experiences also affected the way they viewed males and their roles within relationships. The young mothers speculated about the reasons why their boyfriends were abusive. They often cited that the boyfriend's family often supported the boyfriend's abusive behaviors. Views of the partner and his family supports research on men's family of origin influencing their ability (or inability) to manage relationship conflict and stress, and increasing the likelihood of domestic violence (Skuja & Halford, 2004).

The impact of witnessing domestic violence in the home appears to be mediated by a few factors that include quality of relationship with the parent, messages sent by the parent about relationships, and the way the parent coped with the violence. All of these were influential in the development of views of the self as a young woman. Witnessing domestic violence or high conflict among parents did not necessarily result in victimization or viewing the female as disempowered in relationships. Many of these young women reported that they viewed their mothers as resilient and endorsed female roles as “strong” and “independent.” In this study, the participants who had the most positive views of their mothers and had close relationships with them also identified themselves as being “strong” and “independent.” As Lichter and McCloskey (2004) found in their study, exposure to domestic violence did not necessarily result in an increased likelihood of dating violence victimization. It was gender role beliefs that endorsed aggression in dating relationships that was related to victimization. All of the young women in this present study who witnessed domestic violence clearly voiced that intimate partner aggression was not acceptable, but half of them experienced dating violence victimization. As Ellington and Marshall (1997) suggested in their research, intimate partner violence were found to be more related to the gender role beliefs of the perpetrator than the person being abused.

Whether they were survivors of intimate partner violence or witnesses to interparental domestic violence, these young women used several strategies to cope with the abuse. For the young women without children, they cited their relationship with their mother as a major source of support. Often these young women defended their mothers

when they were being abused, sometimes risking their own safety. For the young mothers, they used many strategies to cope with the abuse including family support and community resources. Those that were able to rely on family for support appeared to feel more hopeful about their futures. For homeless young mothers, lack of family support has been found to put them at greater risk for depression and further victimization (Meadows-Oliver, Sadler, Swartz, & Ryan-Krause, 2007; Rosen, 2004). The program staff cited that many of the young women came with childhood trauma histories and lack of family supports exhibited more difficulties in assessing safe relationships.

The focus group interview provided insight about the staff women's role as witnesses and facilitators to healing. They appeared to have a specific role of mentor and positive role models. The staff provided opportunities for the young women to widen their views on female gender roles and develop healthy relationship skills. Sale, Bellamy, Springer, and Wang (2008) found that adolescents who developed a trusting relationship with a mentor were more likely to show improvements in social skills. Despite the many challenges faced by these staff women in working with the young mothers, they appeared to be informed about ways to persist in developing working relationships with the young women. Not persevering toward developing a trusting relationship was seen as a major barrier in bonding with adolescent mothers in a study by Bogat, Liang, and Rigol-Dahn (2008).

The results of this study are consistent with literature on Latina adolescents and young women's socialization of gender role beliefs and its impact on self development (Denner & Dunbar, 2004; Gallegos-Castillo, 2006; Raffaelli & Ontai, 2004; Villarruel,

1998). Although it appears that the word “traditional” does not capture the possible adaptability of gender roles, it is more the lack of flexibility in adjusting in the face of stressful changes in relationship and living circumstances that increases the risk of intimate partner violence (Perilla, Bakeman, & Norris, 1994). In fact, research has shown that Latina adolescents, whose families are able to maintain the traditions of their culture in an adaptable manner, are less likely to engage in risk behaviors (Ebin et al., 2000).

Limitations of the study

Several limitations are noted in this study which includes the heterogeneity of the group, sampling methodology, the omission of certain variables, researcher bias, and approaches used for verification. One limitation was the heterogeneity of the group which included a wide range in age. A study sample that focused more on adolescents 18 and under or young adult women 18 and older would have provided different themes more applicable for that group. Although the adjustment in age was due to the challenges in recruiting sufficient participants from the adolescent mothers’ program since young mothers under 18 years old are not able to provide consent for research. Bowman (2008) noted this as a particular challenge in promoting research with this population.

