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Undocumented Latina GBV Survivors: Using Social Capital as a Form of Resistance

Carolyn Stauffer

Applied Social Sciences Department, Eastern Mennonite University, Harrisonburg, VA 22802, USA; stauffer.carolyn@gmail.com

Abstract: This research draws on the tradition of Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit) to explore how social capital is deployed by undocumented Latina GBV survivors as a form of personal and collective resistance. The study uses the social capital matrices of bonding, bridging, and linking capital as its primary narrative analysis grids. The research qualitatively analyzes a sample of undocumented survivors' counter-stories regarding three factors: citizenship status, help-seeking behaviors, and service use patterns. Research findings illuminate the social logics of GBV disclosure locations, the use of informal support services, and how survivors strategically deploy new economic opportunity structures. The article highlights the intersectionality of GBV and undocumented status, demonstrating how survivors leverage various forms of social capital to resist both the carceral state and the violence of abusers.

Keywords: social capital; gender-based violence (GBV); Latinas; undocumented; intersectionality

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1. Introduction

This article is the third product emerging out of a multi-year research initiative called the Silent Violence project. The Silent Violence project (SVP) explores how experiences of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) compare and contrast across a variety of survivor communities, specifically examining the role and impacts of identity and social location. This is done by comparing narratives of GBV across three specific survivor groups: (a) Latina's who are undocumented, (b) women who experience chronic insecure housing, and (c) women from a conservative religious enclave. This article focuses specifically on findings related to the project's undocumented Latina participants, analyzing the unique morphology of the bonding, bridging, and linking social capital they deploy as GBV resistance and resilience strategies.

The SVP research applies a grounded theory methodology (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Charmaz 2008; Oktay 2012) using qualitative narrative analysis to investigate over 400 pages of life-story interview transcripts collected from a sample of survivors within the migration-corridor of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. The research design uses the narrative analysis grids of bonding, bridging, and linking capital to code for recurrent patterns of social capital deployment. Tracking these deployment patterns makes visible the 'how and why' behind survivors' disclosure choices, how they use social support networks, and the public services they do or don't make use of.

Social capital is chosen as a key narrative analysis probe in this study because it illuminates what GBV survivors perceive as their key assets, as well as significant potential risks they face in the process of integration into new communities. The research explores how participating Latina survivors use social capital as a covert strategy of agency and oppositional power. In conclusion, the article generates and discusses key policy and practice recommendations that consider the unique resistance and resilience assets leveraged by this particular survivor community.

Context

As the U.S. experiences marked shifts in the nation's demographic profile, the connection between social capital and the resilience of new immigrant communities becomes increasingly significant (Tzanakis 2013; Sanchez et al. 2019). Accompanying the literature on social capital writ large is research that examines the role of social capital as a fungible exchange resource (Portes 2000). Social capital is particularly important for newcomers as the securities of country-of-origin networks are disbanded and as newcomers become engulfed in the risks and hazards of unfamiliar contexts of reception (Reina et al. 2013). Undocumented Latinas in particular, practice a variety of mutual support activities that exhibit unique patterns of social capital use. Aguilera and Massey (2003, p. 673) highlight the critical importance of social capital among new immigrant communities in this way: "Given the norms of reciprocity, bounded solidarity, and enforceable trust that are associated with kinship and friendship, migrants draw on the social capital embedded in these relationships to lower the costs and risks of international movement."

For undocumented Latinas, and more specifically those experiencing gender-based or intimate partner violence (IPV), filial social capital networks can be locations fraught with ambivalence. This is because these family networks have the potential to take on unique conflict dynamics when households are splintered internally as well as externally by threats of deportation and/or serial relocation. The body of research that investigates these dynamics surfaces a number of interesting observations. Brabeck and Guzman (2009) examine how the presence or absence of opportunity structure factors (income, education, English proficiency, and immigration status) contribute to the number of help-seeking behaviors pursued by battered Latina women. Reina et al. (2013) examine how social capital supports are forged in relation to whether there are 'formal' and/or 'informal' support structures available to Latina GBV survivors. In a study comparing African-American and Latina-American low-income mothers, Dominguez and Watkins (2003) find that the size and heterogeneity of social networks are key to whether these locations function as sites of either 'support' or 'leverage'.

While various studies highlight the larger question of how social capital interfaces with various GBV survivor identities, additional research is needed that addresses how survivors decide between social support networks that may represent *conflicting* identity allegiances. For example, how do survivors weigh the risks of household GBV against the hazards associated with turning to police structures? When 'support' networks represent potentially conflictual interests, as was often the case for our respondents, how and why are certain networks chosen above others? Additionally, how do undocumented Latina survivors reinforce current or create alternative social capital supports? This article addresses these questions by identifying key patterns that regulate how social capital is formatted amongst Latina respondents in contextually specific and identity-sensitive ways.

2. Materials and Methods

The Silent Violence project (SVP) emerged as a collaborative effort between a group of women's studies scholars, survivors, practitioners and local activists. In light of the sensitive nature of this research and our desire to stay contextually situated, the initiative engaged in a granular study of participants' GBV-related narratives using a small yet qualitatively meaningful sample group ($n = 24$). This is close to other similar studies in the field which indicate that female immigrants' experiences with sexual and domestic violence are largely sourced from case studies of discrete communities (Erez et al. 2009). Engagement phases of the project included conducting: (1) in-depth life-story interviews with respondents, (2) qualitative narrative analysis on interview transcripts, and (3) facilitating a series of arts-based follow-up training and support events with survivors.

