

INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN THE LATINX COMMUNITY:
RISK FACTORS, BARRIERS TO CARE, TREATMENTS AND PREVENTION

by

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DEDICATION

I'd like to dedicate my work to my mom, who nurtured in me a love for learning and always told me that knowledge can become my wings and take me wherever I want to go.

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ABSTRACT

When looking at the high rates of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community, it is important to consider the underlying factors that contribute to its occurrence and can act as barriers to care. Factors such as culture and context are essential to understanding behaviors and attitudes towards intimate partner violence and how they can influence the individual and community responses to intimate partner violence. Furthermore, knowledge about the factors involved with intimate partner violence in the Latinx community will also help us better understand the barriers to care that prevent Latina women from seeking and getting help. Overall, further understanding of the underlying factors at play in the perpetuation of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community will aid in the development of culturally competent treatments and prevention programs.

Introduction

Most of my early memories regarding the topic of intimate partner violence were of discussions my mom would have with my grandmother, as they pondered and reflected on stories from Peru and the experiences of the women there. When deciding what I wanted to research, my memory was filled with the stories of these women, because although some of the stories had inspirational and empowering endings, the majority were of Latina women who found themselves in abusive and violent relationships with no end in sight. These were stories of women who were too afraid to leave their abusive partners and who renounced themselves to continue living a life of fear and violence.

As studies have shown, intimate partner violence is not a problem unique to the Latinx community, but compared to other racial and ethnic groups, intimate partner violence occurs at higher rates and with more profound consequences in the Latinx community. For example, Hispanic women suffer a higher degree of health consequences, both mentally and physically, and deaths due to Intimate partner violence are higher for Hispanic women compared to non-Hispanic white women (Gonzalez-Guarda, Cummings, Becerra, Fernandez & Mesa, 2013). In the United States, one out of every three Latinas has experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and out of those who have been in an abusive relationship only half will file a report (Smith, Basile, Gilbert, Merrick, Patel, Walling, & Jain, 2017). These significant differences observed based on group identity bring into question what factors are linked with the prevalence of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community.

To answer that foremost and primary question, we need to consider the secondary questions, such as, “Why are Latinx women, especially at risk? What stops Latinx

women from getting help? And how can we help Latinx individuals overcome this problem?" All these questions are key in addressing Intimate partner violence in the Latinx community. We can better serve and gain access to Latinx individuals by understanding the underlying values and conditions that perpetuate a cycle of violence. In so doing we can combat the high rates of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community through culturally competent intervention and prevention programs.

In my paper, I will explore cultural and contextual factors in the Latinx community and show how they affect the attitudes and behaviors of the public, victim and abuser. In addition, I will address specific barriers in caring for Latinx women who have experienced intimate partner violence. I plan to address current treatment options and how they relate to challenging norms in the Latinx community. In conclusion, I want to look towards the future and explore the topic of Intimate partner violence in terms of prevention and what are some ways to educate Latinx adolescents and young adults about intimate partner violence.

Factors in the Latinx Community linked to Intimate Partner Violence

Cultural Factors

Marianismo

Marianismo is the Latinx cultural value of femininity, and it emphasizes women's roles in the home as supportive, self-sacrificing, submissive, pure, and virgin like wives. The term originates from Mary, the virgin in Christian scripture, and while there might be some variation on the expression of these values, the ideal of Marianismo is that women are limited in their position as subservient to men (Castillo, Perez, Castillo & Ghosheh, 2010). When talking about Marianismo, it is also important to consider the importance that the church has in the lives of Latinas and how it plays a part in enforcing the image of women as pure and submissive pillars that hold their families together (Serrano, 2021). Overall Marianismo contributes to how Hispanic women react to intimate partner violence, barriers to leaving the abusive relationships, and social structures that allow intimate partner violence to continue.