Second, this challenge also impacted the number of subjects included in the study. The study sampling was biased toward participants who were sufficiently stable to stay in the program long enough to get interviewed by the researcher. As mentioned in the methods section, there were up to four young mothers who qualified for the study, but prematurely left the residential program due to a variety of reasons. The inclusion of these interviews could have provided different themes in the final outcome. According to

the staff, these young women experienced significant trauma in childhood and within intimate relationships.

Third, this study did not examine the variable of acculturation as many other studies have due to inconsistent definitions of acculturation. The young women in the group varied in immigration experiences with some born in the U.S. and others who immigrated during their early adolescence. This may have influenced the way they experienced socialization of gender role beliefs as they may have experienced some of their learning outside of the U.S.

Finally, another limitation is that the researcher was the only person involved throughout the data collection and analysis process thus increasing the likelihood of bias that may have influenced the information that was collected and interpreted. Although attempts were made to use a peer reviewer to check the final analysis, it was not a thorough process and it would have been preferable to check the final results with the focus group. It would have been also preferable to have shared the results with the young women, but many of them moved on to other settings soon after the interview was completed.

Implications

Clinical practice and program development

The U.S. census has shown that by 2050, the Latino population will be at 24.4% making it the largest ethnic minority group. This is due to a steady flow of immigration and high birth rate that is attributed to the greater proportion of youth in this ethnic group (U.S. Census Bureau, 2004). The rate of domestic violence among in this group ranges

from 23% to 34% (as cited by The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, 2005, Domestic Violence in Latino Communities section, para. 2). This underlines the importance of developing prevention programs that address the dynamics of culture and risk behaviors related to domestic violence, including dating violence.

Implication of the findings from this present study could add to the current limited body of literature, and underscore the importance of developing culturally sensitive teen dating violence prevention programs. Instead of providing a curriculum that provides a brief overview of gender roles, a culturally sensitive program would incorporate information regarding culture-specific gender roles with an emphasis on the adaptability of these gender roles. Such a program would help Latino adolescents reflect on culturally defined gender roles and its impact on relationships without diminishing cultural pride. Although the paradigms of *machismo* and *marianismo* are generally seen within a negative light, these cultural gender roles could be redefined and reframed to promote healthy and safe intimate relationships. This approach will help preserve cultural pride among ethnic minority youth. Research has indicated that cultural pride is a protective factor against sexual risk behaviors, depression and violence (Goodyear, Newcomb, & Locke, 2002).

The findings of this study also demonstrate the importance of building resiliency in young Latina women. Research on Latino adolescent ethnic and gender role development has shown that Latina teenagers are at higher risk of developing depression when faced with negotiating identities that differ from their families (Cepedes & Huey,

2008). This highlights the importance of developing programs or interventions that mediate the effects of acculturative differences between parents and daughters. Reducing the conflict between parents and daughters will create a more supportive family environment, thus lessening the likelihood of risk behaviors. Interventions that include a mentoring component are also important as it could mediate the lack of family support for young adolescent mothers (Bogat, 2008).

Future research

The findings also have implications for future research in the area of dating violence among Latino youth. In using a qualitative approach, this study aimed at further exploring the dynamics of culture, gender role beliefs, and family-home environments by allowing Latina young women to use their own words to illustrate their experiences. This approach afforded the opportunity to study a phenomenon that is fluid and embedded within the social-cultural context of the present time. More research is needed in the area of gender role beliefs and culture among ethnic minority youth especially as there are continued changes in ethnic composition in the U.S.

Conclusions

This study highlighted the struggles young Latina women face in constructing identities within the U.S. mainstream culture. This process of constructing an identity is further complicated by witnessing domestic violence in the home and/or experiencing intimate partner violence. It appears that developing close and positive relationships with adult women, their mothers or female mentors, may facilitate the coping process and lead to healthier views of themselves and relationships.