The project's participant sample was selected through a chain-referral process. The specific benefits of this type of referral system are that it is respondent-driven and that it makes explicitly visible the networks that connect hidden communities of survivors. All study participants were over the age of eighteen and self-identified as undocumented.

Interviews were conducted in Spanish, unless the interviewee preferred otherwise. Interviewers were all bi-lingual and had established previous relationships with participants through their local community work. These relational and cultural ties were key to the research strategy as they established necessary rapport and trust.

Interview protocols were refereed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB reference # IRB0001105) of the university affiliated with the primary researcher. The research was vetted according to standards of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) code # IORH0009231 that ensured the anonymity and protection of respondents.

The study employed four qualitative design approaches: grounded theory, a participatory methodology, critical discourse analysis, and the use of three metrics for social capital. Grounded theory is an inductive approach that generates theory by coding for dialogic and performative themes that emerge in respondent interviews (Birks and Mills 2011). Narrative theme frequency, sequencing, and purpose were examined in respondents' stories. Secondly, a participatory methodology (Moser and Clark 2001, p. 181) was employed using the following elements: (1) a reverse learning approach which shifts power from researchers to respondents as respondents determine the progression of interviews, (2) somatic processing which includes the use of arts-based follow-up seminars to solicit further visual, kinesthetic and verbal processing, and (3) a focus on everyday voices through qualitative analysis of participants' direct verbiage. Thirdly, critical discourse analysis techniques (Fairclough 2013), were utilized to give primacy of place to the study of power relations, specifically highlighting how respondents used social capital as an alternative location of power. And finally, three forms of social capital (bonding, bridging, and linking) were used as the study's comparative narrative analysis grids.

Each of the study's three social capital narrative grids was further broken down into two descriptive categories. Bonding capital explored whether survivors disclosed GBV within intrinsic (filial and affective) networks or instead within extrinsic (more exchange-based) relationships. Bridging capital surfaced whether survivors sourced formal (state) or nonformal (primarily non-institutional) support services. An examination of Linking capital scrutinized how survivors used employment opportunities to distance themselves from economic dependence on abusers. These elements were tracked within individual respondent stories, as well as compared across respondent narratives as a group. Coding for the presence and meaning of these forms of social capital made visible the rationales behind the services and support networks survivors chose.

2.1. Definitions

To identify the research's theoretical framework, this next section explores the following key constructs in more depth: gender-based violence, feminist standpoint theory, LatCrit intersectionality, and social capital.

The term gender-based violence (GBV) is applied here as an umbrella concept that designates harm done to respondents based on their social identity as females. This includes domestic and intimate partner violence (IPV), as well as sexual assault, harassment, or stalking in work or public spaces. Not all GBV depicted in respondent narratives consists of 'intimate partner' violence per se; some narratives disclose rape and abuse enacted by strangers, employers, or colleagues. Intergenerational incest is also cited as well as the more prevalent IPV perpetrated by husbands or partners. The types of GBV that participants identify include physical, psychological, economic, or sexual forms of abuse; these take place in public or private settings through acts of coercion, deprivation, covert manipulation or overt violence. Survivors recount experiencing the impacts of these forms of GBV in acute as well as chronic formats, and often in terms of long-term co-occurring effects.

In this research, feminist standpoint theory is utilized as both a descriptive and an analytic tool. Originating in the 1970s amongst Marxian feminists, this perspective emphasizes women's epistemologies (Hartsock 1983; Harding 1991; Hill Collins 1991). New Zealand scholar Tracy Bowell (2011, p. 1) suggests that this perspective makes three claims: (1) that knowledge is socially situated, (2) that the lived experiences of oppressed groups are

vital locations of knowledge generation, and that (3) social research validity is enhanced through a focus on power relations, particularly originating in the experiences of the marginalized. These assumptions represent the analytic frames used in the SVP research.

The term 'intersectionality', the third construct, was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Crenshaw sought to highlight the cumulative impacts of multiple forms of marginalization and how their interactions form larger interlocking systems of oppression. Growing out of the fields of critical race theory (CRT) and critical legal scholarship, intersectionality theory helps to explain the interactions between various forms of oppression. In their work with battered female immigrants, Erez et al. (2009, p. 34) describe these dynamics:

> These categories mutually construct each other via structural inequalities and social interaction, creating a matrix of intersecting hierarchies that is not merely additive but multiplicative in terms of unearned privilege, domination, and oppression ... In this way, both opportunities (including social and material benefits) and oppressions may be simultaneously created by intersecting forms of domination.

In comparison to other survivor groups, Latinas with insecure immigration status face unique challenges in accessing health, legal, and victim services. This is due in large part to the intersectionality of multiple and simultaneous forms of exclusion.

As a branch of CRT, LatCrit came to the fore in 1995 as a scholarly movement to explore the invisibility and subjugation of Latina/o thought and practice in the U.S. Two specific features of LatCrit that are relevant to this project are: LatCrit's focus on counterstories (Mora 2014; Martinez 2014), and an ethos of activism through community-building. As Francisco Valdes (2005, p. 148) suggests, "LatCrits work both to create scholarship and activism through community, and to create community through scholarship and activism." To this end, the SVP's research focuses on surfacing the counterstories of Latina survivors as a form of activist community-building.