In a study done by Da Silva, Verdejo, Dillon, Ertl & De la Rosa (2018), among women that had experienced intimate partner violence, women with higher levels of Marianismo felt more distressed about their situation compared to women with lower levels of the Marianismo. According to the authors, the Marianismo belief of *Subordinate to Others/Self-Silencing to Maintain Harmony* was linked with significantly higher rates of psychological distress in the low intimate partner violence condition (Da Silva et al., 2018). Thus, Marianismo plays a key role in the mental health outcomes of Latinas, with less acculturated and more enculturated Latinas adhering stronger to Marianismo beliefs. It is important to observe Marianismo in accordance to acculturation and enculturation

because although enculturation is essentially the one deciding how important Marianismo is in the lives of more enculturated Latinas, acculturation exposes them to new values of femininity (Da Silva et al., 2018).

Another factor surrounding marianismo is the advice they receive from others to stay with their abusive partners and how it reflects Marianismo's ideals of women as submissive, forgiving, and self-sacrificing. One important source of this advice is from clergy and church leaders, who instead of providing abused women with resources or acknowledging the negative impacts intimate partner violence will minimize it and encourage women to stay with their husbands and have faith things will get better (Cooper-White, 2011). Thus, clergy members play an important role in downplaying the severity of intimate partner violence by normalizing and labeling it as a trial of faith (Cooper-White, 2011). Another way the clergy deliver misguided messages in support of intimate partner violence is by focusing on sections of the scripture that outline women's submissiveness towards their husbands and condone intimate partner violence as a means of control (Cooper-White, 2011). It's important to examine the role of clergy in church-going Latinas experience of intimate partner violence because not only can they offer misguided advice to women to stay in their abusive relationships, but they can also reinforce male dominance and women's submissiveness through selective church teachings (Cooper-White, 2011).

Another way Marianismo affects women is by restricting their income-generating opportunities because of their role in the family. As researched by Ehlers (1991) the importance Marianismo places on women's role in the house has contributed greatly to their limited income possibilities in terms of paid labor and job opportunities. Unable to

provide income to the family contributes to an increased dependency on men for economic security. This reliance on the man to provide for the family may determine how much they will put up with in a relationship. As women are delegated all the household and childcare tasks, they are left with not enough time to take on an income-generating job. As women's ability to contribute to the family income decreases, they become dependent on men for survival, making women tolerate men's vices more as they're seen as a valuable resource (Ehlers, 1991).

In addition to how Marianismo can limit women's choices and alternatives to staying in abusive relationships, it also brings the shame of failing in abiding and following femininity standards. Marianismo acts as an impediment to Latinas leaving abusive relationships. In a study of Hispanic women and non-Hispanic white women in violent relationships, one of the significant differences between them was the higher rates at which Hispanic women identified the fear of social embarrassment as one of the significant barriers to leaving their abusive relationship (Bridges, Karlsson, Jackson, Andrews & Villalobos, 2018). Comparable results to these have been seen in other studies, which highlight the importance that shame in a social context carries as a barrier for leaving (Reina, Lohman & Maldonado, 2013). Those feelings of shame and embarrassment stemmed from a fear of being judged as someone who has failed at keeping up the image of their home and from a view that intimate partner abuse is a shameful problem that should be kept within the confinement of the home (Reina et al., 2013).

When talking about intimate partner violence in the Latinx community, the gender expectations of Marianismo are important to keep in mind since the values important in

Marianismo can explain the different reasons women stay in a relationship and the fears they might have about leaving their partner. Another result of Marianismo is the support it lends to the establishment of the Latinx community's patriarchal structure and gender inequalities associated with it, both of which have substantial implications for the power structure within partnerships (DaSilva et al., 2018).