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Appendix A

Project: **Latina adolescents: Exploring the dynamics of family experiences, gender role beliefs and dating relationships**

Demographic Survey

- 1) How old are you? _____years old

- 2) Who are your primary caregivers or the person (s) who you live with and take care of you?
 - a. Female caregiver _____ (*Does this person have a boy/girlfriend, husband, partner? Specify_____*)

 - b. Male caregiver _____ (*Does this person have a boy/girlfriend, wife, partner? Specify_____*)

- 3) What ethnic background do you identify with? (choose more than one)
 - a. U.S.
 - b. Mexican
 - c. Puerto Rican
 - d. Dominican
 - e. Cuban
 - f. Central American, please specify _____
 - g. South American, please specify _____
 - h. Other, please specify _____

- 6) Have you had a “boyfriend”, been “seeing someone” or “talking with someone” in the past 12 months?
 - a. Yes (go to question 7)
 - b. No (this is the end of the survey)

- 7) If yes to question 6, for how long did you see each other?
 - a. Less than 1 week
 - b. 1-2 weeks
 - c. 3 –4 weeks
 - d. 1 month or more

Appendix B

Interview Protocol

Project: **Latina adolescent: Exploring the dynamics of family experiences, gender role beliefs and dating relationships**

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee (pseudonym):

Description of project: *Thank you for meeting with me today and taking some time to share your thoughts about being a young woman, growing up and dating. Remember as we discussed earlier, what you share with me today is confidential and that your participation is voluntary.*

Open-ended questions/inquiries:

- Before asking you about being a young woman and dating, I would first like to know if you've ever seen in your home fighting between a father figure and mother figure in your family that involved purposefully hitting, slapping, or pushing? Also have you heard that same couple using put downs such using verbal insults or threatening to harm the other person?

If not how did you observe couples in your family resolve conflicts....?

OK, so now I would like to hear your experiences growing up as a teen girl/young woman in today's world:

- I'm interested in what's it like being a young woman today? Could you tell me what's it like for you? (*Query for negative/positive experiences and for gender role expectation in different settings, including home, school, community and media influences*)
 - *What do you think your family expected from you as a young woman?*
 - *Career/school*
 - *Sex*
 - *Family/having children*
 - *What did your friend/peers expect from you?*
 - *Career/school*
 - *Sex*
 - *Family/having children*
 - *What did others (school, community) expect from you?*

- I'm wondering if you could share with me what dating is like for you? (*Query for gender role expectations, issues of power and control within a relationship, what they have experienced and what they have seen among peers?*)
 - *Gender role expectations in the relationship?*
 - *Who was expected to have the control? Both? Only one?*
 - *Sexual initiation?*

- Some people say that young men use violence when they feel frustrated, hurt, or angry with someone, like a friend or someone they're going out with? What do you think? (*Query for beliefs about dating violence and under what circumstance is it OK, if any; Define violence*)

Thank you for your participation today and in helping me better understand what's it like for a Latina girl to grow up today. One last question before we end, what's this interview been like for you?

Appendix C

Project: Latina adolescents: Exploring the dynamics of family experiences, gender role beliefs and dating relationships

Demographics

1. What is your age? _____

2. What is your ethnic or racial background? (you may chose more than one)
 - a. Latina (please specify _____)
 - b. African American/Black
 - c. Caucasian/White
 - d. Asian (please specify _____)
 - e. Native American
 - f. Other (please specify _____)

3. What is your job title? _____

4. How many years have you worked for ATLP and Casa Myrna Vazquez?
_____years

5. What is your educational background?
 - a. Completed HS or GED
 - b. Completed 2 years of college/Associates degree
 - c. Completed 4 years of college/Bachelor's degree
 - d. Completed graduate school (i.e., master's degree, etc...)

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Protocol

Project: **Latina adolescent-Exploring the dynamics of family experiences, gender role beliefs and dating relationships**

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Description of project: *Thank you for meeting with me today and taking some time to share your thoughts about teen dating violence and working with the young women in your program. Remember as we discussed earlier, what you share with me today is confidential and that your participation is voluntary.*

Open-ended questions/inquiries:

1. What are your thoughts about teen dating violence?
 - a. How does it start?
 - b. What are the influences? Family? Friends? Community?

2. What are your views of women's roles in...
 - a.* Society?
 - b.* Family?
 - c.* Work?
 - d.* Intimate relationships?
 - e.* Sex?
 - f.* How does culture influence a women's role in the above?

3. What are your views and experiences of the young women in the program?
 - a. How do you most of the young women arrive to the program? Under what circumstances? (*How do they leave the abuse? Who helps them?*)
 - b. How is it providing services to them? What are their needs?
 - c. What are their family supports like? Other supports (DSS workers etc.)?