Social capital is the final key construct referred to here. Conceptions of social capital (writ large) follow a long tradition, especially in the work and practices of indigenous practitioners and scholars. Drawing on the work of Javier Mignone (2003, p. 132), First Nations community members in Manitoba Canada highlight these elements: "Social capital characterizes a community based on the degree that its resources are socially invested, that it presents an ethos of trust, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and participation, and that it possesses inclusive, flexible and diverse networks."

Other scholars describe social capital as a powerful tool for solidarity-building, as well as a social exchange currency (Hanifan 1916; Mauss [1922] 1990; Homans 1961; Bourdieu 1983; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2000; Woolcock 2001; Portes 2000). Synthesizing these concepts, Mignone (2003, p. 132) suggests that the "social capital of a community is assessed through a combination of its **bonding** (within community relations), **bridging** (inter-community ties), and **linking** (relations with formal institutions) dimensions." Our research investigates these three types of social capital, highlighting how respondents use them as platforms for resistance and risk reduction.

2.1.1. Bonding Capital

Bonding capital is understood as functioning primarily within a group, often building on common-identity affiliations such as kinship, culture or religion. This form of capital acts to reinforce group homogeneity. Several characteristics of this type of capital are relevant here, namely whether survivors' bonding capital exhibits in **intrinsic** or **extrinsic** formats. Intrinsic social capital comprises of the conveyance of affective qualities such as approval, affirmation, status, prestige or social support. These transfers generally function in longer-term relational environments of high allegiance, trust or affinity (Blau 1964, pp. 88–97). Extrinsic transfers on the other hand, consist of the conveyance of material or economic goods. These include externally quantifiable assets such as a money, fringe benefits, direct goods or services, professional advice, or typically transfers that enhance job security

or increase economic mobility. Extrinsic transfers are generally mediated by contractual obligations that exist in environments of lower trust (Blau 1964, pp. 33–50). In the context of this article we examine the presence of bonding capital within survivor kinship groups. We investigate whether and why, in response to episodes of GBV, survivors seek 'extrinsic' or 'intrinsic' support from extended family members.

2.1.2. Bridging Capital

Bridging capital connects group members to heterogeneous parties, relationships or resources (Schuller et al. 2000). This type of capital builds primarily on assets received from cross-cutting acquaintances or associations as opposed to the receipt of transfers from those with close affinity ties. While more fragile than bonding capital, bridging capital is positioned to have greater instrumental reach. Our research investigates whether respondents turn to **formal** or **informal** bridging structures in response to GBV-related incidents. Insofar as bridging capital connects individuals to external resource brokers, we wondered if, how, and under what circumstances respondents experiencing GBV access formal crisis intervention services such as police, hospitals or other emergency services. The types of formal or informal bridging capital chosen indicates how respondents perceive their allegiances and who they see as their primary allies under circumstances of GBV-related crisis.

2.1.3. Linking Capital

Linking capital operates by connecting individuals to institutions across the spectrum of the social ladder, mobilizing vertically to link otherwise disassociated entities across power and status differentials (Woolcock 2001). These links connect members to a wide and vastly disparate range of vertically positioned resources and social networks. Building on Granovetter's (1973) scholarship on **strong** and **weak** ties, our research asks whether respondents use linking capital in strong or weak formats? Granovetter studied the interface between economic location and access to new opportunities, interrogating which networks job-seekers used to gain economic mobility. Granovetter (Granovetter 1973, p. 1364) makes the argument that it is the less emotionally intense 'weak' ties (those relationships that involve limited contact and less mutual confiding), which prove to be the most promising links to new economic opportunities. Our research mirrors this inquiry, asking whether survivors use strong or weak linking capital ties in accessing jobs and other economic opportunities. These are key questions that our research seeks to address through the prism of participants' voices.

3. Results

3.1. Findings: Bonding Capital

This research found that respondents are ambivalent about disclosing GBV to immediate family and community members, hesitating to rely on kin for affective (intrinsic) forms of support in response to episodes of GBV. Respondents indicate that this is the case for several reasons. First, undocumented survivors face multiple hazards simultaneously, juggling the immediacy of GBV risks along with the threat of state-sanctioned deportation. Victims indicate that they fear that sharing about GBV (even within kinship circles) might increase the risks of deportation for themselves or their family members. This double-bind means that victims tend to remain silent, perceiving disclosure within family circles as a betrayal of both kinship loyalty and broader familial safety.

Second to the above, respondents indicate that GBV that is perpetrated by a household member is experienced as a breach of personal as well as cultural honor. In light of this, respondents are reticent to report IPV to family and community members due to a culture of shame (for both victims and perpetrators). The dual factors of deportation and cultural shame are further amplified by an external (state) environment that is experienced as structurally hostile. These dynamics increase respondents' sense of personal isolation and systemic vulnerability. To counter these dynamics, respondents turn to **extrinsic** forms of

bonding capital, exchanging goods and services among family and community members in order to increase their sense of communal solidarity and safety.

3.2. Findings: Bridging Capital

Respondent narratives surfaced some interesting observations regarding the deployment of bridging capital. With in mind their predisposition to predominately sidestep GBV disclosures within kinship circles, our research asked where do survivors disclose, and to whom do they turn for help? Here we used the metrics of formal and informal support services, inquiring how survivors do or don't use health, policing and social service networks. Our findings suggest that respondents rarely source policing (and 911 services) with the exception of one circumstance: when victims perceive their dependents to be at risk. While these survivors tended to absorb GBV risks to themselves (enduring harm to their own bodies/psyches), they only turned to formal policing and emergency services when they believed their offspring were in danger.