Machismo

In support of the patriarchal structure in Latinx society, not only is Marianismo essential but so is Machismo, and the ideas and behaviors it promotes and contributes to men perpetrating intimate partner violence. Machismo deals with masculinity standards and ways men must behave to be perceived as *macho* (Castillo et al., 2010). One of the known risk factors for intimate partner violence is drinking, which machismo further increases in the Latinx community, where drinking is already big part of the social culture. Machismo encourages competition and rivalry in male relationships and since over drinking is seen as manly, it occurs at higher rates in Latino men (Flake & Forste, 2006).

Machismo contributes to the occurrence of intimate partner violence not only because it encourages negative risk factors for intimate partner violence like drinking, but also because it promotes patriarchy and male dominance that if threatened results in males responding aggressively to reclaim their lost dominance (Ehlers, 1991). There are many ways that male dominance can be threatened by women, like women having better jobs and incomes, or being better educated (Flake & Forste, 2006). Not only is male dominance threatened in these instances, but the male partner's role as a man is called

into question too because one of the gender roles central to men's identities is their ability to provide for their families and be the head of the household (Castillo et al., 2021).

Placing a focus on families, machismo is something that men learn from birth, and is a concept acquired from society through their observation of male figures in their life who promote and participate in toxic masculinity. Therefore, based on men's environment growing up, they might be at an increased risk of perpetrating intimate partner violence if observed in childhood (Mancera, Mungal, Santis & Provencio-Vasquez, 2018). As Mancera et al. (2018) observed, this risk factor requires reassessing the use of violence in solving problems and questioning toxic masculinity.

Familismo

Familismo is the Latinx cultural value that promotes family cohesiveness and a sense of duty and responsibility to the family and while it has many positive outcomes for Latinx families, it can act as a double-edged sword when it comes to intimate partner violence. While Familismo creates a family structure of emotional support and helps women who have already decided to leave their abusive partners, it also contributes to the reasons many women stay in their abusive relationships for so long (Serrano, 2021). Facing the permanent view on marriage so common in the Latinx community, getting a divorce or doing something to break up the family would be against the belief that family should come first above all individual desires and needs (Barrios, Khaw, Bermea & Hardesty, 2020). Not only does this affect the internal struggle that women go through when deciding to leave an abusive relationship, but it also greatly influences the advice from others to endure for the family, especially for the children (Serrano, 2021). Another aspect of familismo associated with intimate partner violence is that most problems are

kept within the family and that restricts women from reaching out for help and their decision against leaving their abusive partner for fear of the stigma and shame leaving the relationship would bring to the family (Serrano, 2021).

Environmental/Contextual Factors

Socioeconomic Status

Research has shown that the combined socioeconomic risk factors that Latinx face is key in to accounting for the higher rates and severity of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community (Field & Caetano, 2004). Low socioeconomic status has been linked with the occurrence of intimate partner violence and also plays a part in the occurrence of other risk factors for intimate partner violence such as drinking and substance abuse (Cunradi, Caetano & Schafer, 2002). Another aspect of socioeconomic status that is important to recognize and try to fix is the resources available to women if they decide to leave their abusive partners. Women in lower socioeconomic status have less access to resources such as, legal help, housing assistance, and childcare services (Gonzalez-Guarda et al., 2013).

Income, compared to education and employment status, is a bigger risk factor for the occurrence of intimate partner violence. However, the three are all intertwined, and as research has shown Latinx individuals have lower rates in all 3 (Cunradi et al., 2002; Trask & Hamon, 2007). Low levels of education are linked with lack of employment opportunities which together result low-income paying jobs. Unhappiness due to job limitations and stress from not being good provider is linked with an increased occurrence of marital conflict and intimate partner violence (Serrano, 2011). Additionally, an outlet for these frustrations can take shape in binge drinking and

substance abuse, which has been linked to more severe cases of intimate partner violence (Cunradi et al., 2002). According to the Social Structural Theory, being at the bottom of the social hierarchy causes greater levels of social stress due to an increased exposure to unemployment, poverty, discrimination, and additional disadvantages of limited access to community and economic resources more pronounced in ethnic minorities (Field & Caetano, 2004). Overall, the combination of stressors, disadvantages, and limitations due to societal structural conditions faced by people of low socioeconomic status is linked with an increased risk in intimate partner violence (Cunradi et al., 2002).