4. How do you find the staff interacts with the young women?
 - a. What is the most difficult?
 - b. What is the most rewarding?
 - c. How does the staff cope? (*organizational/systemic supports etc.*)

5. What are your personal experiences with domestic violence?
 - a.* How do those experiences influence your work with the young women?

6. What led you to this type of work?

7. Thank you for your participation today and in helping me better understand what's it like to provide services for young women who have experienced domestic violence. One last question before we end, what's this interview been like for you?

Appendix E

Demographic characteristics of individual interview participants

Participants ^a	Age	Country of origin	Ethnicity	Duration of dating relationship	Witnessed domestic violence ^b
Natalia	18	Columbia	Columbian	4 years	No
Maria	20	U.S.	Dominican	2 Years	No
Sofia	18	Puerto Rico	Puerto Rican	4 Years	Yes
Adriana	17	U.S.	Puerto Rican	2 years	Yes
Bianca	15	U.S.	Puerto Rican	1 year	Yes
Lola	18	U.S.	Dominican	5 months	No
Isabel	18	U.S.	Columbian	5 months	Yes
Amanda	18	U.S.	Puerto Rican	3 years	No

^a All participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality

^b Corresponds to participants' response to being asked if they witnessed interparental domestic violence. Does not include those who described high parental conflict, but denied it was DV.

Appendix F

Demographic characteristics of focus group

Participants ^a	Ethnicity	Age	Job Title	Years working at CMV	Educational background
Liz	African American	48	Relief Staff	3	Bachelor's degree
Nicole	Haitian	45	Guest Advocate	11	2 years college
Madeline	Haitian	30	Relief Staff	1	Master's degree
Rosa	Puerto Rican	40	Guest Advocate	5	Bachelor's degree
Sabrina	Haitian	45	Relief Staff	2	Master's degree
Stephanie	Puerto Rican	27	Family Service Advocate	2	Bachelor's degree
Jackie	Dominican/Puerto Rican	23	Family Service Advocate	2	2 years college
Mayte	Peruvian	39	Relief Staff	4	Bachelor's degree
Michelle	Cuban/Italian	26	Family Transition Advocate	3	Bachelor's degree
Paola	Dominican	30	Program Coordinator	10	2 years college

^a All participants were given pseudonyms to protect confidentiality

Appendix G
Tree nodes: parent nodes and frequency of references to data

Parent node	No. of Child nodes	No. of total references to data sources
Dating among peers	4	11
Educational aspirations	6	35
Vocational aspirations	2	8
Expectations of being a Latina	6	16
Family dynamics	5	32
Family's advice about relationships	0	6
Family's gender role expectations	20	81
Family's initial reaction to dating relationship	0	8
Nature of dating relationships	37	131
Parental conflict	10	41
Relationship with father	5	19
Relationship with mother	9	64
Sexuality	7	61
Strategies to cope with abuse	7	34
Adolescent risk for IPV	6	16
The future	3	9
Views about men	20	61
Views of aggression toward women	2	9

Parent node	No. of Child nodes	No. of total references to data sources
Views of self	8	49
Views of womanhood	6	19
Staff reason for working in teen DV field	6	30
Staff experiences of working with teens	10	25
Staff's role in program	6	23
Types of abuse (from staff's view)	3	5

Appendix H

Five central themes and associated subthemes

Central themes	Subthemes
Conflicting feelings about dating relationships and gender roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Men as dangerous and controlling ◆ Men as protectors and providers ◆ “I don’t need a man” ◆ Desire to be cared for, loved and respected
Family relationships and views of self transitioning into adulthood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Experiences of witnessing domestic violence ◆ Mother as advisor, ally and role model ◆ Father as provider and aggressor
Negotiating culture and family beliefs of femininity and masculinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Explicit versus implicit messages about gender role beliefs ◆ Different expectations for daughters and sons ◆ Family messages reflecting onto gender role expectations in dating relationships

Central themes	Subthemes
Strategies to cope and begin healing from abuse	◆ Family support ◆ Community support
Staff as witnesses and facilitators to healing	◆ Advocacy and mentoring ◆ Using own experiences women of color to inform work ◆ Rewards and emotional costs