Our other finding was that respondents frequently spoke of disclosing GBV in informal service settings. This included making use of **informal** contact with providers whose services did not directly target GBV. This included disclosures in children's school settings, within faith-based communities, at routine health screenings, and among work colleagues. We noted that none of these settings specifically target IPV or GBV services as their primary deliverable. This has implications (discussed later in this article), for how support system *entry-points* are created for undocumented female survivors.

3.3. Findings: Linking Capital

In what ways did respondents assert agency in terms of their deployment of linking capital? Here we find that the connections that respondents very strategically forge with new economic opportunity structures are key. This study found that respondents made use of work opportunities and their own economic advancements as platforms for power and leverage to push back at abusers. Further to this, respondents accessed these opportunities through "weak tie" connections (Granovetter 1973), that abusers had little (or less) control of. This strategy gained survivors access to external locations of economic power that were outside the ambit of the reach of abusers' authority.

While access to these forms of linking capital leveraged power for respondents, they also created flashpoints of friction with abusers, in some cases even heightening the risks of IPV/GBV. This irony meant that survivors chose carefully when (and when not) to leverage their new economic independence for fear for triggering further abuse reprisals. This created a double jeopardy dynamic for survivors, further motivating them to make use of the elasticity of "weak ties" (those that were less known).

Respondents suggested that they saw linking ties as possible escape routes using them as potential exit strategies from GBV environments. Again, (and as discussed in the recommendations section of this article) the powerful role of new economic opportunities for immigrant women, particularly those locked into contexts of IPV/GBV, cannot be underestimated. Using the "weak ties" of linking capital, these survivors leveraged economic mobility as a purposefully deployed resistance and resilience strategy.

4. Discussion

4.1. Bonding Capital: Narrative Analysis

Bonding capital surfaces in participant narratives primarily in terms of how respondents solicit **extrinsic** forms of support from extended family members, as opposed to **intrinsic** support. This means that respondents readily rely on kin for help with extrinsic everyday material transfers such as transport, housing, finances, childcare, and other tangible or material exchanges. However, they much less frequently turn to these same kinship circles to disclose episodes of GBV or to receive intrinsic and emotional support. These findings are in many ways counter-intuitive and belie the assumption that new immigrant survivors turn first to insider-members of their own community to disclose

GBV. Our respondents' narratives reveal that this is due to the co-occurrence of other 'risk factors' that survivors perceive as compounding the GBV hazards they face.

Risk Factors: Detection, Detention, and Deportation

The threat of state violence against those with insecure immigration status is woven in as a consistent thread throughout respondent narratives. This hazard features in their lives more generally, but also specifically in relation to how their undocumented status intersects with their experiences of GBV. For our respondents, this intersection results in a variety of outcomes.

First, the threat of deportation heightens survivors' vulnerability to abuse, abusers and protracted entrapment in circumstances of GBV. This resonates with a significant body of literature that confirms this finding (Rajaram et al. 2015; Alvarez and Fedock 2016; Messing et al. 2017). Respondents in our study go on to intimate that these forms of intersectional risk impact them cumulatively by layering the personal and structural hazards they face.

> "It's more difficult for a person who doesn't have papers, I also think that if I had papers, I would feel safer with my daughters. Yes, because imagine if I had problems with him, and I told them that, well, he's abusing me. And me [being] without papers? They check and they see that I don't have papers, and they deport me!" (Interview 17 November 2012).

> "I know a lot of cases that women are abused but they are afraid of the police. Actually, I'm also afraid of the police. ... We don't have anybody here to help, and we are afraid of being alone with the children ... needing to pay the rent, bills, caring, everything. So, when this problem [of abuse] comes, we don't have options." (Interview 4 November 2012).

> "She [my boss] asked about my [black] eye and immediately she asked 'who did it?' So, I had to tell her that it was my brother. She was so angry. She told me I had to report him, but I told her that I didn't want to because I didn't want to be responsible for my brother's deportation." (Interview 10 June 2014).

> "There were two big obstacles [to calling the police]. First, I didn't speak the language, and second, he would threaten me saying, 'What are you going to tell the police when you call them? You don't even speak English. They're not going to understand you. I'm American, they're going to believe me. You're just an illegal. You're not strong. You don't have anything. I'll tell them, and they'll deport you." (Interview 4 December 2012).

> "I have had other experiences [of sexual harassment] at the work place with coworkers. I think it's because I don't have documents and many people try to humiliate me. So, sometimes I endure all the humiliation . . . because I do not want to lose my job. That's the trouble with this country, that one cannot defend themselves." (Interview 10 June 2014).

Second, because GBV is often perceived as a transgression of familial cultural honor ('familismo'), the shame of detection tends to silence disclosure within kinship circles. This essentially closes access to vectors of intrinsic bonding capital within extended family networks.

> "I didn't want to get my love[d] ones mixed up in problems. Apart from that, I didn't want my family in [country of origin] to find out - my children. So, I had to manage the situation really carefully. I decided that it was better that they didn't find out." (Interview 4 December 2012).

> I just, I never told anyone in my family. In fact, until now, when I got out of the hospital . . . I basically don't. It's embarrassing for me to talk to them about what happened to me. And I, frankly speaking, I couldn't even tell my sisters what was happening to me." (Interview 25 November 2014).