Neighborhood

When it comes to neighborhood, where you live is often in accordance with the area you are able to afford and in lower income neighborhoods there are higher crime rates and other forms of social disorder (Garcia & Herrero, 2007). In neighborhoods with high social disorder, reporting intimate partner violence is uncommon, acceptance of intimate partner violence is common, the social cost of abusing your partner is lower, and the involvement of the police as intermediaries is limited. Garcia and Herrero (2007) investigated the social tolerance and acceptability surrounding domestic violence in neighborhoods with social disorder and how it negatively affects residents' attitudes to domestic violence reporting and found that high neighborhood disorder was linked with negative attitudes to reporting. Residents lacked trust in the authorities, making it harder for others to intervene (Garcia & Herrero, 2007). Thus, the environmental factor of neighborhood disorder plays a key role in the higher rates of intimate partner violence in Latinx couples, its reporting, and how the community responds to cases of intimate partner violence.

Immigration

Immigration impacts Latinx individuals in many ways and is imperative to the study of intimate partner violence because of the many risk factors and barriers to leaving a relationship it creates. The risks arise from such a big life transition in learning the ways of the new culture and experiencing acculturation stress, social isolation, economic and emotional dependence, and fear due to documentation status (Bridges et al., 2018). All the stressors surrounding immigration may facilitate intimate partner violence to start or exacerbate it if it was already happening. Faced with an unfamiliar environment and its challenges immigrant Latinas face increased barriers to leaving their abusive relationships (Erez, 2000). Documentation status is also imperative in understanding how undocumented Latinas face an increased dependence for resources on the abusive partner and greater risks when it comes to leaving the relationship, especially in terms of possible legal repercussions (Reina et al., 2013). Most Latinas immigrating to the United States also face a lack of knowledge about legal options and resources. Unable to speak the language also adds another barrier when seeking help (Bridges et al., 2018).

Many immigrants Latinas arrive from patriarchal countries with higher rates of intimate partner violence. In the U.S. Latinas face new cultural norms that expose them to different ideas and attitudes about intimate partner violence. In Latin and South American countries, intimate partner violence is almost expected to go hand in hand with relationships and there are little to no legal consequences (Ehlers, 1991). When they arrive in the United States, they lack knowledge of the legal systems and resources in place that protect them against intimate partner violence (Reina et al., 2013) Alongside lack of knowledge about resources, language barriers also make a difference in the

resources that Latinas are able to access and who they are able to reach out for help. This becomes increasingly important in regard to filing police reports, which they cannot have direct and immediate access to if there are no bilingual staff members (Reina et al., 2013). Not being able to rely on the police for help and having limited access to other resources can further isolate a Latina who knows little to no English. Language also affects how successful Latinas will be at establishing new relationships in their community, especially if there are few Spanish-speaking individuals in proximity. Overall language plays a role in how isolated immigrant Latinas can become after coming to the United States alongside their increased dependence on their abusive partner.

Isolation may also exacerbate intimate partner violence and may act as a barrier to help-seeking behaviors. Isolation may impact those who are not within an accessible reach of extended family (Reina et al., 2013). Immigrant Latinas become isolated due to many factors, like their partner controlling what they do and where they can go, not having access to transportation, language and cultural barriers due to making new connections in their new neighborhood (Reina et al., 2013). Another aspect of isolation comes from being unemployed and doing unpaid labor at the home, since a substantial majority of immigrant Latinas are young and uneducated and with few marketable skills required for high-paying jobs (Bridges et al., 2018). Faced with limited social connections in an unfamiliar environment, isolated immigrant Latinas may become more dependent on their partners emotionally and economically (Valenzuela, 2019). They may not seek help or consider leaving their abusive partner since they depend on them for daily survival.

Treatment and Intervention Programs

Women-Centered Treatments

Immigrants and Intervention Programs

When it comes to intimate partner violence services provided for Latinas, an essential fraction of the population are immigrant Latinas that face specific struggles that need to be addressed to create intervention programs that serve the whole population of Latinas in the United States. Immigrant Latinas face many challenges and barriers when coming to the United States and when dealing with Intimate Partner Violence, they are one of the vulnerable and overlooked populations. For example, their non-permanent legal status is linked with a higher rate of intimate partner violence and poses a significant barrier to care (Sabina, Cuevas, & Zadnik, 2014). Another aspect of immigration that intervention programs need to keep in mind is acculturation and the need to adapt intervention programs to include services in Spanish. Additionally, the importance Latina women place on cultural values and their enculturation need to be taken into account. Overall, there is a need to adapt intervention programs so they are culturally relevant.

Most Latino immigrants have lower levels of acculturation and higher levels of enculturation. Acculturation is characterized by adapting to a new environment and culture, and while not directly correlated, enculturation is the opposite and deals with the adherence to one's origin culture (Sabina, Cuevas, & Zadnik, 2015). Having intervention programs that address acculturation levels is important because Latinas with low acculturation levels are less responsive to mainstream intervention programs that place a greater emphasis on the individual rather than the family (Garcia, Hurwitz & Kraus,

2005). In the U.S. there is greater reliance on person-on-person therapies and interventions than on family interventions. This issue becomes increasingly important for Latinas with high enculturation levels who adhere more to the cultural values of Familismo and who need to have treatment options that include a place for family support.

Another aspect of acculturation that is important is language comprehension. To Latinas that speak little to no English, having materials and staff that speak Spanish is crucial to offering them the care they need. Providing Spanish services can also make the difference between them continuing to seek help or becoming more isolated (Valenzuela, 2019). A consequence of not having bilingual services is revictimizing survivors by making them rely on their abusive partners for translations and further making them dependent on them, all while not providing them with the resources and information they need (Valenzuela, 2019).

In the intervention model CARE (acronym for Collaborative for Abuse prevention in Racial and Ethnic communities), the implementation of the program takes into account the Latina's struggles and needs, factors that increase culturally competent services. Positive changes the CARE program has made to better serve Latinas are providing immigrant Latinas family involvement, bilingual staff, legal help, and needed shelter (Whitaker et al., 2007). Through listening and adapting to the needs of Latinas, the intervention program has had a greater success engaging and helping Latinas going through intimate partner violence (Whitaker et al., 2007).

Personal Development and Economic Empowerment

Economic empowerment is crucial for women to be able to leave their abusive partners and necessary for them to build a life for themselves afterward. Financial instability is one of the risk factors for intimate partner violence and can sometimes be the reason women return to their abusive partner (Reina et al., 2013). Economic empowerment can come through furthering education or the gaining of technical skills, but the important outcome of both are better job opportunities that help women establish their financial independence. An intervention program for economic empowerment currently in use is ACCESS. But, in order for it to be culturally competent, some adaptations need to be made.

Informed by her research on intimate partner violence in the Latinx community, Valenzuela (2019) adapted the ACCESS intervention program to better meet the needs of Latinas. She started by modifying the language used, changing themes of individualism to relational and communitarian references, and including more examples relevant to the Latina's experiences. An important aspect of the implementation of the ACCESS intervention program she observed was relying on other programs already established in the community to garner trust and working on meeting the basic needs of Latinas first so they would be able to focus on the curriculum (Valenzuela, 2019). Alongside food, the program provided childcare services to the women attending the sessions. This service significantly increased attendance among women who would not have been able to attend without access to reliable childcare support (Valenzuela, 2019).