> "[My kin] still didn't have papers. So, I didn't want to tell them anything. I didn't even want to visit them because I didn't want to get them involved in this . . . in order to protect them." (Interview 11 March 2014).

The priority given to solidarity with cultural identity (even at the risk of personal GBV injury) resonates with what Dr. Jennifer Gomez (2018) calls 'Cultural Betrayal Trauma'. Gomez suggests that women from minoritized groups who face GBV enacted by within-group members, face a risk-laden double jeopardy. If they prioritize personal safety, they may simultaneously be jeopardizing cultural solidarity by disclosing violence by fellow group members. Gomez (2018) suggests that 'outing' offending members of your own group is frequently perceived as cultural betrayal and is thus experienced as a form of treason trauma. These cultural betrayal hazards weigh the odds heavily in favor of silencing survivors.

Our third bonding capital observation is that as levels of survivors' isolation increase, they are ironically accompanied by the growing need for economic support (extrinsic capital) from extended family members. The confining domestic roles that respondents describe themselves in often preclude access to other economic provisioning structures. This in turn puts pressure on survivors to rely on bonding networks as locations for extrinsic material supports.

> "And we were always shut up/confined [in my house] because [the household provider] would never take us out on the weekends. The only way that I could leave was when I would go to school, and I would come back home, and I would go to church on Sundays, and that was [all]." (Interview 11 March 2014).

> "My role was to stay home, do chores, prepare food, attend to him when he got home. And if I wanted to leave, I had to ask for permission and set a time to be back home. He would get annoyed if I stayed out or hadn't come back, and he would start to call me on the phone, asking what time I was going to come back." (Interview 17 November 2012).

> "So, we [filial females] would take turns [taking care of the kids] so that everyone could work, and the kids were always with family . . . " (Interview 2 September 2014).

> "Whenever they have need to have their clothes mended, they come to where I live and they give me their clothes, I fix them up, and they give me a little money." (Interview 23 April 2014).

In summary, extrinsic bonding capital exchanges are framed as part of the dynamics of prescribed gender roles (as opposed to being specifically GBV-related) and are therefore perceived as legitimated by all parties involved. These exchanges perpetuate mores of reciprocity as well as filial bonding, both of which are seen as lowering the risks and hazards of migration.

Our bonding capital findings suggest that survivors evaluate the hazards they face by creating their own risk hierarchies and critically assessing which risks they perceive as most threatening. Moreover, respondents frequently portray the threats associated with detection and deportation as eclipsing the dangers of GBV. This 'Multiple-Criteria Risk Assessment' model echoes the findings of Sherry Hamby (2014) in her work entitled *Battered Women's Protective Strategies: Stronger Than You Know*.

In her research, Hamby pushes against traditional GBV safety criteria which suggest that physical protection is a survivor's top priority. Instead, Hamby points to other forms of risk survivors consider as they navigate abusive relationships. For example, financial instability, the threat of family dissolution, residential volatility, compromised employment, dignity violations, and cultural stigma costs, are all risks that survivors evaluate carefully. Accordingly, Hamby (2014) argues that survivors may stay in abusive relationships because the collective load of these other forms of risk is perceived to be greater than the singular threat of staying and facing physical violence.

Hamby's research helps to explain our finding that respondent safety strategies primarily consist of choices that strategically protect critically important kinship relations. When GBV disclosure may potentially expose nuclear and extended family members to the threat of negative state intervention, respondents choose to remain silent. This rationale structures their reticence to use kinship networks as primary locations for GBV disclosure insofar as survivors want to avoid detection and deportation for themselves and those closest to them.

Conversely, as social isolation increases for GBV survivors, they instead turn to extended family members for material (extrinsic) transfers in order to keep these filial bonds intact and mutually reciprocal. These extrinsic exchanges are framed as 'migration' survival vectors and not GBV-related supports, and they are therefore deemed to be culturally acceptable. Next, we examine bridging capital and ask why respondents resist formal GBV emergency services, and instead opt for informal organizational intermediaries.

4.2. Bridging Capital: Narrative Analysis

The second form of social capital analyzed in this research pertains to bridging capital. We explore this construct through the lens of **formal** and **informal** support services. Our research asks the questions: if, how, and under what circumstances do respondents experiencing GBV access institutional support, or seek the help of formal crisis intervention services? What mechanisms do survivors use to extricate themselves from danger, and who do they approach as external allies when contemplating exit from abusive relationships?

As noted earlier, respondents indicate that they view external support services as potentially contentious and risky spaces due to their negative associations with immigration insecurity. We also found that respondents do not always disclose GBV to their closest kin. In light of these two factors, we now ask: what strategic routes do survivors take to locate external parties who can function as GBV advocates and potential risk-reduction safety nets?

Route Factors: Brokers, Bridges, and Bypasses

Our research suggests that respondents navigate external systems with caution, resisting the use of formal emergency services and instead making use of informal bridging relationships to increase their own safety. In fact, there is an abundance of literature that supports the idea of 'brokers' as key assets in the acculturation processes of new immigrant community members (Pines et al. 2017; Lo 2010). What is distinct about our findings however, is evidence for the fact that these brokers are not necessarily individuals but are rather secondary organizational entities.

Participant narratives suggest that respondents turn to 'intermediary organizations' as primary locations for GBV disclosure and support. Rather than soliciting help from formal emergency service professionals such as police, hospitals, or calling 911, most respondents disclose their GBV crises at secondary institutions such as churches, educational institutions, or community centers. In so doing they use these informal relationships as sites to access the protections they need.