The choice of the intervention program is also important in helping Latinas because compared to other programs for vocational development, the ACCESS

intervention program has a higher rate of success in improving the lives of women who experienced intimate partner violence (Chronister & McWhirter, 2006). A part of this success comes from not only addressing the financial needs of women but also dedicating a portion of the curriculum to supporting them emotionally by incorporating critical consciousness group facilitation techniques. The ACCESS intervention program does this by placing a focus on Latina's recognition of their accomplishments and skills (Valenzuela, 2019). They also learn about the role power has had in their lives and how their perspectives are also valid (Valenzuela, 2019). These aspects of emotional empowerment in the ACCESS intervention program are essential in combatting the negative impact that intimate partner violence has had on their self-esteem and self-worth. Emotional empowerment also lays the foundation for Latinas successfully progressing towards the vocational goals they set for themselves through exploring their interests in the intervention program curriculum.

Men-Centered Treatments

All-Male Group Therapy

Gender-based group therapy is one of the most common forms of treatment for intimate partner violence and has proven to have positive effects in mitigating aggressive behaviors in men (Serrano, 2011). All-Male group therapy can provide men with a safe space where they can discuss as a group the reasons behind perpetrating intimate partner violence and learn skills to manage conflict without relying on violence. Additionally, this type of treatment not only has the potential to improve their relationships with their partners but can also have a positive effect on their interpersonal relationships with their coworkers, friends, and children.

In Serrano's (2011) research study he was able to observe how group therapy allowed men to open up and discuss themes of intimate partner violence as a spectrum of abusive behaviors, gender role stress, Machismo Vs. Caballerismo, marital dynamics, and intimate partner violence's harm on parent-children relationships. When discussing intimate partner violence as a spectrum of abusive behaviors, there were two categories abusive behaviors would mostly fall into, intentional or evasive (Serrano, 2011). Identifying where abusive behaviors come from is important in learning about the triggers of intimate partner violence and different skills that can replace abusive behaviors with healthier ones. This is especially true for abusive behaviors that arise from wanting to evade a difficult conversation or situation and is tied to marital dynamics, such as a lack of communication and problem-solving skills. Learning how to manage triggers and use problem solving skills is essential to prevent conflicts from escalating and leading to violence. Additionally, learning how to effectively communicate can prevent some problem from arising and strengthen relationships. This becomes key in keeping an open line of communication and stopping gender role stressors from becoming relationships conflicts (Serrano, 2011).

Gender role stressors are composed of external stressors like work and economic hardships, and they influence how men relate to their female partners. Due to the feminine gender roles in the Latinx community delegating women's roles to the home, men believe women cannot understand their work-related stressors. Additionally, Latino men believe their role as a man is to be responsible for the financial needs of their families, which places pressure on them to secure their family's economic stability. Not being able to meet those standards leads to marital conflict and can lead to incidents of

intimate partner violence (Serrano, 2011). Furthermore, men must be willing to rely on and seek support from their partners, which machismo values discourages. To address this issue, resources can be provided to men to better their economic situation, but fundamentally it is important to teach men stress management skills to handle those stressors and communication skills to be able to share their problems with their partners (Serrano, 2011).

Another important concept for men in the Latinx community is learning about the differences between Machismo and Caballerismo. Primarily when it comes to realizing how machismo is rooted in toxic masculinity, and contrary to caballerismo which is a healthy outlook on masculinity and goal of how men should act like, machismo is harmful (Mancera, Mungal, De Santis & Provencio-Vasquez, 2018). Finally, discussions of intimate partner violence's harm on parent-children relationships helps men see how their relationships with their children have been negatively affected by their abusive behaviors (Serrano, 2011). The great thing about all male group therapy is that not only does it help men create relationships with other men not centered on competition, but it also helps them see that other Latino men have similar struggles and allows them to learn as a group.