Our first bridging capital observation is that teachers, social workers, clergy, ancillary health providers, counselors, and immigration attorneys all feature in respondent narratives as intermediary parties that respondents strategically disclose to and turn to for support in times of GBV-related crisis.

> I was in that process for more than a year until I [acquired] an immigration lawyer, thank God. They could help me, and they were helping me. And it happened that [during that time] everything between us [violence between abuser and survivor] started, [and] it went downhill. And she [the lawyer] noticed; she was one of the only people who notice[d]. So, she ended up becoming someone really close to me." (Interview 2 September 2014).

> "I went to social services and I also spoke with people from the department of health. And they also told me that if I wanted, I could, um, speak with them

> when there was another instance of abuse, and [that] they were going to take control of that." (Interview 17 November 2012).

> About four years ago, I fell into a really bad depression . . . I couldn't sleep; I wasn't sleeping at all. And I had decided to kill myself, and I didn't want to live anymore because I hadn't been able to talk about everything that had happened to me. And [so] I went to the Community Center." (Interview 25 November 2014).

Our second bridging capital observation is that while respondents construe these ancillary institutional parties as the safest social environments for GBV disclosure, these bridging spaces are also viewed with some suspicion. Respondents approach these locations with caution insofar as they are aware that these brokers only play an instrumental role.

In some instances, we find that intermediary parties have ties to or are complicit with the very individuals who are causing the harm. Due to this dynamic, respondents are at times wary of these third-party brokers because they realize that these parties cannot necessarily ensure accountability for perpetrators. In the following narratives, a respondent explains this two-sided bridging dynamic in regards to conversations she has with leaders at her local church diocese.

> "Well, the church president and the sisters have also given me a lot of advice, and the president also talked to him [the abuser] a lot because he was also a member of the church. They talked a lot with him, and he would say that he had repented, and that's what hurt me [most] because he lied to the people from church. He would tell them that he was sorry and everything, and that he was not going to go back to how he used to be. He was going to straighten things out with his family, and that they should forgive him." (Interview 17 November 2012).

This respondent goes on to describe how instrumental parties such as the church come as a mixed blessing. While these allies may function as disclosure confidants and informal advocates, they have limited enforcement power and therefore cannot ensure survivors' safety.

> " . . . He spoke with some of the brothers at church, with the president, and he told them that he was sorry about everything that he had done, and he wanted them to forgive him—he wanted the people at church to forgive him. But it was a lie; he ended up falling back into the same behavior" (Interview 17 November 2012).

What intermediary parties do offer are opportunities for accessing bridging capital that can connect respondents to other decision options. What they do not guarantee is safety enforcement.

Our third bridging capital observation relates to safety enforcement and the conditions that cause respondents to 'bypass' formal emergency services altogether. Respondents' narratives suggest that there is one glaring exception to their practice of choosing intermediary parties as their primary locations for GBV disclosure. This exception rests on respondents' caregiving and/or maternal roles: if they perceive that incidents of GBV pose a direct threat to their children/dependents' safety, respondents choose to access formal emergency services such as calling the police or 911. In these situations, women tend to 'bypass' their own physical safety needs in deference to what they perceive to be the wellbeing of dependents.

> "No, the police didn't get there in time to see the things that he'd done, only, um, he came and the girls were there crying. And they [police] asked the girls what had happened, and they said that their dad and I had fought . . . Every day that we fought, they would be afraid and he would grab me and hit me . . . And my girl saw that, and I didn't like that she had to see that. Because of that I told the oldest one to call the police. . . . Yea, they were crying when that happened and that was what made me call the police." (Interview 17 November 2012).

> In the beginning, when my mom was with him, when she didn't have documents, he would abuse her. Because she says that [due to] the abuse, she never had

> a healthy relationship with my dad. He would always hit her, yell at her, she would do what he wanted. At first, she said yes [it was because of not having documents]. But afterwards, she said that it was for us, because I asked her why she stayed with him for so long. And she told me that, at first, it was because she didn't have papers, but afterwards, it was because they were going through the process of bringing us [me and my siblings] here." (Interview 11 March 2014).
>
> So, I would think about that; that if I call the police, and he does as well, and they deport me, [then] my daughters are going to be alone . . . . That's another reason why I didn't [report] it because I was thinking about my daughters; that the government could take them away from me. And because of that, I let things stay as they were." (Interview 17 November 2012).

Respondent narratives reveal that formal emergency safety and security structures are generally only accessed under circumstances of extreme duress involving immediate danger to offspring/dependents. Survivors also explain how the social reproduction roles of motherhood are perceived as one of their singularly legitimized locations of power. And precisely because many other social citizenship rights are denied them in the U.S., the external and cultural legitimation of maternal identity is highly valued by respondents. This informs why respondents bypass formal emergency services, only accessing them in relation to situations that reinforce the importance of their roles as 'mothers' and care-givers.

So far, respondents' stories have surfaced findings related to extrinsic bonding and informal bridging capital. In the upcoming segment on linking capital, we discover enactments of survivor resilience as respondents very literally fight for new social, political and economic opportunities.

4.3. Linking Capital: Narrative Analysis

Linking capital is investigated here through the lenses of **strong** or **weak** ties. We ask which of these two forms of linking capital survivors use to access jobs and new economic opportunities. While strong ties comprise of economic opportunities leveraged through already-existing affinity networks, weak ties entail economic links made through less known partners and/or through formal advancement platforms. Our findings suggest that while weak ties are primarily used by respondents, these linkages come at a price: fresh flashpoints of conflict with abusers.

As respondents actively exert themselves to access jobs and their own new economic opportunities, abusers perceive these activities as potential acts of threat and disruption. Respondents on the other hand use work advancements to gain the linking capital necessary to free themselves from abusive conditions and relationships. The cost of survivors accessing this linking capital, however, is that their advancements become a tender-box for increased family violence. Moreover, contentions around access to cash, keys, and cars become symbolic conflict zones as the SVP's Latina respondents exert their push for safety, upward mobility, and independence.

Resilience Factors: Cash, Keys, and Cars

Interpreted as a metaphor for economic opportunity, contentions around access to external employment surface frequently in respondents' narratives. These contentions hinge on the fact that fiscal independence represents a significant threat to women's economic dependence on abusers. Women's access to their own employment and 'cash' sources significantly shifts GBV power relations in favor of victims. Insofar as male abusers may already be experiencing threats to traditional or cultural masculinity scripts, respondents' assertions of economic agency often become the final straw that ignites violence.

Our first observation highlights survivors' fierce pursuit of linking capital and the significant opportunities it represents for them. The narratives that follow illustrate how these pursuits of financial independence are also fiercely contested by abusers.

> "He would take the money away from me, but sometimes I would hide a little money—little by little. So, I would [hide cash] in my interior clothing . . . my womanly things, you know? But sometimes he would ask me where I'd gotten the money from, and I would tell him, that's why I'm working . . . but when I answered him like that, he would hit me in the mouth . . . " (Interview 25 November 2014).

> I hate [it] when men tell women: 'What you are is because I've given you all these thing[s]; you are what you are because I work, because I take care of you'. That is exactly what I did not want. I want to have my own things, work, have my money and be independent." (Interview 10 June 2014).

> "Being here, you start to become more independent. I think that this always annoys men; that you want to become independent and not be under his control." (Interview 17 November 2012).

The second thing we notice about respondents' development of linking capital is that it is accompanied by high levels of hyper surveillance by abusers. This is because respondents' access to weak linking ties (for example formal work or educational advancement platforms) exacerbates abusers' fear of losing control. This mutual escalation process (survivors' economic advancements twinned with declining patriarchal gender-role adherence), accentuate abuser vigilance to respondents' acts of economic agency.

> "He came [to work] to check on me. He spoke with my boss, he checked my punch card, and he realized that I was working that shift, so he left me in peace for a moment. [Afterwards] I had to work on a presentation with a group of classmates. So, I finished my work shift, and I went to IHOP, and he followed me like usual. We were there until almost 1 in the morning, and I think he called my cell about 15 times" (Interview 11 March 2014).

> "Sometimes when I work overtime, he didn't know I want to stay to work overtime. When I came to the house, he's like fighting me and screaming because he was so jealous, because he say[s] 'you were [somewhere] or you went with somebody else or something.' He was trying to hit me a lot of time. And he used my car and my cell phone, and he's like looking for somebody else in my computer or my cell phone, and he's trying to keep my car sometimes. And uh, it's mine, if you want to use it, you have to work, but it's my stuff. And he stole my keys a few times." (Interview 4 November 2012).

> "He told me that I was always spending all of my time at that damned [school] and that I should start working full time and that I stop wasting my time because when I finished [school], I wasn't going to find work, so I should start looking now. And he started to raise his voice, and I said: 'Look, I'm not just anyone's [explicative describing a woman], and I'm not doing anything wrong. So, you're going to have to let me study, and it's going to be three and a half more years, and I want to finish'. And that's when he hit me again . . . he hit me even harder." (Interview 11 March 2014).

While control-based surveillance is cited frequently within domestic violence literature writ large, it is noted here because of its unique connection to the use of weak linking capital ties. Had strong linking capital ties been deployed by respondents, namely connections leveraged through known acquaintances, these conduits may have appeared less threatening to abusers. However, precisely because both the process and the outcome of women's advancements were outside of abusers' purview, respondents experienced these dynamics as precipitating heightened surveillance as well as the potential for violence and more abuse.

Cash, keys and cars feature in survivor narratives as conflict flashpoints. Cash and keys represent the potential for economic independence and new opportunities, while cars add a new dimension. Cars not only represent social and economic mobility, but they also

become actual sites of violence. As transient, less visible, and therefore less accountable venues, cars become mobile spaces where violence occurs. This dynamic mirrors the insecurities of respondents' undocumented status: mobility and transience render abusers less visible and accountable.

> "[He] told me to get in his car, and he took me to a highway, and [there] he beat the living [explicative] out of me." (Interview 11 March 2014).

> "He would come to pick me up from work. And there were times that he'd be high and he would drive like a crazy person, knocking over cones on a street that was under construction. I mean, he would do things in the car that would almost kill you, and I would always be panicked during the rides, and it was horrible, and I couldn't say anything." (Interview 4 December 2012).

> "He grabbed the keys and turned on the car, and I was trying to get in the car. And so, he started the car, and I'm trying to get in, and half of my body is in and half of my body is in the street. And [he] started driving away. And I said, 'If you don't stop the car, and you kill me and you kill the [unborn] baby, believe me, I swear you're going to go to jail" (Interview 4 November 2012).