Change through Inspired Self-Reflection

The Change through inspired self-reflection intervention focuses on awareness of attitudes and beliefs that increase the chances of intimate partner violence? and how self-reflection can lead to a positive breakthrough in thought patterns and behaviors towards women. An important source of attitudes and beliefs on intimate partner violence for Latino men comes from experiences growing up and observing violence in their family of

origin. The concept of learned aggression shows how exposure to violence as a means to resolve conflict in adolescence is linked with the perpetration of intimate partner violence in early adulthood (Smith, Ireland, Park, Elwyn, & Thornberry, 2011). It is also important to note that learned aggression affects men more than women in its link to the occurrence of intimate partner violence (Smith et al., 2011).

First in the process of inspired self-reflection is self-awareness, which requires recognizing the risk factors for perpetrating intimate partner violence in Latino men. The risk factors include: societal view, environment, normalcy, male and female contributing factors to intimate partner violence, and as mentioned above family of origin (Mancera et al., 2018). Societal view is important because based on the self-fulfillment prophecy phenomenon, negative stereotypes of Latino men like binge drinking, machismo, and violence can become true if men believe it is just part of the culture (Mancera et al., 2018). Environment deals with how the surroundings impact how men relate to themselves and others, such as having increased stressors from low socioeconomic status and work stress. Normalcy outlines how violence and aggression is perceived as normal and a part of dealing with conflict. The next steps in the path to breaking through are reflection and the eventual realization that despite the risk factors present in their life Latino men are solely responsible for their actions (Mancera et al., 2018). Reaching a breakthrough means that one takes the accountability of one's actions and realizing one has the power to change oneself. It is that change in perspective that one becomes in charge of one's life and owns the way it will continue. The Change through inspired self-reflection intervention allows Latino men who have reached a breakthrough to better their relationships with their partners and change their behaviors for the better.

Prevention Programs

Opening up the discussion at Texas State University

Texas State University currently only has couples counseling to address relationship discords, and while this may be helpful in addressing lower-level conflicts, prevention is a call to action before the problem takes root. Research has shown that 71.1% of women experience intimate partner violence before the age of 25, and about 1 in 4 women are victims before they turn 18 (Smith et al., 2018). Compared to high school where romantic relationships were more centered on exploration, romantic relationships in college are more focused on commitment (Terrazas-Carrillo, Garcia, & de la Cruz, 2021). This difference is important because college students in more committed relationships are more likely to stay with their abusive partners compared to their younger counterparts.

When faced with the high rates of intimate partner violence in Latinx adults, college is an essential time frame where intervention programs focused on prevention need to take place. Compared to other ethnicities, the interventions for Latinx college students may have to be different given the risk factors and therapies addressed in the paper. For example, Latino students are more likely to grow up in a collectivistic culture, and a prevention program that has a more collectivistic orientation may be suitable for Latinx individuals (Terrazas-Carrillo et al., 2021). Additionally, considering the normalcy of intimate partner violence in the Latinx community, a focus on the characteristics of healthy and abusive relationships is needed. The theory of subculture of violence has outlined how violence and abuse is more widely accepted and normalized in some cultures like that of the Latinx community (Field & Caetano, 2004). For example,

when compared to White Caucasian women, Latinas do not recognize abuse as severe unless an elevated degree of violence occurs often (Garcia, Hurwitz & Kraus, 2005). Additionally, Latinas are less likely to consider emotional abuse as intimate partner violence (Garcia, Hurwitz & Kraus, 2005). Taking this into consideration, prevention programs need to teach Latinx youth about the differences between healthy and abusive relationships.

Full circle and concluding remarks

Reflecting back on the conversations with my mom and grandmother that started my research, and with all I've learned about the way intimate partner violence happens in the Latinx community, I know that the conversations I will be having with my sister, cousins, and peers will be radically different from those I had with my mother and grandmother. I will work on changing the point of view of others like my grandmother that intimate partner violence is just a way of life because no one should have to live thinking that fear and violence from your significant other are normal or remotely ok.

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