Ironically, respondent narratives render cars as sites of both risk and opportunity; cars signify the potential for high violence as well as the opportunity for escape. This paradox encapsulates our third observation regarding the use of weak forms of linking capital: while weak ties may indeed accelerate new opportunity structures for respondents, they simultaneously heighten other forms of risk. Moreover, while we learned previously that maternal identity often took precedence over personal safety considerations, in this instance we see that economic opportunities trump adherence to patriarchal gender scripts. Here again we see evidence of survivors' multiple identity allegiances and the potentially conflictual dynamics that they represent.

4.4. Research Implications

In this next section we discuss recommendations, research limitations, and a possible future research agenda emanating from this SVP study.

4.4.1. Recommendations

Our first recommendation involves the disentangling of local police officers from functions of immigration enforcement. Interview narratives raise questions about the state's conflicting roles during episodes of GBV-related crisis: while law enforcement officers are tasked with the physical protection of survivors, their presence simultaneously raises risks of deportation for undocumented households. These contradictory roles place survivors in a double bind: decreasing the use of police services necessitates that survivors redirect their help-seeking behaviors elsewhere. These dynamics not only echo the racial profiling dangers faced daily by people of color, but they also reinforce white privilege by exempting white abusers from comparable levels of scrutiny. While VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) self-petition protections remain an option for some undocumented women, these contradictory state protection roles make a mockery of the safety options available to undocumented victims.

The second recommendation relates to the need to recalibrate social service provision sites as culturally informed pathways for survivor engagement and assistance. Our research found that respondents did not seek services aimed specifically at GBV but instead chose intermediary agencies as their locations of disclosure and support. Effective service delivery will require the presence of bilingual hotlines, targeted programming, and for those professionals who do serve as entry points, education that sensitizes them to the nuances of this population's GBV trauma.

A third recommendation is to increase the level and quality of legal support services for undocumented Latina survivors. The over-representation of undocumented Latinas in unskilled U.S. labor jobs accompanied by lower levels of formal education place these

survivors at risk of being denied the labor protections afforded other groups. This economic vulnerability exacerbates their dependence on abusers which further entrenches survivors in hostile work or household environments. These dynamics cause some undocumented survivors to stay with abusive partners or in work environments that, while extractive, still provide some economic security. This begs the question of what legal supports are available to undocumented survivors who remain with or return to abusive partners? While VAWA legislation allows battered immigrant women the benefits of initiating protection orders against abusers, many survivors are not aware of these rights. Second, there is a dire need to appropriately educate legal personnel who regularly interface with survivors (Dutton et al. 2000). Especially with in mind the insecure citizenship status of these survivors, the provision of just legal protections is all the more significant and urgent.

4.4.2. Research Limitations

Critiques of this research include some ideological considerations as well as practical limitations. One of the more general criticisms of this study's use of a feminist standpoint approach is that it can be construed as essentialist due to its emphasis on a 'collective' feminist experience. To mitigate this, the SVP intentionally engaged issues of identity and positionality through its comparison of a variety of female survivor groups. Second, our analysis draws from the counter-narrative (Mora 2014) and LatCrit traditions (Solorzano and Yosso 2002) which feature counterstories as acts of agency mirrored in the larger Latino anti-oppression movement. These elements inform how this research positions identity at the center of women's similar and yet divergent experiences of GBV.

A second critique of the research pertains to its relatively small sample size. Due to its qualitative design, the research does not claim to be random nor generalizable. Rather it seeks to represent the voices of specific respondents in context-relevant ways. Moreover, some of the challenges the research faced related to the dual issues of access and trust; these factors being especially pertinent among GBV survivors with insecure U.S. citizenship status. Characterizing their own experiences with GBV-related immigrant research, Erez et al. (2009, pp. 38–39) capture these dynamics well: "Due in large part to the depth of social and cultural capital required to conduct sensitive research with members of marginalized immigrant communities, researchers tend to focus on small, local samples of battered women from specific immigrant communities." While a larger sample may have been advantageous in terms of generalizability (breadth), our research focused instead on the important element of trust-building as a mechanism to foster narrative validity (depth). Future research initiatives would do well to include substantive elements of both breadth and depth through mixed methods approaches.

4.4.3. Future Research Agenda

A question to be raised in subsequent research is whether traditional criminological approaches are always appropriate or desired by undocumented Latina GBV survivors. Current approaches that invoke criminal laws and legal redress assume that all survivors uniformly value police intervention and legal outcomes. While this may be true in some cases, a truly survivor-centered justice lens would optimally provide a range of decision options. Particularly for undocumented survivors for whom police intervention may be unsafe, alternative options might involve using more community-based transformative justice approaches (Chen et al. 2011; Mingus 2019). A research agenda that centers what survivor-defined justice might look like could tailor decision offerings so that women do not feel like they have lost control of their own redress opportunities once they engage with state institutions.

5. Conclusions

The SVP research addresses gaps in knowledge around undocumented respondents' GBV disclosure locations, their use of formal or informal support services, and the types of strong or weak ties that link these survivors to new opportunity structures. The indices of

bonding, bridging and linking social capital are used to examine how identity and social location impact on the intersection of filial support networks, immigration status, and state service utilization. Findings suggest that survivors work to resist both the carceral state and GBV by leveraging extrinsic filial supports, accessing intermediary support services, and by acquiring external links to new economic opportunities. Through their counterstories, the SVP's undocumented Latina survivors demonstrate how they instrumentalize social capital for the purposes of their own resistance and resilience.

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